

STARRY TRAILS

NOVEMBER 2026

November evenings open with golden colored Saturn in the east, southeastern sky after sunset. (Illustration 1). The planet highlight for November will be the close pairing of Mars and Jupiter. Both planets rise together in the constellation Leo, the Lion. On November 1, Mars rises around midnight and Jupiter rises thirty minutes later. Jupiter is brilliant and Mars has a red, orange color. This fabulous pairing will be easy to spot. Regulus, the brightest star in Leo will be near the duo. Each night, Mars and Jupiter will continue to close in on each other. Then on November 15, the pair will be one degree apart! After November 15, Jupiter will climb higher as Mars heads east and brightens by month's end (Illustration2).

Once we have changed our clocks to Eastern Standard Time, it will be great to go outside and enjoy an evening of stargazing right after dinner! The evenings are getting colder, so we will need to put on our winter coats, gloves, hats and maybe boots.

We will begin our hike at 7:00 pm. Grab your Starry Trail map and binoculars and let's go! Face west, or where the sun sets, and you will see a bright star, Vega. Now trek left to another bright star which is Altair. Now trace up and to the right to Deneb. If you connect these three stars you have made the Summer Triangle. Great! Running through the Summer Triangle is our Milky Way galaxy! Take your binoculars and scan through that part of the sky. Look at all those stars! Even if you cannot view the Milky Way, due to light pollution, you can still see so many stars with your binoculars!

Hike back to Deneb. Imagine this to be the tail of Cygnus, the Swan. Below Deneb, you will see three stars in a line. Those make up the wings. You should also be able to see the long neck and head of the swan extending from the wings. The head of the swan would be to the left of Vega. This star, Albireo, is a beautiful double star through a telescope (Illustration 3).

Now look directly overhead and you will see four stars that make a square. This is the Great Square of Pegasus. Turn to the right, which is direction north. You will see a group of stars that are in the shape of a "W". This is the constellation, Cassiopeia. Grab your binoculars again. From the top point of the W shape, scan slowly up and to the right (about halfway to Pegasus). Do you see a fuzzy circular object? That is the Andromeda Galaxy (M31). It is 2.5 million light years away! Find the bottom point of the W. Scan once again to the right and down slightly. You will come upon the Double Cluster in Perseus.

Journey down to the northern horizon and you will find the Big Dipper. By the way, look at the second star in the handle, with binoculars. It is a double star! Head down to the cup of the Big Dipper. 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 is at the end of the handle of the Little Dipper (Illustration 4).

Our last stop is direction east. Turn to the right once more. I saved the best part for last! Look straight ahead. Do you see a small cluster of stars? This cluster is the Pleiades or the Seven Sisters. The Pleiades has to be my favorite group of stars to gaze at through my binoculars (Illustration 5). Take a look! Spectacular! Below the Pleiades is a red, orange star, Aldebaran. Aldebaran is part of the constellation, Taurus, the Bull. Look slightly left at another bright star which is Capella.

Head inside where it is warm. Next month, the return of our most magnificent picture in the sky!

Highlights:
November 1 – Last Quarter Moon.
November 1 - Daylight Savings time ends at 2 am.
November 2 – The Moon passes south of Jupiter & Mars after midnight.
November 7 – The slender crescent Moon passes south of Venus in the predawn sky.
November 9 – New Moon.
November 15 – Mars & Jupiter will be one degree apart, after midnight, in the constellation Leo, the Lion.
November 17 - Leonid Meteor Shower peaks. The First Quarter Moon sets at midnight.
November 17 – First Quarter Moon.
November 20 – The Moon passes north of Saturn.
November 24 – Full Moon. According to folklore it is the Full Beaver Moon.
November 29 – Venus at its greatest brilliancy in the predawn sky.
November 30 - The Moon passes south of Jupiter & Mars after midnight.

Brightest Stars: West: Vega, Deneb, Altair **South:** Fomalhaut **Northeast:** Capella **East:** Aldebaran

Binocular Highlights: The Moon, Milky Way from Cassiopeia through the Summer Triangle, Andromeda Galaxy M31, Double Cluster (NGC 869&884), Pleiades.

Telescope Highlights: The Moon, Saturn, Albireo,
M31, M39, M1, M2, M27, M57, M15, M11, M81, M82, M 36, 37, 38 (near Capella), NGC869 & 864.

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