



Evening sky in January 2017

On summer evenings the well-known constellation of Orion, the Hunter, is a delight to explore. A line of three bright stars above the north-eastern horizon is called Orion's Belt. Other names include Three Kings or Three Sisters. The names of the individual stars are from east to west, Alnitak, Alnilam and Mintaka. From the Southern Hemisphere Orion is seen upside down, so Rigel and Saiph, the two bright stars above the Belt, serve as his feet and Betelgeuse and Bellatrix below, as his shoulders. These bright stars in Orion are among the most distant stars that can easily be seen with the naked eye. Above the belt is Orion's sword, containing the Orion Nebula. The naked eye can see that it is something other than a star, but binoculars and telescopes will reveal newly formed stars and clouds of gas and dust.

Planet Venus is the brilliant Evening Star in the west after sunset. A little higher is reddish planet Mars. Together with the crescent Moon, they form beautiful groupings at the beginning and end of the month. Both planets start the month in Aquarius and finish it in Pisces.

The Moon is in the early evening sky until 13 January and again from 28 January.