



## The Night Sky in March

The March night sky is one of the best times to take up stargazing for the first time. In short, it is a time when the brightest stars in the sky can be seen conveniently early in the evening, not long after the sun has set and the twilight dwindles into dusk.

The first thing you will notice in the sky, looking west after sundown, are two bright, star-like objects, not too far apart. The brighter object, is the planet Venus, visible as a crescent through binoculars. Less bright is the planet Jupiter which will appear as a tiny disc, if magnified. You may even be able to see its brightest moons through binoculars; three or four minute, pale dots, visible close to Jupiter.

Once the sky gets darker, you will then get the full treat of seeing the bold, bright winter constellations in the southern sky with all of their glorious stars. The main highlights, as you can see from the star map are Orion with his belt and brightest stars, the orange Betelgeuse and bright blue Rigel. Sirius, the Dog Star, the brightest star anywhere in the sky, shines majestically, low in the southern sky at the heels of Orion. Taurus the Bull, Gemini the Twins, Auriga the Charioteer, Canis Minor and all their bright stars all link together to create a wonderful show, along with various Galaxies and Nebula and even the Milky Way, when the sky gets even darker. A further treat, lurking amongst the stars of Taurus is the distinctly red planet Mars, a similar colour to Aldebaran, the eye of the bull.

With the Spring (Vernal) Equinox on Monday March 20<sup>th</sup> and clocks going forward the night of 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> March, the first three weeks of March are the best and last time to see these amazing stars before next winter as the skies become lighter earlier.

The moon makes its path in the sky and is full on the 7<sup>th</sup> March, rising as the sun sets. The New Moon, not seen in the Night Sky is on March 21<sup>st</sup>.

Don't forget to keep finding The Plough in The Great Bear directing you towards the North Star in The Little Bear.

Happy Stargazing!

Mr Bates