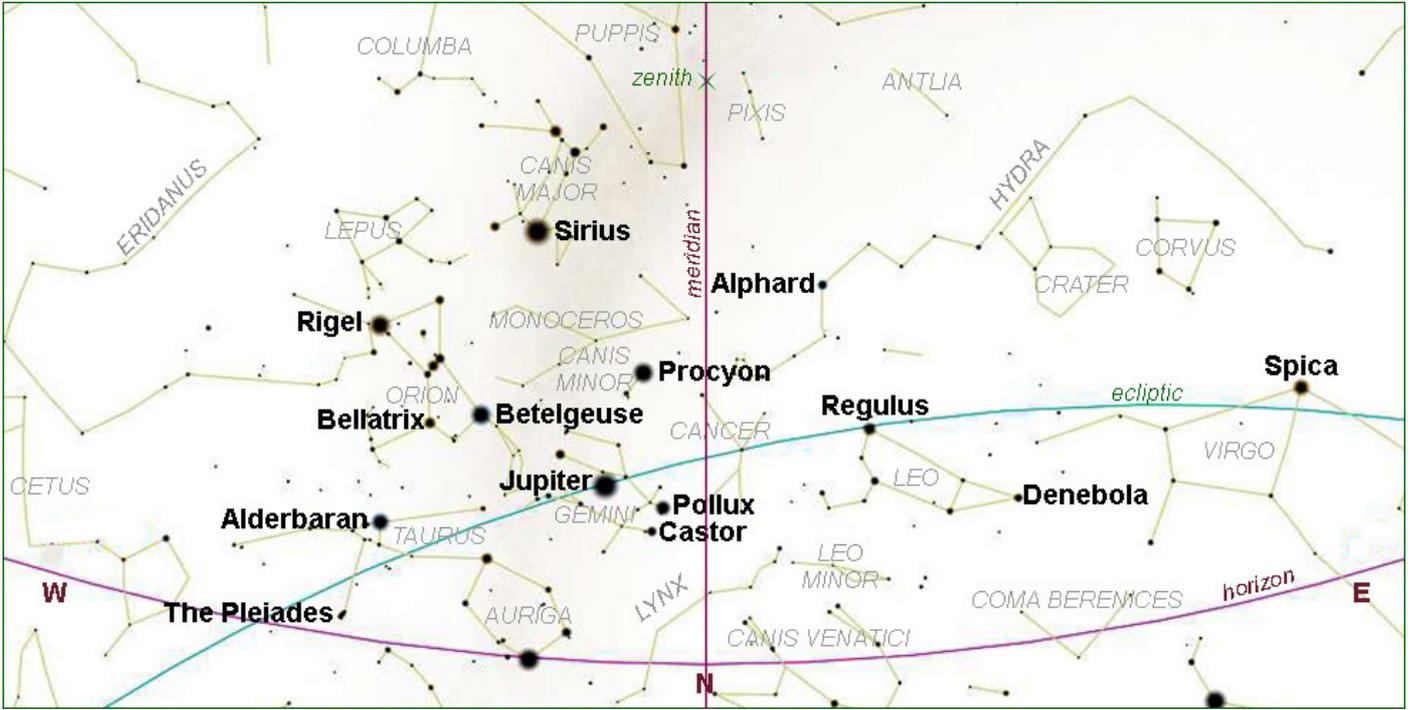
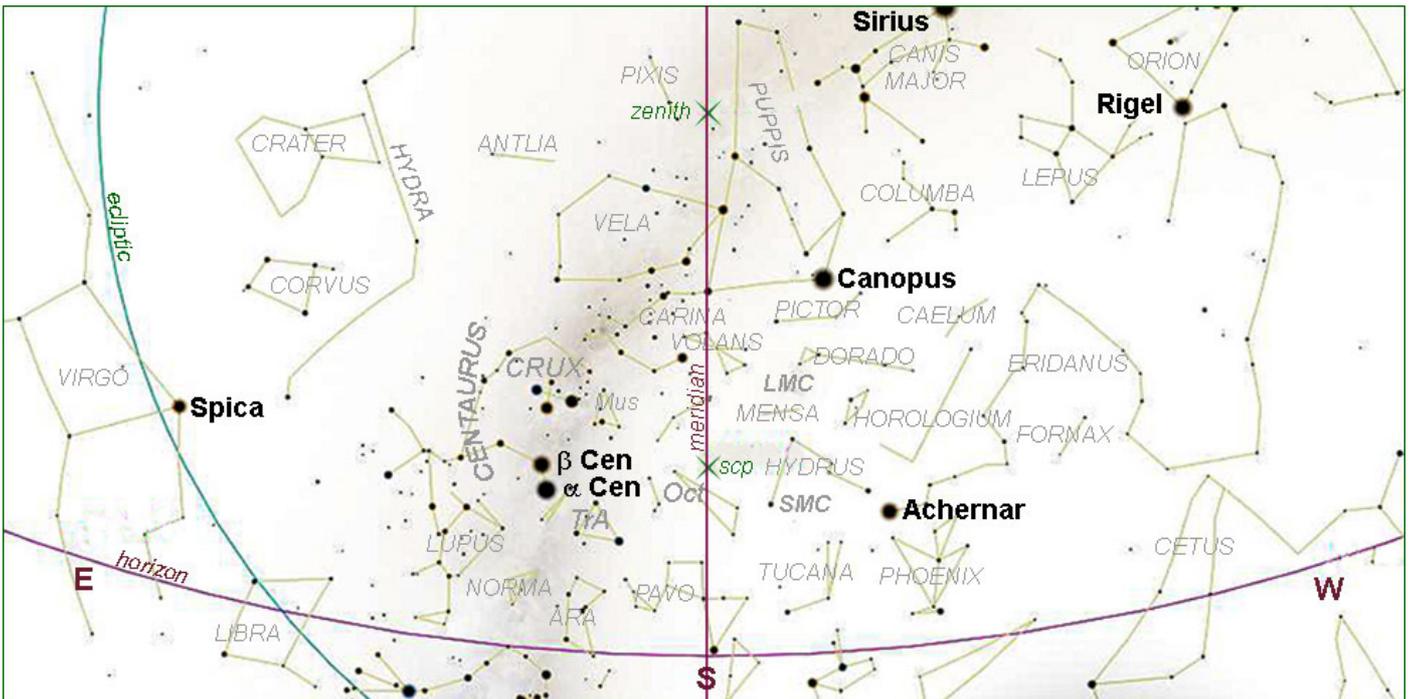


