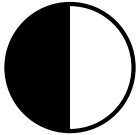
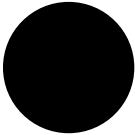
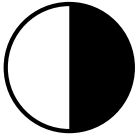
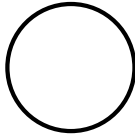


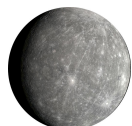
What's Up - September 2026

Moon

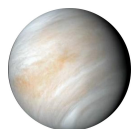
 Last Quarter 4 September 2026 09:51	 New Moon 11 September 2026 05:27	 First Quarter 18 September 2026 22:44	 Full Moon 26 September 2026 18:49
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The moon is at perigee (closest to Earth) on 06/09 at 22:26, at a distance of 368 255 km.
It is at apogee (furthest from Earth) on 19/09 at 05:00, at a distance of 404 217 km.

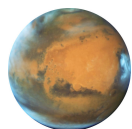
Planets



Mercury (in Virgo)
↑ 07:27 ↓ 19:50
Near the Moon on 12/09



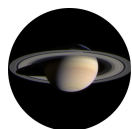
Venus (in Virgo)
↑ 08:13 ↓ 21:56
Near the Moon on 14/09



Mars (in Gemini)
↑ 03:48 ↓ 13:45
Near the Moon on 06/09



Jupiter (in Cancer)
↑ 05:10 ↓ 15:43
Near the Moon on 08/09



Saturn (in Cetus)
↑ 20:03 ↓ 07:52
Near the Moon on 27/09

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
Canopus: yellowish-white star in Carina
Rigel: blue supergiant in Orion
Spica: bluish-white star in Virgo
The Pointers: Alpha and Beta Centauri

Meteor showers

The Southern Taurids are active from 20/09 until 20/11, peaking on 05/11 with 7 meteors per hour. They are best viewed between 21:30 and 03:30.

Spring equinox

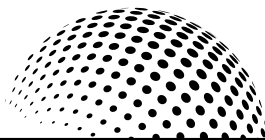
The spring equinox takes place on 23 September 2026 at 02:05.

Fun facts

Empty space is not empty: Quantum physics predicts that the vacuum is teeming with “virtual particles” that are constantly created and annihilated. These may even affect the path of light, at least if you have magnetic fields 500 trillion times stronger than Earth's.

While we cannot produce such high fields in a laboratory, nature provides use with an alternative - neutron stars. Neutron stars have more mass than the Sun but would easily fit into Cape Town. A few spoons of neutron star matter would outweigh Table Mountain!

