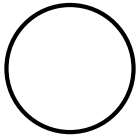
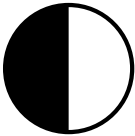
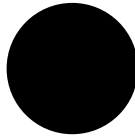
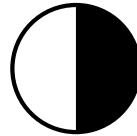


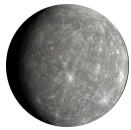
What's Up - May 2026

Moon

 Full Moon 1 May 2026 19:23 31 May 2026 10:45	 Last Quarter 9 May 2026 23:10	 New Moon 16 May 2026 22:01	 First Quarter 23 May 2026 13:11
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The moon is at perigee (closest to Earth) on 17/05 at 15:48, at a distance of 358 074 km. It is at apogee (furthest from Earth) on 05/05 at 00:30, at a distance of 405 843 km.

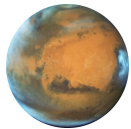
Planets



Mercury (in Taurus)
↑ 07:37 ↓ 17:55



Venus (in Taurus)
↑ 10:04 ↓ 19:45
Near the Moon on 19/05



Mars (in Pisces)
↑ 05:20 ↓ 16:32
Near the Moon on 14/05



Jupiter (in Gemini)
↑ 11:46 ↓ 21:43
Near the Moon on 20/05



Saturn (in Cetus)
↑ 04:01 ↓ 15:53

All the details (apart from the proximity to the Moon) are for mid-month in Cape Town.

More information



Scan the QR code for more information about the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) and for details about visiting the SAAO in Cape Town or Sutherland.

Some bright stars in the evening sky

Altair: white star, brightest star in Aquila
Antares: red supergiant in Scorpius
Arcturus: red giant in Boötes
Betelgeuse: red supergiant in Orion
Canopus: yellowish-white star in Carina
Procyon: yellowish-white star in Canis Minor
Regulus: blue-white star in Leo
Rigel: blue supergiant in Orion
Sirius: brightest star in the night sky, in Canis Major
Spica: bluish-white star in Virgo
The Pointers: Alpha and Beta Centauri

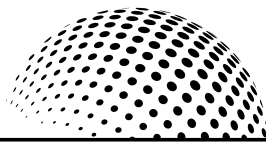
Meteor showers

The eta-Aquariids are active from 19/04 until 28/05, peaking on 06/05 with 50 meteors per hour. They are best viewed between 03:30 and 05:30.

Fun facts

The word "Moon" evolved from an Indo-European root it shares with the word "month" and the Greek word for "measure". With 29.5 days the length between two full moons indeed is close to a month. Sometimes, like this May, you can have two full moons in a month. The second full moon is called a "blue moon". While this has nothing to do with the moon's colour, in rare cases, if big forest fires or a volcano eruption result in lots of dust in the atmosphere, the Moon *can* appear blue. The rarity of such occurrences led to the phrase "once in a blue moon".