SKY CHARTS

EVENING SKY – MARCH 15th at 21h30 (NORTH DOWN)



EVENING SKY – MARCH 15th at 21h30 (SOUTH DOWN)



SUGGESTED EVENING OBSERVATION WINDOW

(Lunar observations notwithstanding)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Moon</i>	<i>Dusk end</i>
March 8	Rise 21h35 (77%)	21h16
to March 23	Set 20h45 (12%)	20h14

THE SOLAR SYSTEM

MARCH HIGHLIGHTS based on the 2026 SKY GUIDE

(PLEASE NOTE: all events are as observed from **HERMANUS**, Western Cape, South Africa)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i> (SAST)	<i>Item</i>
<i>ALMANAC</i>		
2	14h22	Moon passes 0.8° north-west of Regulus
		Titan at maximum from Saturn (3.2')
	13h38	Full Moon
5		Callisto at maximum from Jupiter (9.2')
6		Moon passes 0.9° south-east of Spica
10	15h10	Moon occults Antares
		Titan at maximum from Saturn (3.3')
11	11h39	Last Quarter Moon
		Callisto at maximum from Jupiter (9.1')
19	03h23	New Moon
22		Callisto at maximum from Jupiter (8.7')
25	21h18	First Quarter Moon
	23h45	Lunar X marginally visible
29	22h38	Moon passes 0.9° north of Regulus
30		Callisto at maximum from Jupiter (8.6')

ASTRONOMICAL EPHEMERIS

3	06h35	Moon at descending node
4		(2) Pallas in conjunction with the Sun
7	13h02	Mercury at inferior conjunction
10	15h43	Moon at apogee (404 385km)
	12h57	Mercury closest to Earth (0.618 au)
11	21h12	Moon southernmost (−28°24')
	04h44	Jupiter stationary, ends retrograde
17	17h22	Moon at ascending node
19	21h46	Mercury stationary
20	16h46	<i>MARCH EQUINOX</i>
22	13h40	Moon at perigee (366 858km)
	13h19	Neptune in conjunction with the Sun
23	10h24	Neptune furthest from Earth (30,879 au)
25	04h56	Moon northernmost (+28°22')
	10h55	Saturn in conjunction with the Sun
	07h54	Saturn furthest from Earth (10,489 au)
26		Mars at perihelion (1,38126 au)
30	13h34	Moon at descending node

