SOUTH AFRICAN ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORY

P O BOX 9
OBSERVATORY
SOUTH AFRICA
7935

TEL: (021) 447-0025
FAX: (021) 447-3639
INT. CODE: +27 21

INTERNET:
https://www.saao.ac.za

What's Up - June 2026

Moon

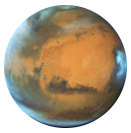
Last Quarter	New Moon	First Quarter	Full Moon
8 June 2026 12:01	15 June 2026 04:54	21 June 2026 23:55	30 June 2026 01:57

The moon is at perigee (closest to Earth) on 15/06 at 01:18, at a distance of 357 196 km.
It is at apogee (furthest from Earth) on 01/06 at 06:32, at a distance of 406 369 km, and again on 28/06 at 09:11, at a distance of 406 267 km.

Planets

Mercury (in Gemini)
↑ 09:38 ↓ 19:30
Near the Moon on 16/06

Venus (in Cancer)
↑ 10:31 ↓ 20:33
Near the Moon on 17/06 and 18/06



Mars (in Aries)
↑ 05:09 ↓ 15:38
Near the Moon on 12/06

Jupiter (in Gemini)
↑ 10:05 ↓ 20:09
Near the Moon on 17/06

Saturn (in Pisces)
↑ 02:11 ↓ 13:58
Near the Moon on 10/06

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

There are no major meteor showers this month.

Fun facts

Different stars have different colours, and for some (such as Betelgeuse in the constellation of Orion, which is reddish) you can even see that with your naked eye. The reason for these different colours are different surface temperatures - and what is true for flames on Earth is true for stars: Red means comparatively cool, and blue means hot.

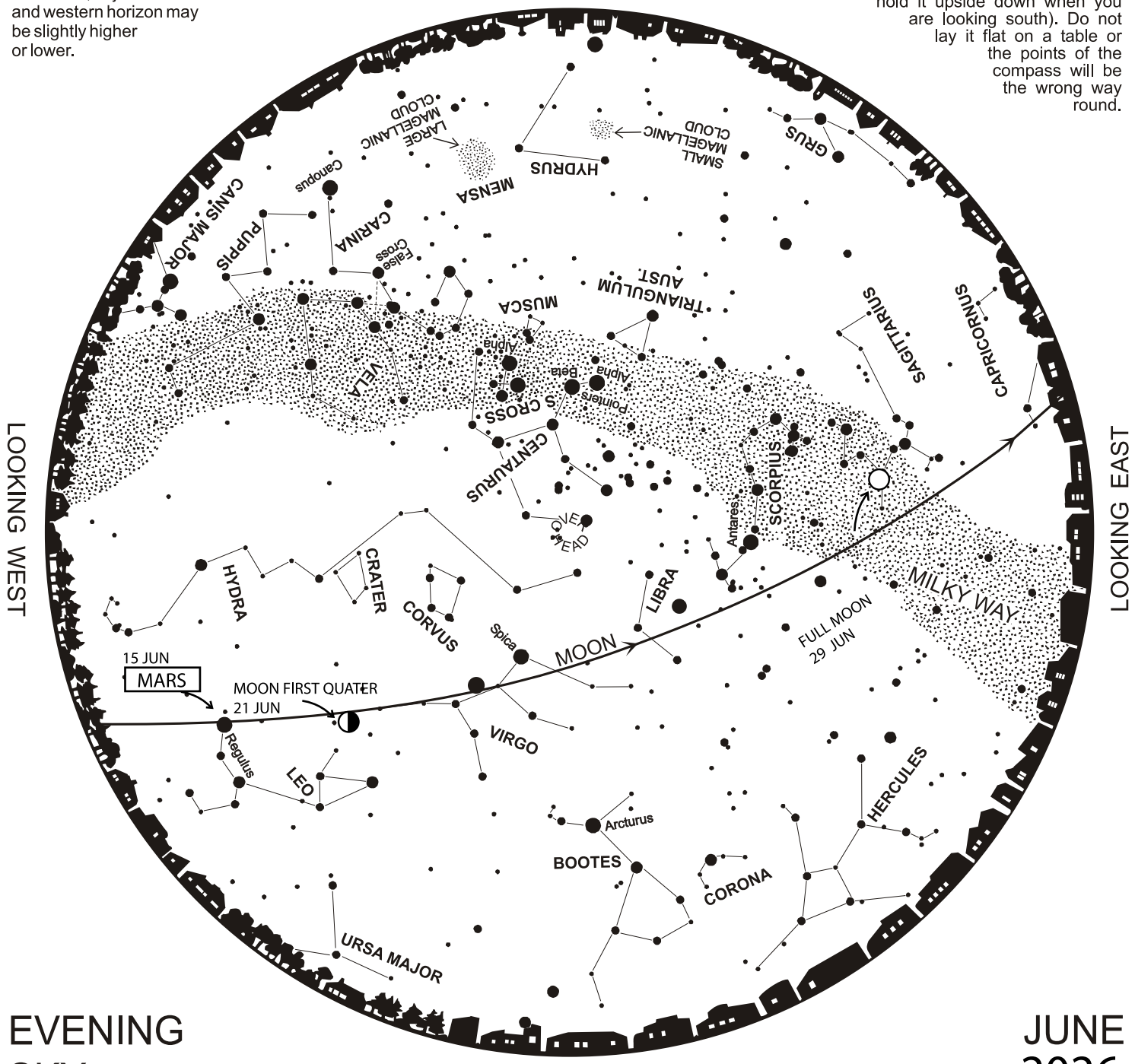
In case of our Sun, the surface temperature is about 5500 degrees Celsius. While this may sound a lot, it pales against the temperature of about 15 million degrees inside the Sun's core. Thanks to this high temperature (and the high pressure) hydrogen atoms may be fused into helium, which is the energy source that has kept the Sun shining for the last 4.6 billion years or so.

Fusion on Earth needs even higher temperatures - 150 million degrees. Storing a plasma of such temperature is, to put it mildly, a challenge. It should come as no surprise that fusion as an energy source has proven somewhat elusive so far!

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

JUNE 2026

As winter settles in, the colder months bring clearer and darker skies. Each year, the Winter Solstice occurs around 21 June, marking the longest night of the year in the Southern Hemisphere.

During this month, the constellation Hercules, named after the hero of Greek mythology, can be seen low in the northern sky near Boötes and its bright orange star Arcturus. Arcturus is one of the bright stars visible from Earth and is approximately 25 times larger than the Sun, located about 37 light-years away. On the eastern horizon, the bright star Altair becomes more prominent, bringing the constellation Aquila into view. Altair forms part of the well-known “Summer Triangle” in the Northern Hemisphere, together with Vega and Deneb.

The constellation Leo gradually descends toward the western horizon, led by its brightest star Regulus. Following Leo is the constellation Hydra, the largest constellation in the night sky. Despite its size, Hydra contains only one particularly bright star, Alphard.

For a stargazing challenge, try spotting Messier 48 (M48) early in the month. This open star cluster can sometimes be seen with the naked eye under dark conditions near the head of Hydra, low above the western horizon.

The Full Moon occurs on 30 June, while the New Moon falls on 15 June. Around the New Moon, darker skies provide an excellent opportunity to observe the Milky Way stretching across the sky from east to west. In San traditions, the Milky Way was believed to be the pathway used by N!adima, a Creator deity, while carrying the Sun across the heavens.

25 Queen Victoria Street, Cape Town
Postal: PO Box 61, CAPE TOWN, 8000
Tel: 021 481 3900, Fax: 021 481 3900

www.iziko.org.za

iziko museums of South Africa