



Sun, Planets and Transitions

The **Sun** will be in Aquarius, the Water Bearer (*Kumbha*) on 1 March. Its angular diameter will be 32'17.3". It will move to Pisces, the Fishes (*Meena*), on 12 March. On 31 March, the angular size of the Sun will decrease to 32'1.7".

The vernal equinox will be on 20 March at 8:16 p.m. Indian time. On this day, the Earth's axis will be perpendicular to the solar rays.

Mercury will be in Pisces on 1 March. It will move to Aquarius on 10 March. After its glorious appearance over the western horizon in February, it closes in on the Sun and will shortly go behind the latter. It will be in inferior conjunction on 7 March. By the end of the month, it will return above the eastern horizon.

Ephemeris of Mercury:

Date	Alt*	Diam''	Mag	El°
20 Mar	+05° 29'	9.9	1.3	20.9 W
30 Mar	+10° 27'	8.3	0.5	27.2 W

Venus is back in the evening sky. We have provided a map showing its positions and angular size. Note that in order to depict the phases, we have used a different scale than for plotting the track. Above the western horizon, it moves rapidly northeast, then moves southwards. By the third week of June, it will reach its maximum altitude above the western horizon. After that, its altitude begins to decrease.

Venus moves from Aquarius to Pisces on 2 March. It moves within the boundary of Cetus, the Whale (*Timingal*), from 12 to 14 March, and then back into Pisces; and then to Aries, the Ram (*Mesha*) on 30 March.

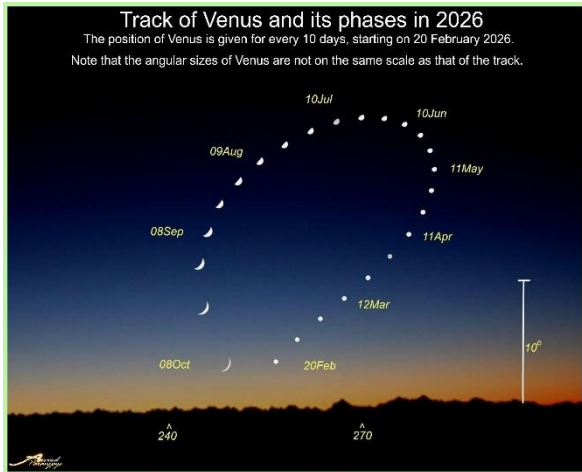
On 8 March, Venus will pass less than a degree north of Saturn.

List of Events in March 2026 (Time in IST)

Dt	Dy	Time	Event
01	Su	17:11	Moon-Beehive: 1.3° S
01	Su	01:37	Moon-Beehive: 1.3° S
02	Mo	17:30	Moon-Regulus: 0.4° S
03	Tu	10:05	Moon descending node
03	Tu	17:05	Total lunar eclipse
03	Tu	17:08	Full Moon
06	Fr	22:54	Moon-Spica: 2° N
07	Sa	16:31	Mercury inferior conjunction
07	Sa	16:56	Venus-Neptune: 0.1° N
08	Su	18:45	Venus-Saturn: 0.9°
10	Tu	17:02	Moon-Antares: 0.8° N
10	Tu	19:13	Moon apogee: 404400 km
11	We	08:14	Jupiter stationary in RA
12	Th	02:42	Moon south declination: 28.4° S
16	Mo	00:43	Mercury-Mars: 3.4° N
17	Tu	20:52	Moon ascending node
17	Tu	21:14	Mercury 1.7° N of Moon
18	We	02:01	Mars 1.4° S of Moon
19	Th	06:53	New Moon
20	Fr	18:09	Moon-Venus: 4.7° S
20	Fr	20:16	Vernal equinox
22	Su	15:46	Neptune conjunction
22	Su	17:10	Moon perigee: 366900 km
23	Mo	14:02	Moon-Pleiades: 1.1° S
25	We	10:16	Moon north declination: 28.4° N
25	We	13:57	Saturn conjunction
26	Th	00:48	First Quarter
26	Th	17:43	Moon-Jupiter: 4° S
28	Sa	07:45	Moon-Beehive: 1.3° S
30	Mo	00:30	Moon-Regulus: 0.4° S
30	Mo	17:04	Moon Descending Node

Ephemeris of Venus:

Date	Alt*	Diam''	Mag	El°
01 Mar	+05°05'	10.1	-3.9	13.0 E
10 Mar	+07°49'	10.2	-3.9	15.2 E
20 Mar	+10°49'	10.4	-3.9	17.6 E
30 Mar	+13°48'	10.6	-3.9	20.0 E



Mars remains in Aquarius this month; the Sun too is in Aquarius. Mars will be too close to the Sun to observe in the first half of the month. It will re-appear above the eastern horizon at dawn. By the third week of March, its elongation will exceed about 15° W. However, around this time, the angle subtended by the ecliptic on the horizon will be too steep for mid-northern latitudes and above, and the planet's altitude rises too slowly.