SOLAR SYSTEM VISIBILITY

2026 MARCH 14				<i>Visibility</i>
Sun	Pisces	Rise:	06h42	Never look at the sun without SUITABLE EYE PROTECTION!
Length of day	12hours 19 minutes	Transit:	12h52	
		Set:	19h01	
Mercury	Aquarius	Rise:	05h37	Low in the east before sunrise
Magnitude	+2.2	Transit:	11h54	
Phase	11%	Set:	18h11	
Diameter	11"			
Venus	Pisces	Rise:	08h00	Low in the west after sunset
Magnitude	-3.9	Transit:	13h54	
Phase	96%	Set:	19h47	
Diameter	10"			
Mars	Aquarius	Rise:	05h32	Low in the east before sunrise
Magnitude	+1.2	Transit:	11h59	
Phase	99%	Set:	18h26	
Diameter	4"			
Jupiter	Gemini	Rise:	15h21	Evening
Magnitude	-2.3	Transit:	20h15	
Diameter	41"	Set:	01h14	
Saturn	Pisces	Rise:	07h23	Too close to the Sun
Magnitude	+0.9	Transit:	13h27	
Diameter	16"	Set:	19h30	
Uranus	Taurus	Rises:	11h48	Evening
Magnitude	+5.8	Transit:	16h54	
Diameter	4"	Set:	22h00	
Neptune	Pisces	Rise:	07h15	Too close to the Sun
Magnitude	+8.0	Transit:	13h19	
Diameter	2"	Set:	19h22	
Pluto	Capricornus	Rise:	02h35	Morning
Magnitude	+14.5	Transit:	09h44	
		Set:	16h53	

Phase: In a telescope, the inner planets (Mercury, Venus and Mars) appear to us in phases depending on the angle of the Sun's illumination, as does the Moon. The observed **angular diameter** is given in arc seconds.

Transit: When an object crosses the **local meridian**, it is said to 'transit'. The local meridian is an imaginary line from the horizon directly north passing overhead through *zenith* to the horizon directly south.

Magnitude: we are accustomed to hearing the brightness of stars described in terms of 'magnitude'. But, for example, the star Sirius at magnitude -1.4 is considerably brighter than the star Antares (in Scorpius) at +1.05. The scale is 'inverse'; the brighter the object, the lower the value. A 'good' human eye on a clear night can see a star down to a magnitude of about +6.

THE MOON

MONTES CAUCASUS

Location: north-west corner of Mare Serenitatis.

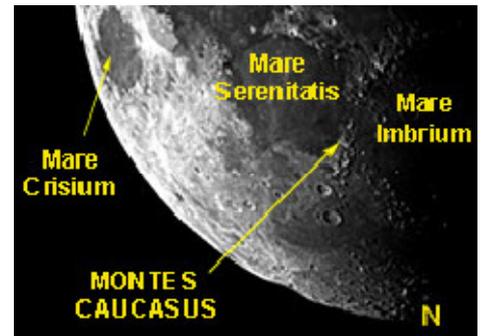
Type: mountain range.

Length: estimated 445 to 550 km.

Best seen: around last quarter (March 11) or first quarter (March 25).

Notes: The range begins at a gap of level surface that joins the **Mare Imbrium** to the west with the **Mare Serenitatis** to the east and extends in an irregular band from the north-northeast to the western side of the prominent crater **Eudoxus**. It forms a continuation of the **Montes Apenninus** range to the southwest. There are several breaks in the range where nearby lunar mare has intruded into the formation, particularly near the southern tip. Along the eastern flank to the south of Eudoxus are the remnants of the crater **Alexander**. To the west is the much shallower ring of **Cassini** with two smaller but prominent craters on its floor. Montes Caucasus's northern peak rises approximately 2400m while the southern reaches about 1400m. The highest peak measures 2900 +/- 600m.

Naming: German selenographer **Johann H. Mädler**, after the Caucasus Mountains on the Earth. However none of the peaks in this range has been assigned an individual name. At least officially.



