

STAR TRAK for November: Jupiter and Leonid meteor shower

November 5 2010



Photo courtesy of NASA

Jupiter will be easy to see in the south as night falls in November. The best time to observe this bright planet with a telescope will be from dusk to midnight as it travels high across the sky from southeast to southwest. Jupiter's four brightest moons will be visible with binoculars.

The planet Uranus will be about 3 degrees northeast of [Jupiter](#) all month, offering a rare opportunity to use the conspicuous larger planet as a marker. Their apparent separation is about a third of the width of your fist at arm's length.

Saturn will rise in the east a little before the start of morning twilight at the beginning of November and as early as 2 a.m. local time by month's

end. The yellow planet will be slightly brighter than the bright white star Spica below it. Saturn's rings are opening rapidly after being almost edgewise as seen from Earth.

Venus will rise in the east-southeast less than a half hour before the sun at the start of November, and it will be noticeably higher each day after that for observers at mid-northern latitudes. By month's end, Venus will rise more than three hours before the sun and reach the peak of its brightness as it approaches Spica directly above it.

Mercury will gradually emerge very low in the southwest as the weeks of November go by. It will form a triangle with Mars and the bright orange star Antares, but all three objects will be hard to see so close to the horizon.

Mars will be barely visible with binoculars very low in the southwest a half hour after sunset during November. The pumpkin-colored planet will be too dim to see without optical aid in such bright twilight, and it will disappear from view by month's end.

Meteor showers

The annual [Leonid meteor shower](#) will peak on the night of Nov. 17-18, just three days before [full moon](#). Moonlight will make for impaired viewing conditions before midnight, but as many as 20 meteors per hour may be visible in a clear sky. The Leonid meteors appear to radiate from the [constellation Leo](#) the Lion. They are actually caused by streams of fast-moving dust particles from Comet Tempel-Tuttle.

The best time to watch for meteors will be after the moon sets around 3 a.m. local time, as sickle-shaped Leo gets higher in the east. The farther Leo climbs above the horizon, the more meteors there will be all over the sky. The bright star Regulus is part of Leo and can serve as a marker

for the radiant, the point from which the meteors appear to come.

Another [meteor shower](#), the Southern Taurids, will peak before dawn on Nov. 5, when the new moon will not interfere. These meteors will seem to come from the constellation Taurus the Bull, whose bright orange star Aldebaran is easy to spot. Watch to the west between midnight and dawn.

More information about meteor showers is available from the American Meteor Society at: www.amsmeteors.org/showers.html .

Moon phases

The [moon](#) will be new on Nov. 6, at first quarter on Nov. 13, full on Nov. 21 and at third quarter on Nov. 28.

Provided by Indiana University

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