

A good reason to wake up at dawn

4 July 2012, by Dr. Tony Phillips



Earthshine is also known as "the Da Vinci Glow," after Leonardo Da Vinci who first explained the phenomenon.

Summer is a good time to relax, sleep late, enjoy a break from school or work. Waking before sunrise is just not done.

This summer is a little different. To find out why, set your alarm for dawn.

Every morning this July, the two brightest planets in the solar system will put on a show before [sunrise](#). Look out any east-facing window to see Venus and [Jupiter](#), shining side by side, so close together you can hide them behind your outstretched palm. It's a great way to start the day.

On the 4th of July, Venus will be passing dead-center through the Hyades cluster, a loose grouping of stars 153 [light years](#) from [Earth](#). Using binoculars, scan around the bright planet; you'll see dozens of stars scattered across the velvety-black sky. The temporary addition of Venus will make it seem that a supernova has gone off in the cluster.

Three mornings later, on July 7th, Venus and Jupiter line up with Aldebaran, the bright red eye of Taurus the Bull. Aldebaran is a red giant star of first magnitude. Together with Venus and Jupiter, it forms an almost perfect vertical line in the brightening [dawn](#) sky.

The best, however, is yet to come.

On July 9th, Venus and Aldebaran converge to form an eye catching planet-star pair. Scarcely more than a degree of arc will separate the two celestial bodies as Jupiter looks down from overhead.

And then, on July 15th, a 12% crescent Moon joins the show, forming a bright celestial triangle with Venus and Jupiter.

The slender arms of the crescent cradle a ghostly image of the full Moon. That's caused by Earthshine, sunlight reflected from our own planet onto the otherwise dark lunar landscape.

A crescent Moon with Earthshine is considered to be one of the prettiest sights in the heavens. A crescent Moon with Earthshine plus Venus and Jupiter--that's worth waking up for even in the middle of summer vacation.

Provided by Science@NASA

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