

THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE



With Glenn Dawes

Catch the Super Blue Moon, take a tour of Aquila and welcome Venus back to the morning skies

When to use this chart

1 Aug at 00:00 AEST (14:00 UT)
15 Aug at 23:00 AEST (13:00 UT)
31 Aug 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.

AUGUST HIGHLIGHTS

We've all heard the phrase 'once in a Blue Moon'. This name is given to a second full Moon in any month. It's not so rare, happening every two to three years. August has a Blue Moon, with both full Moons also being supermoons. A loose definition would be when the Moon is full within roughly one day of being closest to Earth (perihelion). This isn't so infrequent, happening around four times a year. Both events occurring together, well... it makes good trivia, if nothing else!

STARS AND CONSTELLATIONS

The Milky Way's centre lies in the direction of the spout star of Sagittarius's Teapot, hidden behind the dark nebulae which surround our Galactic equator. A dark silhouette gives us the 'pipe nebulae', but the bright clearings in this veil also create Sagittarius's Large and Small Star Clouds. The 'large' is best described as a cloud of steam rising from the spout. The 'small' is further north, appearing as a small island (among others) in this river of darkness.

THE PLANETS

Saturn reaches opposition, arriving around sunset and visible all night. Neptune follows about 2 hours later, rising around 20:00 mid-month. Mars and Mercury travel together low in the early western evening sky before Mercury drops

away into the twilight towards solar conjunction next month. Jupiter and Uranus appear around midnight with both transiting (due north) just before sunrise. Rising out of the dawn glow, Venus makes its return to the morning sky this month.

DEEP-SKY OBJECTS

This month, a trip to Aquila the Eagle. Starting at Altair (Alpha (α) Aquilae), move 12' west-northwest and find third-magnitude Zeta (ζ) Aquilae. Travelling a further 1.5' west brings you to the double star 11 Aquilae (RA 18h 59.1m, dec. +13° 37'). A telescope shows this colourful pair has components of +5.3 and +9.0 magnitude which are yellow and blue respectively, separated by a comfortable 19 arcseconds.

As Aquila straddles the Milky Way, star-rich regions are abundant. One contains mag. +6.6 open cluster NGC 6709 (RA 18h 51.3m, dec. +10° 19'), 4' southwest of 11 Aquilae. This contains 60 or so stars from ninth to 11th magnitude, visible as a hazy patch through binoculars. Arranged in a triangular shape about 0.2' across, the stars form lines with a distinctive pair of ninth-magnitude yellow and blue stars on the western edge.

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

