



Evening sky in FEBRUARY 2012

High above the northern horizon is the constellation of Orion, the Hunter, with three bright stars forming his belt. The western-most and faintest star of Orion's Belt is Mintaka, 915 light years away. In reality it constitutes 2 stars: a large blue giant as well as a more massive white star. Eastern-most is Alnitak, a triple star system with a hot blue supergiant primary star, 800 light years away. The middle star is a blue supergiant, Alnilam, almost twice as far as the other two, but so luminous that it appears equally bright.

Above the south-eastern horizon the Southern Cross, Crux, is lying on its side. Find South by extending a line from the top to the bottom of the Cross four and a half times its own length, to reach a point in the sky that is right above the South Pole. Below the Cross are the two Pointers (Alpha and Beta Centauri) "pointing" to the top of the Cross. Higher up is the larger False Cross, part of two constellations - Carina (Keel) and Vela (Sail) of the ship, Argo.

Planet Venus is in the constellation of Pisces and Jupiter is in Aries.

The Moon is in the evening sky until 9 February and again from 24 February.