

What's In the Sky

May 2023

Image credit NASA Sombrero Galaxy

May 5: Full Moon — Flower Moon

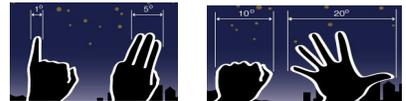
Named after all the flowers blooming in May. It's also Cinco De Mayo. Celebrate this holiday under the glow of the Full Moon. The Moon will rise around 8:30pm. The Eta Aquarids meteor shower also occurs on this night, but the glow of the Moon will be so bright it will be very difficult to see any meteors.

May 13: Last Quarter Moon

The perfect time to observe the Moon is when it is in one of its phases. Even a pair of binoculars can bring out delightful details. The dark areas we now call Seas or Mares are ancient dried lava beds from when the Moon was young.

May 19: New Moon

This is a great time to explore the deep sky objects. In May the Sombrero Galaxy is fairly easy to find with binoculars or any size telescope. First find the star Spica in the southeastern sky. The Sombrero Galaxy will be 11.5 degrees to the west of Spica. Measure degrees with your fingers on an outstretched adult sized hand.



May 27: First Quarter Moon

Half of the Moon will be illuminated. So why is it called a quarter Moon? It's because the Moon is a quarter of the way around its orbit of Earth. The name has little to do with what we see.

Planets

May 1: It's May Day and Venus will be in the sky shining gloriously bright. Look 45 minutes after sundown to the western horizon. Venus will be the brightest object you see.

May 12,13,14: Look near the Moon for Saturn. The ringed planet will be just above the Moon in the eastern sky a few hours before dawn.

May 15: Jupiter returns as a morning star. Look 45 minutes before sunrise. But you have to be quick as the sun will soon rise and the glow will wash out Jupiter

May 17: Moon and Jupiter Conjunction. The giant planet will very close to the waning crescent moon. You can catch this special sight just before the sun rises.

May 22: After sunset Venus will be above the waxing crescent Moon. **May 23:** Venus and Mars will frame the crescent Moon. It will be a beautiful sight. **May 24:** The moon will be above Mars. Venus will set in the West before midnight. Mars will follow and set after midnight. **May 31:** Venus and Mars are both in the night sky before midnight. Venus will be bright and Mars will hover at the upper right of Venus. If you locate Venus you can find Mars. Mercury is too far away and faint to be seen now.