

THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE



With Glenn Dawes

Get ready as comet C/2017 K2 draws closer and play spot the difference with two triangles

When to use this chart

- 1 Oct at 00:00 AEST (14:00 UT)
- 15 Oct at 23:00 AEST (13:00 UT)
- 31 Oct at 22:00 AEST (12:00 UT)

The chart accurately matches the sky on the dates and times shown for Sydney, Australia. The sky is different at other times as the stars crossing it set four minutes earlier each night.

OCTOBER HIGHLIGHTS

Comet C/2017 K2 (PanSTARRS) is worth following during autumn and summer. Ideal from the Southern Hemisphere, it's setting late in the evening and has possibly achieved 8th magnitude. The comet skirts around the head of the Scorpion, following the Scorpion/Lupus border during October. It slowly brightens as it continues its southward trek, passing through Norma, Ara and concluding the year in Pavo. By then it will be circumpolar from mid-latitude Australia.

STARS AND CONSTELLATIONS

Some constellations have northern and southern counterparts, such as Pisces and Piscis Austrinus. A lesser-known pair, each composed of three main stars, look exactly like their namesakes. Rising in early October evenings in the northeast is a distinctive narrow isosceles triangle of 3rd- to 4th-magnitude stars called Triangulum. Low in the southwest you'll find Triangulum Australe, sitting on its base above the Pointers, with a prominent 2nd-magnitude apex star.

THE PLANETS

Saturn is still well-placed to observe early in the night, transiting around the end of twilight (midmonth) and visible until the early morning. With Neptune and Jupiter at opposition last month, they are well up in the evening hours, crossing the

meridian around 23:00 (midmonth). Uranus is rising early in the evening and visible most of the night. Mars arrives just before midnight and transits around dawn. Unfortunately, Venus and Mercury remain too close to the Sun to observe.

DEEP-SKY OBJECTS

This month a visit to the constellation of the Water Bearer, Aquarius, or more specifically to the western end close to the border with the more recognisable roof-shaped asterism in Capricornus. NGC 7184 (RA 22h 02.6m, Dec -20° 49') is an 11th-magnitude, near-edge-on barred spiral galaxy. It has a reasonably bright halo (1x4 arcminutes) with a star-like nucleus. It displays two distinctive stars, an 11th-magnitude star

on its northeast end, with another a similar distance due west of its centre.

Move 3' east to discover impressive double star 41 Aquarii (RA 22h 14.3m, Dec -21° 05'). The two components are mag. -5.6 and +6.7, just 5 arcseconds apart. Both should be visible with reasonable seeing and magnification (150x). The real attraction of this double is the colour contrast, one yellow and the other blue.

Chart key

GALAXY	DIFFUSE NEBULOSITY	ASTEROID TRACK	STAR BRIGHTNESS: MAG. 0 & BRIGHTER
OPEN CLUSTER	DOUBLE STAR	METEOR RADIANT	MAG. +1
GLOBULAR CLUSTER	VARIABLE STAR	QUASAR	MAG. +2
PLANETARY NEBULA	COMET TRACK	PLANET	MAG. +3
			MAG. +4 & FAINTER