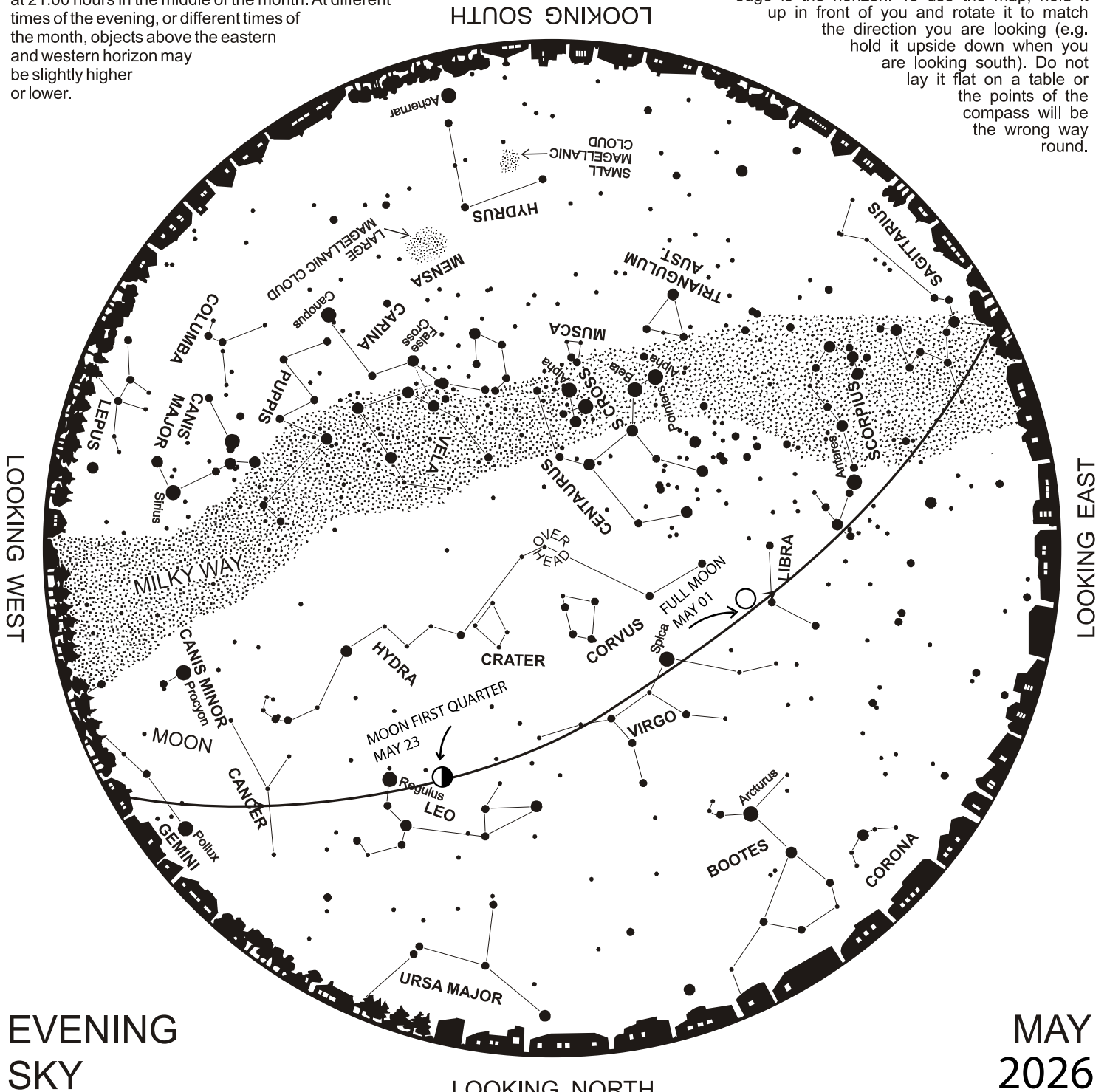
Other words are related to the Moon as well. "lunatic" stems from the Latin word "luna" for the Moon. It reflects the belief that changes of the Moon caused intermittent insanity. Closer to home, one of Cape Town's townships, Nyanga, was named after the isiXhosa word "inyanga" for the Moon to complement the name of the adjacent township Langa. But while ilanga means "Sun" in isiXhosa, Langa actually was named after the Natal king Langalibalele, whose name can be translated as "the blazing Sun".



IZIKO PLANETARIUM AND DIGITAL DOME

The map shows the night sky visible above the Cape at 21:00 hours in the middle of the month. At different times of the evening, or different times of the month, objects above the eastern and western horizon may be slightly higher or lower.

The centre of the map is the overhead point, the edge is the horizon. To use the map, hold it up in front of you and rotate it to match the direction you are looking (e.g. hold it upside down when you are looking south). Do not lay it flat on a table or the points of the compass will be the wrong way round.



EVENING SKY

MAY 2026

As we enter the final stretch of autumn, it becomes the perfect time to view some of the most well-known Southern Hemisphere constellations, Centaurus and the Southern Cross (Crux). In Tswana, Sotho, and Venda traditions, the Southern Cross is referred to as Dithutlwa, meaning giraffes. Centaurus is easy to identify thanks to the bright Pointer Stars, Alpha Centauri and Beta Centauri, which guide observers toward the Southern Cross. The centre of the Milky Way begins to rise during May. With it comes the constellation Sagittarius, easily recognised by the "Teapot" asterism, which points toward the galactic core.

This month also brings the Eta Aquariid Meteor Shower, which peaks on 5-6 May. Unfortunately, a waning gibbous Moon may make these meteors more difficult to spot.

To improve your chances, look toward the eastern horizon in the early morning hours, near and around the constellation Aquarius. The Eta Aquariids are debris from Halley's Comet, making them one of the more notable annual meteor showers.

With Orion now gone, his two hunting dogs, Canis Major and Canis Minor, also descend toward the western horizon. Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky, will soon disappear from our evening skies.

The Full Moon occurs on 1 May, with another Full Moon on 31 May, known as a Blue Moon - a term referring to the second Full Moon in a calendar month. The New Moon falls on 16 May, providing darker skies for mid-month stargazing.

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