

Our Night Sky for October 7th, 2024

Last week I suggested that these were good nights to look for our planetary neighbours. This week is again an excellent opportunity you should not miss. All the outer planets are well placed in our evening skies. Only the two planets closer to the sun, Mercury and Venus are not available this week. Mercury is hidden in the sun's glare and Venus sets at about the same time as the sun. By next month and closer to Christmas Venus will have advanced in its orbit and trails the sun with good opportunities to view Venus for a couple of months until the advancing earlier sun rise in March.

Venus is now referred to as an evening star. Of course, Venus is a planet not a star. If you have a chance to spot Venus in the next few days and look closely with binoculars you will see that Venus has phases just like the moon. Try and catch a quick look a few times during the next few months. In 1610 Galileo first documented the phases of Venus and this helped solidify the true makeup of our solar system with the sun at the center and the planets circling in large orbits.

Look for Venus's greatest elongation, the furthest behind the setting sun, January 10, 2025. And by March 23 it passes between the sun and the earth, inferior conjunction. Venus moves along its orbit to again lead the sun into our morning sky. Seeing distant planets move across the sky or watching their phase change or very rarely pass in front of a planet or the sun, will show you the beauty of Our Night Sky.