Ephemeris of Mars:

Date	Alt*	Diam''	Mag	EI°
20 Mar	+00°26'	4.05	1.2	15.7 W
30 Mar	+03°37'	4.07	1.2	17.8 W

Jupiter remains in Gemini, the Twins (*Mithuna*). It is still in the eastern sky at sunset. Jupiter has been in retrograde motion. On 11 March, it will be stationary, and after that it will resume its prograde motion.

Ephemeris of Jupiter:

Date	Alt*	Diam''	Mag	EI°
01 Mar	+63°30'	42.7	-2.4	124.2 E
10 Mar	+71°46'	41.6	-2.4	115.1 E
20 Mar	+80°23'	40.3	-2.3	105.3 E
30 Mar	+86°03'	39.0	-2.2	95.8 E

Saturn remains in Pisces. The angular separation between Saturn and the Sun is decreasing. By the end of the first week of March, it will be too close to the Sun for us to locate. Saturn's conjunction will take place on 25 March at 2 p.m. Indian time. At this time, the planet will be almost exactly on the opposite side of the Sun.

Ephemeris of Saturn:

Date	Alt*	Diam''	Mag	EI°
01 Mar	+12°54'	15.9	1.0	20.9 E
10 Mar	+05°42'	15.8	1.0	13.1 E

* Altitudes of a planet are given for the beginning of civil twilight if the planet is to the west of the Sun, or for the end of civil twilight if the planet is to the east of the Sun.

(Disclaimer: We categorically mention here that we do not believe in astrology and believe that the only influence a planet has on us is to give us the viewing pleasure of its beauty. The sole purpose of giving the transition of planets and the Sun is to acquaint the reader with the Indian nomenclature of planets and constellations and also to show that the actual positions of the Sun and planets, which are based on modern computing, are very different from those given in astrology tables.)

March of the Moon

On 1 March, the Moon will pass less than 1.5° south of the Beehive cluster. It will be nearly 92% illuminated. Beehive is an open cluster and is visible to the naked eye under clear skies. It is called *Pushya nakshtra* in Indian astronomy. On 2 March, the Moon will pass less than half a degree from Regulus (*Magha*).

On 3 March, it will be at the descending node of its orbit. This point is called *Ketu* in Indian astronomy.



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Note: A lunar eclipse takes place when the Full Moon is at its descending or ascending node.

A total lunar eclipse will take place on 3 March. The entire eclipse will not be visible from India. However, from the far eastern locations, one can observe the end of totality. At Guwahati, at the end of totality, the rising Moon will be about 2° above the horizon, and it will be nearly 18° when the Moon leaves the umbra.

On 6 March, the Moon passes 2° north of Spica (*Chitra*). If you take an early morning walk the

next day, on 7 March, you can see the Moon and Spica above the western horizon. On 10 March, the Moon can be seen passing through the southern claw of Scorpius, the Scorpion (*Vrushchika*).

On 20 March, the Moon passes less than 5° north of Venus. This could be a good photo opportunity. Then on 26 March, it can be seen passing south of Jupiter. Two days later, the Moon will be south of the Beehive cluster (*Pushya nakshtra*). On 30 March, the Moon can be seen west of Regulus (*Magha*).

Events Involving the Moons of Jupiter

In the table below, we list the events visible from India. The table gives the timings of eclipses, occultations, transits and shadow transits of the moons of Jupiter, suitable for Indian observers. The timings are given in Indian Standard Time (IST).

The output is given as per the following abbreviations and notations:

Columns: 1 = date; 2 = time; and 3 = satellite number.event type.phase.

Satellite numbers: 1 = Io; 2 = Europa; 3 = Ganymede; and 4 = Callisto.

Event type: Ec = eclipse; Oc = occultation;

Tr = transit; and Sh = shadow transit.

Phase: D = disappear; R = reappear; I = ingress; and E = egress.