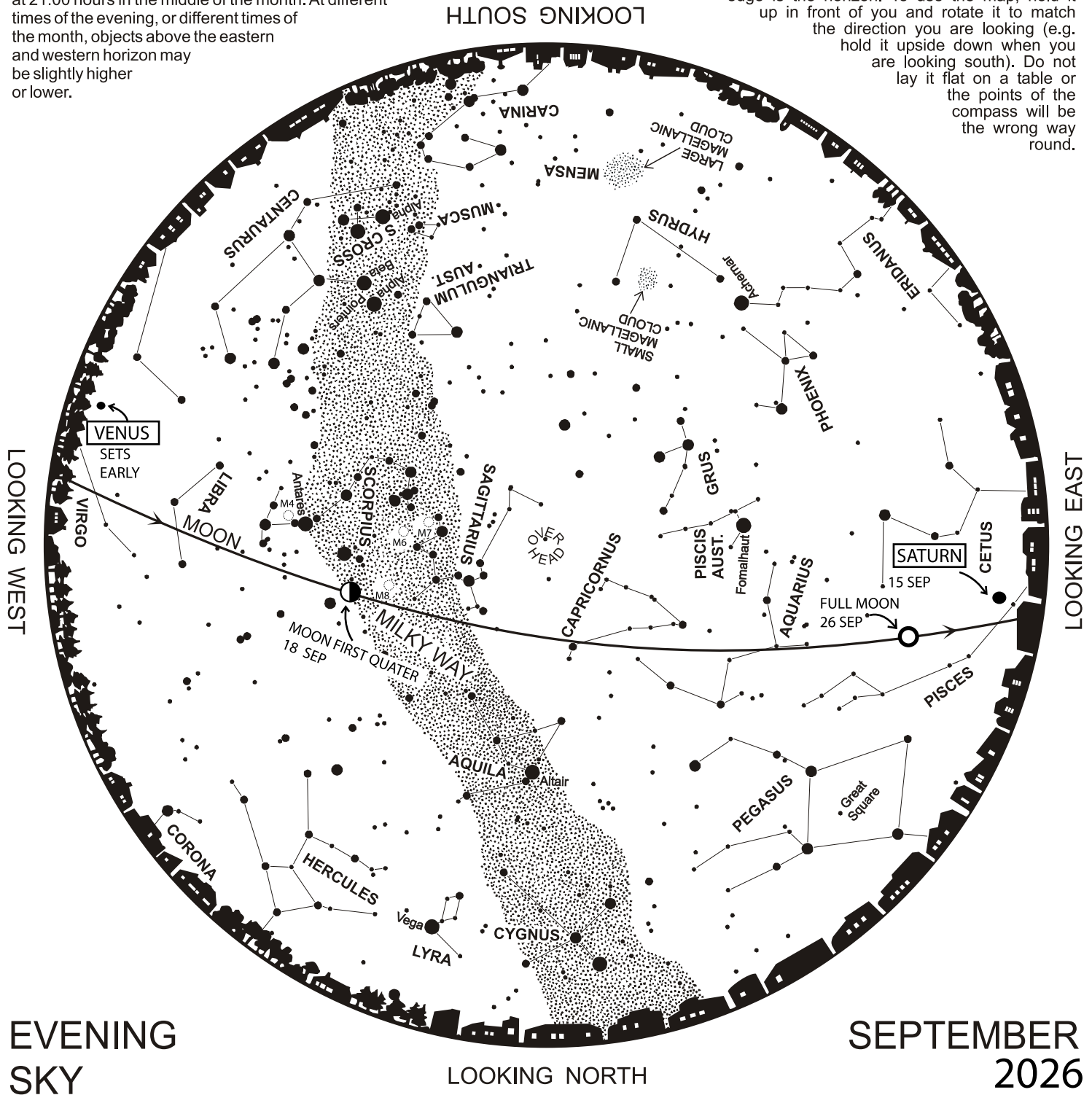
Some neutron stars, so-called magnetars, have fantastically high magnetic fields, and astronomers observed such a magnetar in X-rays and radio waves. Their results, recently published in the prestigious journal *Nature*, suggest that its light might be indeed be affected by the virtual particles predicted by quantum physics.



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

SEPTEMBER 2026

We welcome a new month and a new season. As spring begins, the night sky starts to change, bringing new constellations into view. On the northeastern horizon, Pegasus, the winged horse, begins to rise. The easiest way to find it is by looking for the distinctive asterism Great Square of Pegasus. One of the stars forming the Square is Alpheratz, which is also the brightest star in the constellation Andromeda (low on the Northern horizon). In the southern sky, Achernar, the brightest star in the constellation Eridanus and the ninth-brightest star in the night sky, becomes increasingly prominent. Under dark, clear skies, the faint constellations Pisces and Cetus can also be traced.

In the northern sky, Cygnus is visible through its distinctive asterism, the Northern Cross. Together with Vega in Lyra and Altair in Aquila, its bright star Deneb gradually shifts toward the northwest as the month progresses. Virgo and Boötes sink lower into the western sky, while Saturn remains a prominent evening planet, rising in the east and moving westward throughout the night. During this time the moon Titan should be easier to see with binoculars or a telescope as it will reach its maximum separation this month. The New Moon occurs on 11 September, providing dark skies for stargazing. The Full Moon follows on 26 September, brightening the spring sky.