

SKY WATCH

Jan 17 to Jan 24



This week look for Jupiter and Mars

Year 2009 was dedicated to astronomy to commemorate the first time any human being observed the sky with a telescope. We are trying to familiarise readers with some of the glory of the sky. We just witnessed the annular solar eclipse on Friday, January 15. An annular solar eclipse is in a way a sub-type of total solar eclipse. On January 17, the Moon is at the farthest position from the Earth, so it appears smaller in size. However, the difference in size is not noticeable with the naked eyes.

This week, Jupiter is shining with its -1.9 magnitude brightness in the southwest sky. It's really eye-catching. Jupiter is visible just after sunset if you look towards the western sky, even in twilight.

In fact, Jupiter is the first visible object in the sky after the Moon. Luckily a crescent Moon is just below Jupiter. On Sunday, January 17 and Monday January 18, they will come close. Jupiter is in Aquarius.

Around 9 pm, if you look towards the zenith (overhead position) you can see Aldebaran, commonly called as Rohini. The entire Taurus constellation is visible overhead.

At around 10 pm, a bright reddish Mars will appear on the eastern horizon. It appears just below the gateway of heaven. The second object we can see after the sunset in the sky is Sirius, which is the brightest star in the sky whose magnitude is -1.46. Sirius is visible in the southeast sky. Just above Sirius, we can see the Orion constellation.



If you have ever star-gazed shortly after sunset or before sunrise, you have probably noticed one or two "stars" sailing gracefully across the sky. These are Earth-orbiting satellites, visible due to the reflection of the Sun's light off their surfaces toward the observer. Hundreds of satellites are visible to the unaided eye; thousands are visible with binoculars and telescopes. Observing satellites has many enthusiasts around the world.

This week, almost every morning, we will be able to see the Hubble Space Telescope (HST) in the Pune sky. On Monday, January 18 at 6.37 am, HST will fly in the north sky. HST will be visible 26 degrees above the horizon. On Thursday, January 21 at 6.32 am, again you can observe the flight of HST in the northern sky. On Friday, January 22 in the evening, Lacrosse 4 rocket is visible from south-southwest to south-southeast between 7:56 pm and 8 pm.

Clear skies and enjoy the sky watching!

— ANIRUDDHA DESHPANDE
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