



Evening sky in March 2018

Halfway above the south-eastern horizon we find the Southern Cross (Crux). It appears on its side with the two Pointers below and in line with the top star of the Cross. Higher up is the second-brightest star in the night-time sky, Canopus, known as *uCansibe* in Xhosa. It is 310 light years from Earth. No star closer than Canopus is more luminous. The brightest star in the night-time sky is Sirius, “only” about 8.6 light years distant.

Planet Mercury is visible until late March low in the west shortly after sunset but may be difficult to find. Close by and outshining Mercury is planet Venus which will be visible as the bright Evening Star until late October. Towards the end of the month planet Jupiter makes its appearance in the evening sky, rising in the east.

Full Moon occurs on 2 March and again on 31 March. The second Full Moon in a calendar month has popularly become known as a Blue Moon.

Earth Hour (<https://www.earthhour.org/>) is on 24 March between 20h30 and 21h30. To demonstrate the need for climate change action, people all over Earth switch off all lights for an hour, presenting city dwellers with an excellent opportunity to observe the stars in dark sky conditions.