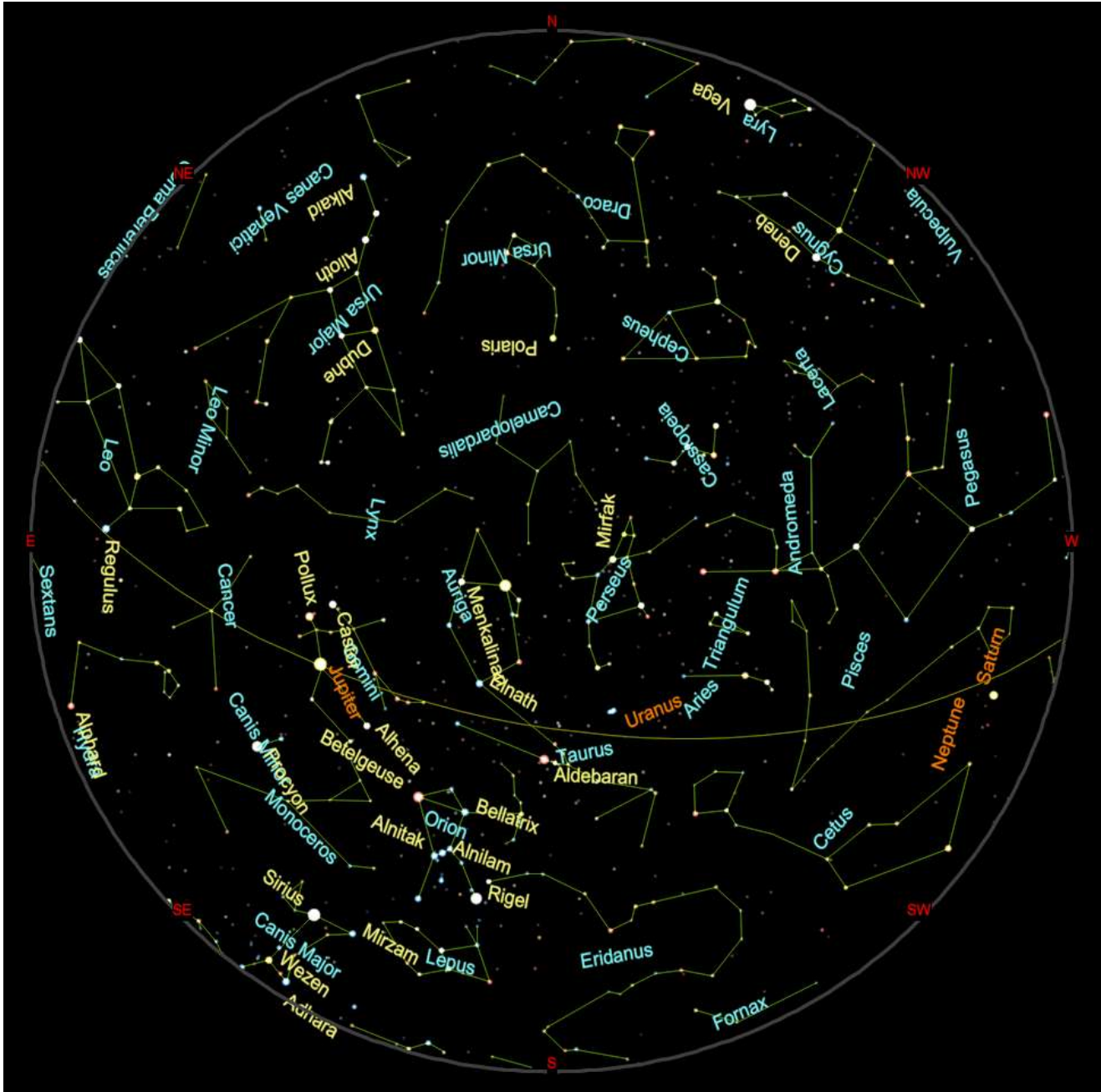
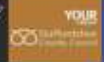


# The Night Sky in January 2026



## Monthly Guide compiled by Doug Bickley

PERTON LIBRARY  
ASTRONOMY  
GROUP



The chart is based on location  $52.6^{\circ}$  N,  $2.2^{\circ}$  W (Perton, Wolverhampton) @ 21:00 on 15/01/2026.

The orange line is the ecliptic.

**We are looking SOUTH** (as shown at the bottom of the chart) at the constellations Orion, Taurus and Cetus with the constellations Auriga and Perseus overhead.

**To use the chart hold it so that the direction you are facing is at the bottom** – the lower part of the chart shows the sky ahead of you and the centre of the chart shows the sky directly over your head.

# A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

Hopefully we can look forward to colder and dryer nights. January is a winter month in the northern hemisphere. Its name comes from Janus or Ianus, the Roman god of passage and new beginnings. Our old friend Orion starts to make an appearance, always a good observing opportunity.

