

# MARCH 2023

9:00 pm CST on March 1  
 9:00 pm CDT on March 15  
 8:00 pm CDT on April 1



**To use this chart:** hold the chart in front of you and turn it so the direction you are facing is at the bottom of the chart.

- **Bright Stars**
- **Medium Bright Stars**
- **Faint Stars**

**Scan dark skies with binoculars:**

- M-42: The Great Orion Nebula
- M-44: The Beehive Cluster
- M-45: The Pleiades star cluster
- The Double Cluster in Perseus

Spring begins on March 20!  
 The days have been getting longer ever since the first day of winter, and will continue to lengthen until the first day of summer, June 21.

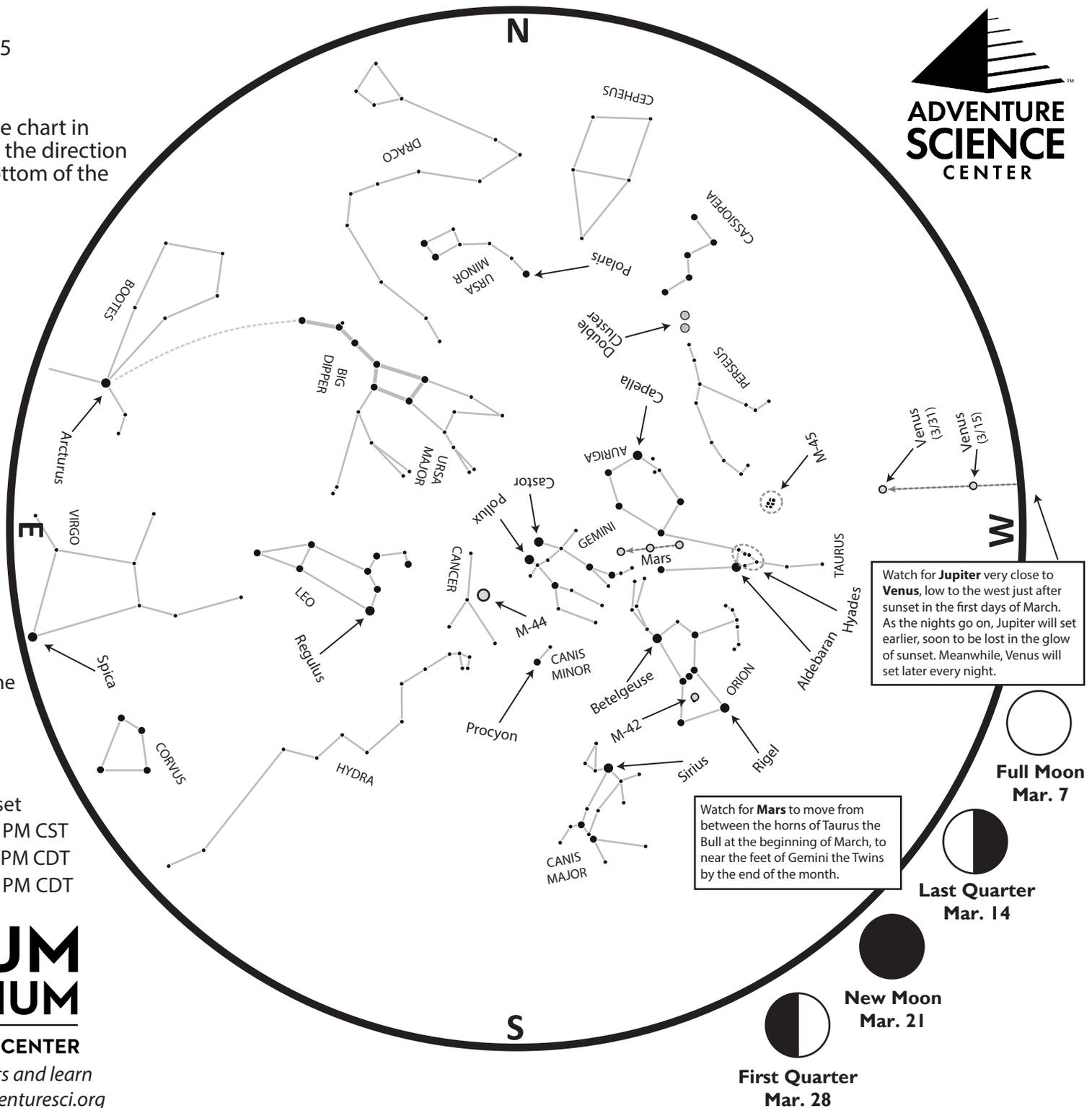
From Nashville:

	Sunrise	Sunset
Mar 1	6:18 AM CST	5:41 PM CST
Mar 15	6:59 AM CDT	6:54 PM CDT
Apr 1	6:34 AM CDT	7:08 PM CDT

## SUDEKUM PLANETARIUM

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Watch for **Jupiter** very close to **Venus**, low to the west just after sunset in the first days of March. As the nights go on, Jupiter will set earlier, soon to be lost in the glow of sunset. Meanwhile, Venus will set later every night.

Watch for **Mars** to move from between the horns of Taurus the Bull at the beginning of March, to near the feet of Gemini the Twins by the end of the month.

Full Moon  
Mar. 7

Last Quarter  
Mar. 14

New Moon  
Mar. 21

First Quarter  
Mar. 28

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### After Sunset

For the past several weeks, we've watched **Venus** approach **Jupiter** to the west just after sunset. On March 1 these two brilliant planets appear extremely close to each other. Look as soon as the sky begins to get dark, because both planets will set by 8pm. As March continues, the two planets will drift apart from each other - Jupiter setting earlier, and Venus setting later. Jupiter will become increasingly difficult to see, getting lost in the glow of sunset by the end of the month. If you have a clear, low horizon and cloudless skies to the west, look for an extremely thin crescent Moon near Jupiter on the evening of the 22nd.