Example:

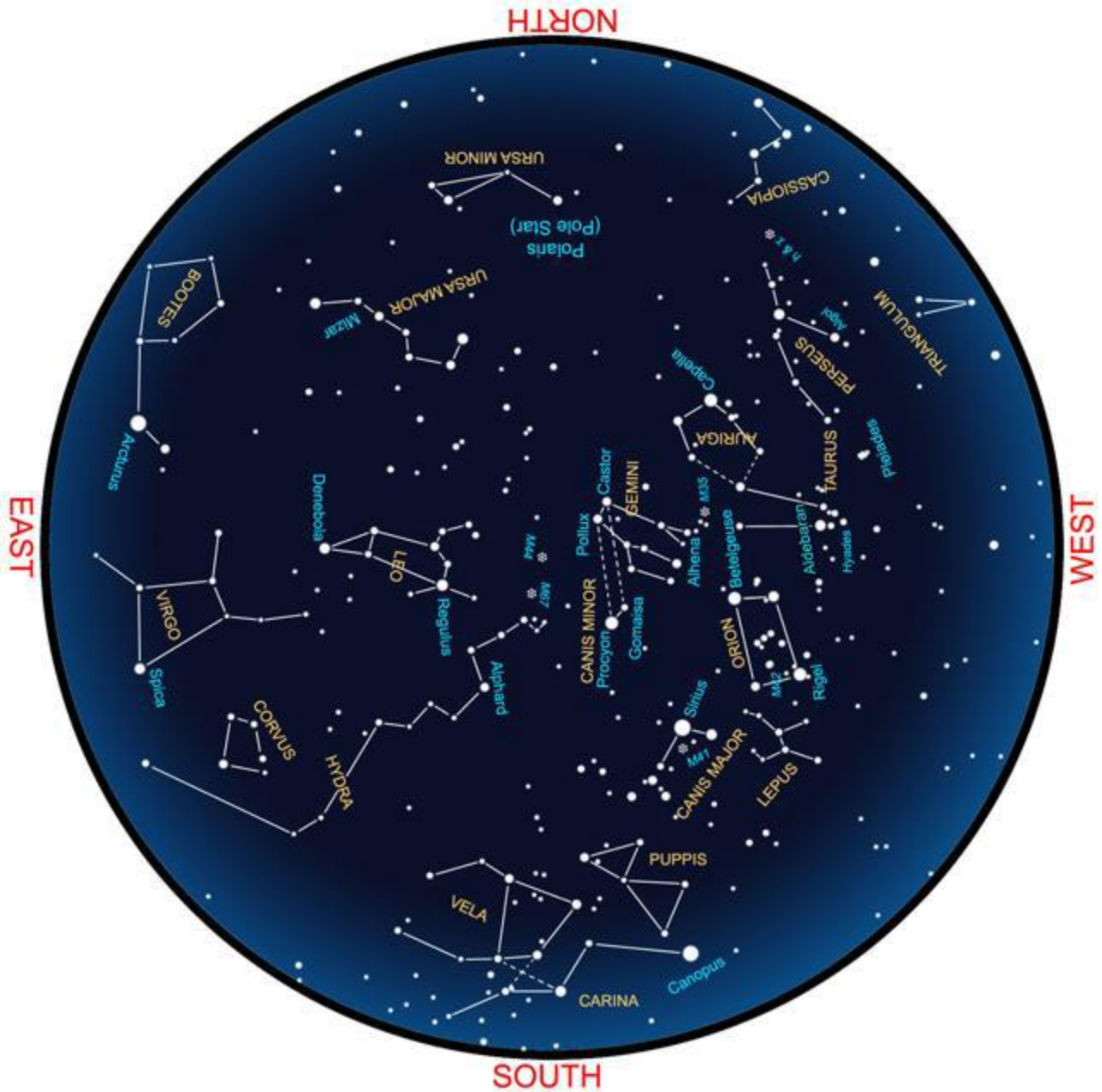
01 01:22:48 2.Ec.R
 18:38:18 4.Sh.I

Means that

At 01:22:48 hours on the night of 28 February and 1 March (see table of February 2026 issue), Europa will emerge from Jupiter's shadow. Later that evening at 18:38:18 hours, Callisto's shadow will begin its march across the planet's disk.

