



JANUARY 2012

EVENING PLANETS Venus, Jupiter

MORNING PLANETS Mercury (1–14), Mars, Saturn

THE SKY (mountain time)

- 2** Moon at apogee: 1:19 p.m.; 251,407 miles from Earth (404,600 km)
- 4** Quadrantid meteor shower peak: 12:23 a.m.*
Earth at perihelion: 8:59 p.m.; 91,403,445.285 miles from sun
- 6** Moon at greatest northern declination: 22.5° N; 2:46 p.m.
- 9** Full moon: 12:30 a.m.; moonrise, 4:37 p.m.; moonset, 6:41 a.m.
- 16** Last quarter moon: 2:08 a.m.; moonrise, none; moonset, 10:40 a.m.
- 17** Moon at perigee: 2:28 p.m.; 229,845 miles from Earth (369,900 km)
- 19** Moon at greatest southern declination: 22.5° S; 7:12 p.m.
- 23** New moon: 12:39 a.m.; moonrise, 6:34 a.m.; moonset, 4:51 p.m.
- 30** Moon at apogee: 10:42 p.m.; 251,220 miles from Earth (404,300 km)
First quarter moon: 9:10 p.m.; moonrise, 10:04 a.m.; moonset, none

*The Quadrantids are an above average shower, with up to 120 meteors per hour at their peak. The shower peaks in the early morning hours of the 4th, but some meteors can be visible from January 1 to 6. Best viewing will be from a dark location after midnight. Look for meteors radiating from the constellation Bootes.

THE PLANETS

Mercury rises at 5:52 a.m. on the first day of the year and is visible in the eastern dawn sky during the first half of the month.

Venus, in Aquarius, shines with a -4.03 magnitude and can be observed in the southwestern evening sky beginning around dusk. At midmonth Venus rises near 9:15 a.m., transits about 2:30 p.m., and sets around 8 p.m.

Mars, on the Leo-Virgo border, can be observed in the early morning sky. Its apparent magnitude is -0.12. At midmonth Mars rises near 9:30 p.m., transits about 4 a.m., and sets around 10:30 p.m.

Jupiter can be observed high in the southern evening sky, moving from Pisces into Aries this month. Look for a waxing gibbous moon just above Jupiter on the 2nd and a waxing crescent moon on the 29th. At midmonth Jupiter rises near 11:45 a.m., transits about 6:15 a.m., and sets around 1 a.m.

Saturn, in Virgo, can be observed low in the predawn sky. On the 15th, Saturn, the moon, and the bright star Spica form a nice trio, with Mars not far to the southwest. At midmonth, Saturn rises near 12:45 a.m., transits about 6:15 a.m., and sets around 1:45 a.m.

Uranus, in Pisces, is well-placed in the southwestern, early evening sky. Its apparent magnitude is +5.8. At midmonth, Uranus rises near 10:30 a.m., transits about 4:30 p.m., and sets around 10:30 p.m.

Neptune can be found in the southwestern evening sky, moving from Capricornus into Aquarius this month. Its apparent magnitude is +7.9. From the 11th to the 15th, Neptune and Venus do a little cosmic tango. As the month progresses Neptune becomes more difficult to observe as it approaches conjunction in February. At midmonth, Neptune rises near 9 a.m., transits about 2:30 p.m., and sets around 7:45 p.m.