Look high in the south for the red planet **Mars**. It's almost directly overhead in the early evening. A first quarter Moon visits Mars on the evening of March 27.

During the autumn and winter, the **Big Dipper** was buried low to the northern horizon until the wee hours of the morning. As we head towards springtime, it's getting easier to find in the early evening. We can use the stars of the Big Dipper to help us find **Polaris**, the **North Star**. Use the two stars at the end of the bowl of the Dipper to point you to Polaris. When you face Polaris, you're facing due north.

Polaris is at the end of the handle of the **Little Dipper**. This group of stars is officially known as **Ursa Minor the Little Bear**. The Big Dipper is just a part of the constellation **Ursa Major the Great Bear**.

Imagine poking a hole in the bottom of the Dipper's bowl. Where does the water fall? Onto the back of **Leo the Lion**. Look for a backwards question-mark shape representing the head of the lion. The point at the bottom of the question mark is **Regulus**, the regal heart of the lion.

Follow the curved handle of the Big Dipper to trace the 'arc' to **Arcturus**, the orange colored star in **Boötes the Herdsman**. Then speed on to **Spica**, the single bright star in **Virgo the Maiden** low in the southeast. Neither of these constellations has any other bright stars.

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Look to the northwest for a group of five stars known as **Cassiopeia the Queen**. This group of stars can also help you find the North Star. The central peak of Cassiopeia's W-shape also points you in the direction of Polaris.

High in the southwest you can find the bright stars of the winter evening sky. The most famous and easily found constellation is **Orion the Hunter**. Look for the three stars in a straight line that mark his belt, the two stars that mark his shoulders, and the two stars of his feet. **Betelgeuse**, one of his shoulder stars, is distinctly red in color.

Learn to find Orion, and he can direct you to many other sights of the winter sky. Follow the belt stars up and to the right to find a "V"-shaped group of stars. At one end of the V-shape is a bright orange-red star called **Aldebaran**. The rest of the stars are part of a cluster called the **Hyades**. Aldebaran is not part of the Hyades itself. It just happens to sit in front of the star cluster, lining up in just the right spot. Together, Aldebaran and the Hyades mark the face of **Taurus the Bull**.

Look just past Aldebaran and you may see a grouping of stars called **M-45**, or the **Pleiades Star Cluster**. While your eyes alone may just see six or seven stars in this cluster, a pair of binoculars will reveal dozens of stars.

Follow Orion's belt down and to the left for the brightest star in the night sky, **Sirius**, in **Canis Major the Big Dog**.

Draw a line from Orion's blue-colored foot **Rigel** up through Betelgeuse, and keep on going until you run into **Gemini the Twins**. The bright stars **Castor** and **Pollux** mark the heads of the twins. Under dark skies you may just be able to pick out two stick-figure bodies leading back towards Orion.

Other bright stars to look for this month are **Capella** in **Auriga the Charioteer**, and **Procyon** in **Canis Minor the Small Dog**.

Don't mistake red stars Betelgeuse or Aldebaran for Mars! A good rule to tell the difference: planets usually don't twinkle like stars! Mars starts the March between the horns of Taurus, but heads towards Gemini through the month.

### From Dark Skies

Bright outdoor lighting can make it hard to see all but the brightest stars. On a clear night, find a dark spot far away from city lights, give your eyes time to adjust to the dark, and look for even more celestial sights. You can begin by looking for the fainter stars of the season's constellations. The faint stars of Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, Boötes, and **Perseus** become easier to spot.

Even under dark skies, the stars of **Cancer the Crab** can be a challenge to see. Look for a faint upside-down Y shape of stars between Leo and Gemini. Near the center point of the Y is **M-44**,

the **Beehive Cluster**, a pretty **open star cluster** best seen with binoculars or a small telescope.

Winter evenings are great for spotting the **Milky Way**, coursing from the south, high overhead through Cassiopeia, and on towards the northwest horizon.

Just beneath the belt of Orion is a faint patch of light that marks the hunter's sword. This is **M-42**, the **Great Orion Nebula**. A small telescope can reveal the overall shape of the nebula. Also visible in telescopes is a quartet of young stars near the center called the **Trapezium**. These young stars formed out of the gas and dust of the nebula.

### Early Morning

As Earth orbits the Sun throughout the year, the constellations rise and set just a little bit earlier every day. You won't see much difference from night to night, but you will over the course of weeks or months. What we see in today's pre-dawn sky is a preview of the early evening sky in later months. Go out before dawn this month for a look ahead at the summer night sky.

Just before dawn, our winter constellations have set in the west. The Big Dipper is high in the northwest. Meanwhile, the three bright stars of the **Summer Triangle** are high in the east. By summertime, they'll be rising as the sun sets in the evening.

Before you set your alarm for the wee hours of the morning, consider planning out your observing. Desktop planetarium software like the free, open-source Stellarium (stellarium.org) can show you more precisely where night sky objects can be found on any date and time, and help you plan ahead.

### Watch the Clock

For most of the United States, **Daylight Saving Time** begins at 2:00 am the morning of Sunday, March 12, 2023. Be sure to set your clocks forward one hour before going to bed. Another date to watch for is the first day of spring! The **Spring Equinox** is on Monday, March 20, 2023.

### This Month in the Sudekum Planetarium

S P A C E  
E X P L O R E R S  
T H E I S S E X P E R I E N C E  
E P I S O D E 2 : A D V A N C E

**INCOMING!** **NIGHTWATCH**