Satellites of Jupiter in March 2026												
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	
01	01:22:48	2.Ec.R	07	22:50:00	2.Oc.D	12	22:51:06	3.Sh.E	19	23:28:42	3.Sh.I	
	18:38:18	4.Sh.I	09	00:44:48	3.Oc.D	13	18:39:54	1.Ec.R	20	20:35:00	1.Ec.R	
	21:06:00	3.Oc.D		19:00:06	4.Oc.R	15	01:18:48	2.Oc.D	23	22:57:06	2.Tr.I	
	22:48:00	4.Sh.E		20:14:06	2.Sh.I	16	20:26:18	2.Tr.I	24	01:25:30	2.Sh.I	
02	00:24:00	3.Oc.R		20:46:18	2.Tr.E		22:49:54	2.Sh.I	25	22:34:12	2.Ec.R	
	01:22:30	3.Ec.D		23:03:48	2.Sh.E		23:14:42	2.Tr.E	26	00:28:18	1.Oc.D	
	03:06:42	1.Tr.I	10	01:51:42	4.Ec.D	17	01:39:30	2.Sh.E		19:54:54	4.Ec.D	
	20:28:06	2.Sh.E		02:16:06	1.Oc.D	18	01:16:06	4.Tr.I		21:38:00	1.Tr.I	
03	00:25:54	1.Oc.D		23:24:42	1.Tr.I		01:16:36	1.Tr.I		22:23:54	3.Tr.I	
	21:34:06	1.Tr.I	11	00:33:48	1.Sh.I		19:56:24	2.Ec.R		22:53:30	1.Sh.I	
	22:38:36	1.Sh.I		01:40:36	1.Tr.E		22:35:30	1.Oc.D		23:53:54	1.Tr.E	
	23:50:00	1.Tr.E		20:43:48	1.Oc.D	19	18:32:48	3.Tr.I	27	00:15:54	4.Ec.R	
04	00:55:00	1.Sh.E	12	00:11:12	1.Ec.R		19:44:42	1.Tr.I		01:10:00	1.Sh.E	
	18:53:18	1.Oc.D		19:02:42	1.Sh.I		20:58:06	1.Sh.I		18:56:42	1.Oc.D	
	22:16:06	1.Ec.R		19:29:00	3.Sh.I		21:48:48	3.Tr.E		22:30:00	1.Ec.R	
05	18:50:06	3.Sh.E		20:08:24	1.Tr.E		22:00:36	1.Tr.E	28	19:38:48	1.Sh.E	
	19:23:54	1.Sh.E		21:19:06	1.Sh.E		23:14:30	1.Sh.E	30	20:47:48	3.Ec.R	

This sky map for March is drawn for mid-northern latitudes, to be used around 9:30 p.m. local time



For the latest updates, please visit <https://skytoneight.wordpress.com/monthly-sky-notes-and-links/>

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Discovery of Comet C/2016 A1 (MAPS) by Amateur Astronomers

A group of French amateur astronomers, Alain Maury, Georges Attard, Daniel Parrot and Florian Signoret, (MAPS) have discovered a new comet which is expected to pass very close to the Sun towards the end of March. It has a chance of becoming bright enough to be visible to the naked eye by April 2026. In early April it is expected to pass within 2,00,000 km from the Surface of the Sun; it is not sure whether it will survive this proximity to the Sun or disintegrate.

The MAPS team have been using telescopes in Chile. All four are amateur astronomers. Alain is an engineer who has founded his own observatory in Chile. Georges, Florian and Daniel are computer scientists; with their expertise, the four of them developed a high-performance software suite. Daniel collaborated extensively with the other three amateur astronomers in developing the software, but did not actually participate in the observations. He is the author of the Tycho Tracker software (<https://www.tycho-tracker.com/>), which is widely used in astronomy.

They use four telescopes that cover a large part of the southern sky. The telescopes operate completely automatically, using a programme called Prism. They are switched off during the day, and switched on after sunset, when the Sun is 5° below the horizon. The dome then opens and the cameras are cooled to -10° C. When the Sun dips to 15° below the horizon, the PCs begin observing the sky. The programme uses certain selection criteria to determine which fields should be observed on a given day.

Alain Maury describes the operation in his blog <https://www.spaceobs.com/en/Alain-Maury-s-Blog/The-discovery-of-comet-C-2026-A1-MAPS>.

Excerpts from his blog are given below:

“The first camera takes a short image to check the telescope's position in the sky, re-centres

if necessary, finds the correct focus position to obtain sharp images (the focus changes depending on the temperature during the night), and takes a series of 36 30-second exposures.

“Once these PCs have received the 36 images, a script launches the Tycho-Tracker programme, which analyses them and detects the asteroids present in the images... This software can recognise asteroids already known (those in the mpcorb.dat database), and software written by Georges and continued by Florian allows visualisation of the movement of these asteroids, providing several characteristics of the object... All of this is done autonomously.”

On 13 January 2026, Tycho identified two unknown objects, the second of which was surrounded by a faint halo, distinguishing it from an asteroid. The Minor Planet Centre named it 6AC4721 and placed it on their Near Earth Object Confirmation Page.

Once its precise orbital elements were obtained, the Central Bureau of Astronomical Telegrams (CBAT) concluded that it is indeed a comet and gave it the name Comet C/2016 A1 (MAPS).

Alain mentions in his blog, “Big agencies tend to sell their products and don't care too much about the little guys.”

And that is why we at SkyNews decided to dedicate a full page to this discovery.

