

The Sky This Month

12 December 2023 – 15 January 2024



What's On

Thursday, 14 December 2023 @ 01:00

1. Geminids

The Geminids meteor shower reaches its maximum activity on the night of 14–15 December. Known for being one of the most reliable major showers, the Geminids consistently put on a show year after year. From our location, the number of visible meteors will be highest at 1am. Expect to see about 16 meteors per hour. At that time the shower's radiant will be 67° above the south-eastern horizon.

Sunday, 17 December 2023 @ 19:43

2. Moon & Saturn



Keep watch after sunset on 17 December to see a close encounter between Saturn and the waxing crescent moon. At 19:43, the pair will be visible 10° above the south-western horizon, passing within only 3.99° each other in the constellation Aquarius.

Friday, 22 December 2023 @ 16:35

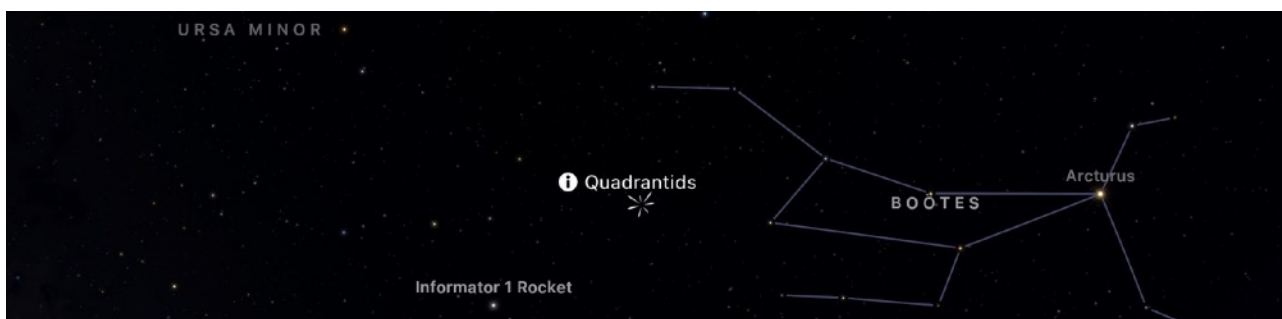
3. Moon & Jupiter



Keep watch after sunset on 22 December to see a close encounter between Jupiter and the waxing gibbous moon. At 16:35, the pair will be visible 31° above the eastern horizon, passing within only 2.67° each other in the constellation Aries.

Thursday, 04 January 2024 @ 07:00

4. Quadrantids



The Quadrantids meteor shower reaches its maximum activity on the night of 3–4 January. This shower can be intense, but the peak meteor rates last only a short time compared to other showers. From our location, the number of meteors will be highest at 7am expect to see about 18 meteors per hour.

Friday, 12 January 2024

5. Best morning to see Mercury

The planet Mercury reaches its greatest western elongation of 24° on 12 January. Mornings within about a week of this time will be your best opportunities to view the magnitude -0.3 planet in the predawn sky.

Sunday, 14 January 2024

6. Moon & Saturn

Keep watch after sunset on 14 January to see a close encounter between Saturn and the waxing crescent moon. At 17:00 the pair will be visible 21° above the south-western horizon, passing within only 3.70° each other in the constellation Aquarius.

Constellation of the month:

7. Monoceros

Monoceros, the Unicorn constellation, is located near the celestial equator, making it visible from a variety of locations, including Manchester, UK. While Monoceros itself doesn't host many bright stars, it contains several interesting deep-sky objects that can be observed with binoculars or a telescope.

8. NGC 2237 – The Rosette Nebula

This is a large star-forming region located in the constellation Monoceros. Smaller telescopes and binoculars will reveal the nebula on very clear nights. NGC 2244 is an open cluster of stars at the centre of the Rosette Nebula, which is a large, circular ionised hydrogen region. The nebula is illuminated by the energy of the young, hot stars within the cluster.

9. NGC 2264 – The Christmas Tree Cluster

This is another star-forming region in Monoceros. The Cone Nebula is a dark nebula, and the Christmas Tree Cluster is an open cluster of stars. Together, they form a visually interesting and photogenic region. The intricate details become more apparent with long-exposure astrophotography.

10. NGC 2261 – Hubble's Variable Nebula

Hubble's Variable Nebula is a reflection nebula that changes in brightness and appearance over time. Observing it regularly can reveal subtle variations in its structure.

11. M50 – Heart-shaped Cluster

This beautiful open cluster, lying slightly more than one third of the way from Sirius to Procyon, is easy to find. Some of the cluster's stars are arranged in arcs.