



STARRY TRAILS

APRIL 2026

Dazzling Venus appears just after sunset in the western sky. As the skies continue to darken, look for the stars of Taurus, the Bull and the Pleiades star cluster, just above Venus. On April 18, the very slender crescent Moon, will be six degrees from Venus with the Pleiades just above Venus. On April 19, the crescent Moon will be above the Pleiades and Venus (Illustration 1). Both evenings will be a lovely sight! Be sure to view earthshine, the faint glow on the unlit portion of the crescent Moon, caused by Earth's reflected light.

Brilliant Jupiter shines high in the western sky. It continues to close in on Venus. On April 1 the two brightest planets will be 73 degrees apart and 41 degrees apart on April 30 (Illustration 2). Jupiter sets around 3:00 am and is a beautiful telescope target, along with the four Galilean Moons. Binocular views are also enjoyable. As you focus on Jupiter you will see pinpoints of light, by the king of the planets, which are the Galilean moons. The waxing crescent Moon pairs with Jupiter on April 22.

Time to get out and enjoy a clear spring night! Our sun sets later now, so our hike will begin around 9:00 pm. You may still need to grab your jacket, hat and gloves. Don't forget your Starry Trail Map and binoculars. Take a minute to listen to the sounds of spring peepers filling the air! It is time to say farewell to the magnificent Hunter, Orion. Orion will return to our night sky once again in early winter.

Let's meet up one last time with Orion. Orion will be our guide as we start out in the west or direction of the sunset. There you will see Orion's magnificent star pattern. The three stars in a row make up the belt of Orion. The bright red-orange star up and to the left of the belt is Betelgeuse. The bright blue-white star down and to the right of the belt is Rigel. Now with your binoculars scan just below the belt. You will notice a small fuzzy area. That is the Orion Nebula(M42). New stars are forming in that hydrogen gas cloud! We call this a stellar nursery. Trek down and to the left from Orion's Belt. One last visit with Orion's friend Sirius, the Dog Star, the brightest star in our night sky! Farewell until early winter.

Hike back to Orion. Trek to the right and you will see a bright red-orange star, Aldebaran, the eye of Taurus, the Bull. Further to the right you will find the beautiful star cluster, Pleiades or the Seven Sisters. One last view of our lovely sisters until fall. Making a counterclockwise loop up, the next bright star is Capella. Look left to the two stars that look almost the same. These are Gemini, the Twins. Loop down to the bright star, Procyon (Illustration 3).

Journey to the opposite part of the sky, or north. You will see the Big Dipper, high overhead, pouring water out of the cup like the spring rains! Take the two stars at the end of the cup and draw an imaginary line to the next bright star. You have reached the North Star! The North Star, or Polaris, is at the end of the handle of the Little Dipper. Queen Cassiopeia, the sideways w-shape, is very low in the north (Illustration 4). Hike back to the Big Dipper. Take the flat part of the cup and look slowly overhead to the shape of a backwards question mark. This is the head of Leo, the Lion. How about a challenge? Take your binoculars and scan to the left of Leo, almost to Gemini, the Twins. Do you see the beautiful Beehive Star Cluster (M44)?

For the last part of our hike, turn right or east. The bright yellow - orange star is Arcturus. Look down and to the right of Arcturus and you will see a blue star, Spica, in the constellation Virgo (Illustration 5). Virgo hosts the sky's richest zone of galaxies. Great telescope viewing!

**Next Month: Jupiter & Venus continue to get closer! The greatest and strongest hero, Hercules, returns!
Take one last deep breath of fresh spring air and head inside. So glad spring is here!**

Highlights

April 1 – Full Moon. According to folklore, it is called the Pink Moon or the Egg Moon.

April 10 – Last Quarter Moon.

April 17 – New Moon.

April 19 – The slender crescent Moon passes north of Venus after sunset.

April 22 – The Moon passes north of Jupiter.

April 22 – Lyrid Meteor Shower peaks.

April 23 – First Quarter Moon.

April 25 – International Astronomy Day.

Brightest Stars: West – Sirius, Betelgeuse, Rigel, Aldebaran, Procyon, Capella, Castor, Pollux. **Overhead** – Regulus. **East** – Arcturus, Spica.

Binocular Highlights: The Moon, Jupiter, Venus, Pleiades, Orion Nebula M42, Beehive Cluster M44, Deep sky objects around Capella (M36, 37, 38).

Telescope Highlights: The Moon, Venus, Jupiter, M51, M42, M44, M81, M82, M35, 36, 37, 38 (near Capella).

Starry Trails is a fun & easy way to explore the night sky as it appears from your backyard! Journey over to **StarryTrails.com** & get everything you need to navigate the night sky from sky maps, illustrations, even audio and video versions of Starry Trails!

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Night Sky Illustrations created by Suzie Dills using Starry Night Backyard & Stellarium.

Illustrations courtesy of Cassandra Dills.