The Night Sky

# January 2018

## MOON & PLANETS

Bright white Jupiter and dim red Mars form a nice pair rising well before first light in the morning sky. Mercury is visible low in the dawn sky in the southeast. Just before mid-month Saturn emerges from the bright twilight and joins Mercury. Before month’s end, Mercury disappears into the twilight and Jupiter rises earlier, pulling away from Mars. The crescent Moon is to the upper left of Jupiter and Mars on the 11th. It is located far to the upper right of the very low Mercury/Saturn pair on the 13th. There will be a total lunar eclipse on the morning of the 31st, however it will be best seen from Alaska and Hawaii. From the U.P., we will only see a portion of the eclipse before the Moon sets and the Sun rises. The full Moon will be low in the west against a dark sky when it starts to enter the Earth’s shadow at 6:48 a.m. The Moon moves deeper into the shadow and sinks lower toward the horizon as the sky brightens with sunrise approaching. The Moon will be in totality for about 30 minutes before it sets around 8:20 a.m.

### STARS & CONSTELLATIONS

The most famous winter constellation is Orion the Hunter. Only the Big Dipper in Ursa Major could be considered just as recognizable. However, the Big Dipper can only be seen from mostly the Northern Hemisphere. Orion, due to its location on the celestial equator, is visible from just about everywhere on the planet. Orion contains two first, five second and two third magnitude stars compared to the Dipper’s six second and one third. Spotting Orion in January is easy. Look for three evenly spaced stars in a vertical row rising almost due east as twilight ends. This distinct threesome is the well-known Belt of Orion. Orion climbs fairly high into the south by 11 p.m., with the white giant star Rigel to the Belt’s lower right and red giant Betelgeuse to its upper left.

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