

# The Night Sky

## The Evening Sky is Ablaze with Planets

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All of the bright (i.e., “naked-eye”) planets are visible in the evening sky during the month of February 2025. To open the month on February 1<sup>st</sup>, the waxing crescent Moon sits just to the left of brilliant Venus in the western sky once the evening twilight fades. Looking about 10-degrees below Venus, you will be able to spot Saturn.

As we continue to scan our eyes upward towards the zenith, we will be able to spot our second brightest planet in the solar system, Jupiter, sitting just to the north of the brightest star in Taurus, Aldebaran.

Turning around and looking east, we now can spot the Red-Planet, Mars, about halfway up from the eastern horizon one hour after sunset. Mars is still shining brightly in the constellation of Gemini after its opposition that occurred last month. On February 9<sup>th</sup>, a nearly Full Moon sits just to the lower left of Mars.

Near the end of the month on the 24<sup>th</sup>, the solar system’s innermost planet Mercury will have a close conjunction with Saturn in the evening twilight. You will likely need binoculars to spot this pair in the bright twilight before they set.

February’s Full Moon occurs on the 12<sup>th</sup> at 8:53 a.m. EST. February’s Full Moon is known as the Full Snow Moon by native Americans since February is typically the snowiest month of the year at northern latitudes.

The next scheduled astronomy open house is on Saturday, February 1<sup>st</sup> from 8 to 10 pm at the campus Harry D. Powell Observatory. At these open houses, the public can view objects in the sky through telescopes and hear talks by faculty of the Physics and Astronomy Department. Note that the open houses are cancelled if the sky is cloudy. Make sure you dress warmly since you will likely be standing outside for some time to look through one of our telescopes. Further information about these open houses and directions to the observatory can be found on the web at <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/observatory/starparty.php>.

For those of you who would rather explore the night sky indoors, this month’s planetarium show will be on February 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at the ETSU Planetarium in Hutcheson Hall. A location map of the Planetarium on the ETSU campus can be found on the web at <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/outreach/planetarium.php> for further information.

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This month's Night Sky was written by Dr. Donald G. Luttermoser, Chair of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at ETSU. He can be reached at [lutter@etsu.edu](mailto:lutter@etsu.edu). Any students wishing to pursue a career in Physics or Astronomy are encouraged to contact him at this email address. Astronomy-related information for the public, including a link to the ETSU Powell Observatory, can be found at <http://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/> by selecting the Public Outreach pull down menu on the lower-left side of this web page.