## Events to look out for this month:

- 3 Moon and Jupiter in conjunction
- 3 Quadrantid meteor shower peak (unfavourable)
- 3 Full Moon (supermoon?)
- 5 Moon near M44 Beehive Cluster (morning)
- 10 Jupiter at opposition
- 15 Perton Library Astronomy Group meeting 7pm
- 23 Saturn south of crescent Moon
- 27 Moon occults Pleiades (evening)
- 30 Moon, Jupiter, Castor and Pollux near (evening)
- 31 Moon and Jupiter in conjunction (morning)
- 31 Moon, Castor and Pollux in a line (evening twilight)

## The phenomena of the month : January 2026

Times are given in UT for PERTON (2° 11' 53" W, 52° 35' 26" N, zone Z).

Date	Hour	Description of the phenomenon
yyyy mm dd	hh:mm	
1	2026 01 01	21:43 Moon at perigee (geocentric dist. = 360348 km)
2	2026 01 03	10:03 FULL MOON
3	2026 01 03	12:36 Meteor shower : Quadrantids (80 meteors/hour at zenith; duration = 16.0 days)
4	2026 01 03	17:00 The Earth at its perihelion (distance to the Sun = 0.98330 AU)
5	2026 01 03	22:22 Close encounter between the Moon and Jupiter (topocentric dist. center to center = 3.2°)
6	2026 01 04	02:22 Close encounter between the Moon and Pollux (topocentric dist. center to center = 3.5°)
7	2026 01 05	02:27 Close encounter between the Moon and M 44 (topocentric dist. center to center = 0.7°)
8	2026 01 06	11:00 Mercury at its aphelion (distance to the Sun = 0.46670 AU)
9	2026 01 06	16:36 SUPERIOR CONJUNCTION of Venus with the Sun (geoc. dist. center to center = 0.7°)
10	2026 01 08	07:28 Comet 24P Schaumasse at its perihelion (dist. to the Sun = 1.184 AU; magn. = 7.9)
11	2026 01 09	11:41 CONJUNCTION between Mars and the Sun (geoc. dist. center to center = 0.9°)
12	2026 01 10	15:48 LAST QUARTER OF THE MOON
13	2026 01 13	20:47 Moon at apogee (geocentric dist. = 405438 km)
14	2026 01 18	19:52 NEW MOON
15	2026 01 20	18:21 Comet C/2024 E1 Wierzchos at its perihelion (dist. to the Sun = 0.566 AU; magn. = 5.2)
16	2026 01 21	15:48 SUPERIOR CONJUNCTION of Mercury with the Sun (geoc. dist. center to center = 2.1°)
17	2026 01 22	19:00 Venus at its aphelion (distance to the Sun = 0.72824 AU)
18	2026 01 23	10:26 CONJUNCTION between Pluto and the Sun (geoc. dist. center to center = 3.8°)
19	2026 01 26	04:48 FIRST QUARTER OF THE MOON
20	2026 01 27	22:12 Close encounter between the Moon and the Pleiades (topocentric dist. center to center = 0.6°)
21	2026 01 29	21:53 Moon at perigee (geocentric dist. = 365871 km)
22	2026 01 31	04:55 Close encounter between the Moon and Jupiter (topocentric dist. center to center = 3.0°)

# THE MOON

## Lunar Phases this month

Full Moon is on 3 January.

New Moon is on 18 January.

You may see this Full Moon described as a supermoon, which is when the event coincides with the Moon being near its closest point to Earth. There is some discussion as to whether this Moon qualifies, so you can decide yourself!



CHART GENERATED BY COELIXAPEX SOFTWARE

January's Full Moon is the Wolf Moon, thought to have a Celtic and Old English origin, describing an animal which tends to be active during the early part of the year. Other Celtic names for the Full Moon include the Stay Home Moon and the Quiet Moon. In Anglo-Saxon culture, this month's Full Moon was also called the Moon after Yule (pre-Christian Yule (or Juul) is the ancient winter solstice festival usually celebrated around December 21). In some Native American cultures, it is known as the Severe Moon or the Center Moon.

# THE SUN

Graphical format showing sun rising, setting and twilight linked to an online data source (time-ok.com) to show twilight zones more clearly. Location is set at Wolverhampton UK.



Key:

Night	Twilight			Day
	Astronomical	Nautical	Civil	

After the winter solstice 21 December the days will start getting longer and the nights shorter. If you're an astronomer the solstice marked the start of astronomical winter (but meteorologists have strange ideas of their own and to them winter started on 1 December).

