November Skies

Mars continues to hang in the early evening sky but only 10 degrees or so above the horizon. At magnitude +1.8 it is likely you will need a pair of binoculars to see it.

Jupiter will continue to be our nighttime planetary star for most of the month. It rises about 2 hours after sunset on the 1st and will already be well above the eastern horizon at twilight by the end of the month. As it brightens to magnitude -2.8 it will be well placed for binocular and small telescope viewing during the entire month.

While the early morning hours continue to be dominated by brilliant Venus, we will also add two more planets to the early morning skies. Saturn begins its ascent into the early morning sky and should be readily visible by the 15th. On the 23rd through the 30th, Saturn and Venus will be less than 10 degrees apart. Remember that 10 degrees is the width of your fist at arm’s length. On the 26th the two planets will be separated by less than one degree!

Mercury makes one of its better apparitions during the last week of the month. It will brighten from magnitude +1.6 on the 23rd to -0.3 on the 30th. You will find Mercury below and to the left of Venus and Saturn.

The Moon will be last quarter on the 6th, new on the 13th, first quarter on the 20th, and full on the 28th. Looking east-northeast on the 1st of November, around 10 p.m., the waning gibbous Moon will be just above the giant planet Jupiter. On the 16th, about a half hour after sunset, the crescent Moon will be just above and to the left of the red planet Mars.

At dawn on the 11th, about 45 minutes before sunrise and looking east-southeast, the waning crescent Moon will be slightly below and to the right of brilliant Venus. The following morning on the 12th, the very thin crescent Moon is very near the horizon and to the right of Saturn. On the 28th the full Moon once again aligns with Jupiter but this time much closer. Look to the east-northeast about an hour after sunset.

Worth mentioning, because of the absence of the Moon, is the Leonid meteor shower which should peak during the predawn hours on the 17th. Expect perhaps 20 meteors per hour but be aware that the Leonids have been known to surprise us from time to time.

We all get an extra hour of sleep on November 4th as Daylight Savings Time ends. Remember to fall back and set your clocks and watches (cell phones do it automatically) back one hour.

Clear Skies!

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