No eclipses, lunar or solar, will be visible from southern Africa in March 2026

COMETS, ASTEROIDS AND METEORS

The link to the latest Comet, Asteroid and Meteor Section from Tim Cooper:

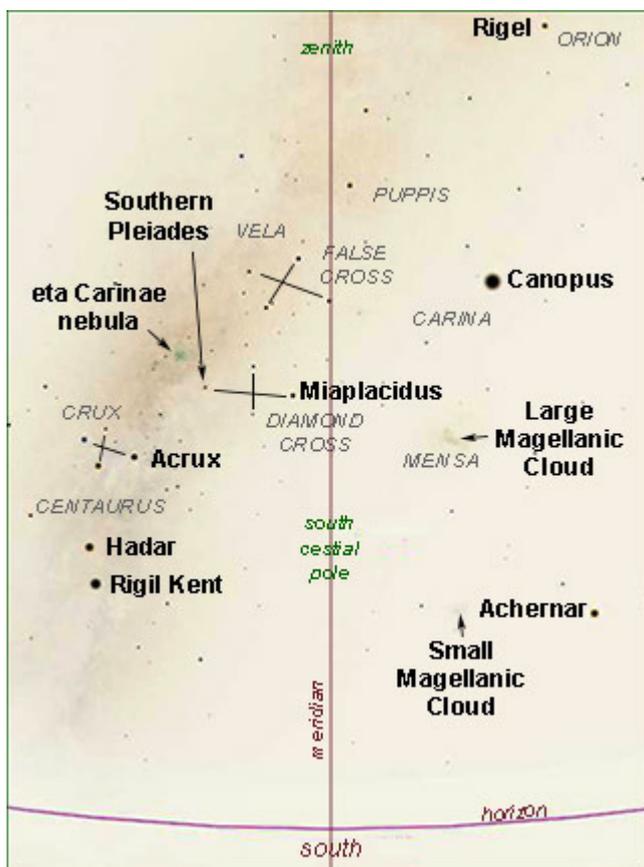
<https://assa.sao.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2025/12/ASSA-CAMnotes-2026-Number-1.pdf>

NO 'SCOPE REQUIRED

(or what to do on a lovely evening without a telescope)

We are familiar, I believe, with much of this area of the night sky and realise how lucky we are in the southern hemisphere to have such magnificence at our beck and call. A headlight, selected to RED (available reasonably cheaply in the stores in town), will aid with reading printed charts.

If you are anything like I am, you have probably built up a dependence upon the constellation lines drawn on star charts to identify the areas included in the constellations. Unfortunately, the real sky does not display such convenient guidelines so here I offer you a chart *without* lines so we can lie on the lawn (or reclined deckchair if you're rich!) and get to know the sky as we see it without tiring the neck muscles. The trick is to recognise and remember the *patterns* of the prominent stars of each constellation in a particular area of the sky.



The chart above is timed 2026 March 15 at 21h30

(alpha Eri) with the **Small Magellanic Cloud** (SMC) to the left.

Note - a really clear night is required to see the Magellanic clouds so don't be too disappointed if you don't!

On page 6, please see Ian Ridpath's "Star Tales" to clarify the mythology of the **Argo Navis**.

Repeating this exercise for a few nights running (if the weather be good!) will quickly familiarise the viewer with the various stars and constellations. With your toes pointed south, the night sky will appear as in the star chart to left.

Starting at the bottom left of the chart, **The Pointers** (**Rigel Kent** - alpha Cen and **Hadar** - beta Cen) point to the top of the **Southern Cross** (**CRUX**). In Crux, we have **Acrux** at the foot. Moving clockwise, on the left is **BCrux**, at top **GaCrux** with **delta Cru** on the right.

Next is the **eta Carinae** nebula, a most beautiful image in a telescope, then the **Diamond Cross**, topped by the **Southern Pleiades** (IC 2602) with **Miaplacidus** (beta Car) at the bottom. **The False Cross** (which caused some confusion with early maritime navigators) shares its four stars between constellations **CARINA** (the keel) and **VELA** (the sails).

At the chart's top right we have **Rigel** (beta Ori), the hunter **ORION**'s right shoulder. Then there is **Canopus** (alpha Car), **CARINA**'s brightest star.

Down a bit is the **Large Magellanic Cloud** (LMC), the table cloth above **MENSA** (Table Mountain).

The great river **ERIDANUS**, with its source just below Rigel, meanders its way down to end at **Achernar**

History and Mythology

Ian Ridpath's

STAR TALES

Carina

The keel

Genitive: Carinae
Abbreviation: Car
Size ranking: 34th
Origin: Part of the original Greek constellation [Argo Navis](#)

The smallest but most prominent of the three parts into which the ancient Greek constellation of [Argo Navis](#), the ship of the Argonauts, was divided by the French astronomer Nicolas Louis de Lacaille in his first catalogue of the southern stars, published in 1756. In that catalogue he gave it the French name Corps du Navire. His final catalogue, Coelum australe stelliferum, appeared in 1763 containing the same three subdivisions but with Latin instead of French names. Although usually described as the keel, Carina represents the main body or hull of the ship. The other two parts are [Puppis](#), the poop or stern, and [Vela](#), the sails. *[then there is Paxis the compass to the left of Puppis (see the south down chart on page 1) – ed.]*

Carina inherited the two brightest stars of the dismantled Argo; they are now labelled alpha Carinae (better known as Canopus) and beta Carinae (Miaplacidus). Canopus, a creamy white giant just over 300 light years away, is in fact the second-brightest star in the entire sky; it marks the blade of one of the ship's two steering oars. Eratosthenes and Ptolemy both spelled the star's name Κάνωβος (Kanobos); Canopus is the Latinized version.

CANOPUS AND OTHER STARS

Canopus was not mentioned by Aratus in the *Phaenomena* (c.275 BC), because the star was below the horizon from Greece in his day. The name first appears with his somewhat younger contemporary Eratosthenes who was based farther south, at Alexandria in northern Egypt. From there he could see Canopus low in the south, as could Ptolemy, who worked at Alexandria four centuries later. It was the most southerly star that Ptolemy catalogued in his *Almagest*, and by some way: the next most southerly was the present-day Tau Puppis, over 3° to the north.

Greek writers such as Conon (c.280–c.220 BC) and Strabo (64/63 BC–c.AD 24) tell us that Canopus is named after the helmsman of the Greek King Menelaus. On Menelaus's return from Troy with Helen his fleet was driven off-course by a storm and landed in Egypt. There Canopus died of a snake bite; Helen killed the snake, and she and Menelaus buried Canopus with full honours. On that site grew the city of Canopus (the modern Abu Qir) at the mouth of the Nile. Fittingly, modern space probes now use Canopus as a navigation star. Eratosthenes also knew this star by the name Περίγειος (i.e. Perigeios, or Perigee), in reference to the fact that it remained close to the horizon; this name appeared in Eratosthenes's entry on Eridanus, not Argo.

The Arabs called Canopus Suhail, a name of uncertain meaning. In one story Suhail was said to be the brother of Sirius and Procyon, who were his sisters. Sirius crossed the Milky Way into the southern sky to be with him, while Procyon was left behind on the northern side of the Milky Way, crying and hence dimmer than her southern siblings.

Beta Carinae is called Miaplacidus, but the origin of the name is unknown. The second-magnitude stars Epsilon and Iota Carinae, along with Delta and Kappa Vellorum to the north in Vela, form a cruciform shape known as the False Cross, sometimes mistaken for the true Southern Cross. Epsilon Carinae is called Avior, a name given in or around 1937 by the UK's Nautical Almanac Office for use in *The Air Almanac*, a navigation guide produced for the Royal Air Force. The RAF specified that all navigation stars should have proper names, so this name was coined for the otherwise unnamed Epsilon Carinae.

ETA CARINAE AND THE KEYHOLE

The constellation contains a unique star, Eta Carinae, that flared up to become brighter than Canopus in 1843, but has since faded to the edge of naked-eye visibility. Astronomers now think that Eta Carinae is a close pair of hot, very massive stars. They cannot be seen directly because they are embedded in a cloud of gas called the Homunculus Nebula that was ejected during the great eruption. One or both of the stars will one day explode as a supernova.

Eta Carinae lies in front of a much larger area of glowing gas known as the Eta Carinae nebula or simply the Carina nebula, catalogued as NGC 3372. Silhouetted against the bright background next to Eta Carinae is a bulbous mass of dark gas and dust known as the Keyhole nebula from its distinctive shape. This was beautifully sketched by John Herschel from his observations made at the Cape of Good Hope in 1834–38.

CHINESE ASSOCIATIONS

In ancient China, Canopus was known as Laoren, 'old man', or sometimes Nanji Laoren, '[old man of the south pole](#)'. He was equated with Shouxing, the god of longevity. Carina also once contained part of a large Chinese constellation called Qifu, a storehouse for musical instruments, the rest of which was in [Centaurus](#) and Vela. However, as the effect of precession gradually carried Qifu below the southern horizon the constellation was repositioned to the north on later star maps, farther into Centaurus and out of Carina entirely.

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Please keep in touch...

Have a look at our excellent website, edited by Derek Duckitt - <https://www.hermanusastronomy.co.za/>

Contact ASSA - Get in touch with officers of the Society - we're real people with a passion for astronomy, so [contact us and let's talk!](#)

<http://www.mnassa.org.za/>

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2026 Sky Guide Southern Africa

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