## PLANETS THIS MONTH

Here's my usual summary table showing planetary observation opportunities based on mid-month data:

Planetrise/Planetset, Thu, 15 Jan 2026				
Planet	Rise	Set	Meridian	Comment
<b>Mercury</b>	Fri 08:04	Fri 15:59	Fri 12:01	Extremely difficult to see
<b>Venus</b>	Fri 08:15	Fri 16:34	Fri 12:24	Slightly difficult to see
<b>Mars</b>	Fri 08:03	Fri 16:12	Fri 12:07	Very close to Sun, not visible
<b>Jupiter</b>	Thu 15:42	Fri 07:50	Thu 23:46	Perfect visibility
<b>Saturn</b>	Thu 10:29	Thu 22:04	Thu 16:16	Average visibility
<b>Uranus</b>	Thu 12:19	Fri 03:50	Thu 20:04	Average visibility
<b>Neptune</b>	Thu 10:28	Thu 22:21	Thu 16:24	Very difficult to see

Data from [timeanddate.com](http://timeanddate.com)

Here is my usual run-down of planetary movements for the month of January, not a very good month for planetary observing:

**Mercury** is at aphelion in the Sagittarius shining at mag -1.2. It reaches superior conjunction on 21 January, when it lines up with the Sun on the opposite side of its orbit from Earth (so is behind the Sun). This marks its transition from being a morning to being an evening planet, but it also means Mercury is too close to the Sun for observation this month.

**Venus** is in the WSW in Capricornus shining at mag -3.8 and like Mercury also reaches superior conjunction this month and transitions from a morning to an evening planet. This happens on 6 January and so Venus won't be visible at the start of the month, being too close to the Sun. At the end of the month there is a chance but its altitude will be very low.

**Mars** reaches solar conjunction on 9 January and so won't be visible at all this month.

**Jupiter** remains in the S in Gemini at a maximum altitude of 59° shining at mag -2.7 and still dominates the night sky. It reaches opposition on 10 January, when the planet will be at its brightest and highest in the sky.

**Saturn** is still in the S in Aquarius at a maximum altitude of 33° shining at mag +0.7 and is still an evening planet, as usual in the same area of the sky as Neptune. Later in the month the planet moves into Pisces and its altitude will be lower as the month progresses. On 23 January a 24%-lit waxing crescent Moon sits nearby.

**Uranus** is still in the S in Taurus, shining at mag. +5.7 at a maximum altitude of 57° south of the Pleiades open star cluster and should be visible through binoculars.

**Neptune** is still in the SW in Pisces at a maximum altitude of 35°, shining at mag. +7.9 and remains in the same part of the sky as Saturn, and both planets are well placed for observations.

# International Space Station (ISS)

## Forecast time for all visible passes this month

Date	Mag	Transit time	Time	Start Alt.degs.	Az.	High point	Time	End Alt.degs.	Az.
13-Jan	-1.5	01:12	19:00	10°	SSW	18°	19:01	18°	SSW
14-Jan	-2.0	02:49	18:12	10°	SSW	20°	18:15	20°	SE
14-Jan	-0.4	00:12	19:47	10°	WSW	11°	19:48	11°	WSW
15-Jan	-1.5	03:42	17:24	10°	S	14°	17:28	10°	ESE
15-Jan	-2.3	02:09	18:59	10°	SW	32°	19:01	32°	SSW
16-Jan	-2.8	03:58	18:11	10°	SW	35°	18:15	30°	ESE
16-Jan	-0.6	00:36	19:47	10°	W	14°	19:48	14°	WSW
17-Jan	-2.3	05:36	17:23	10°	SSW	26°	17:28	11°	E
17-Jan	-2.9	02:34	18:59	10°	WSW	47°	19:01	47°	SW
18-Jan	-3.5	04:29	18:10	10°	WSW	56°	18:15	34°	ESE
18-Jan	-0.7	00:47	19:47	10°	W	16°	19:48	16°	W
19-Jan	-3.0	06:18	17:22	10°	SW	44°	17:28	11°	E
19-Jan	-3.2	02:46	18:58	10°	W	56°	19:01	56°	WSW
20-Jan	-3.7	04:43	18:10	10°	WSW	74°	18:15	32°	E
20-Jan	-0.8	00:57	19:46	10°	W	17°	19:47	17°	W
21-Jan	-3.5	06:40	17:21	10°	WSW	65°	17:28	10°	E
21-Jan	-3.3	02:56	18:58	10°	W	60°	19:01	60°	WSW
22-Jan	-3.7	04:57	18:09	10°	W	76°	18:14	28°	ESE
22-Jan	-0.9	01:06	19:46	10°	W	18°	19:47	18°	W
23-Jan	-3.6	06:43	17:21	10°	W	77°	17:27	10°	E
23-Jan	-3.2	03:12	18:57	10°	W	51°	19:01	51°	SSW
24-Jan	-3.4	05:21	18:09	10°	W	62°	18:14	21°	ESE
24-Jan	-1.0	01:16	19:46	10°	W	17°	19:47	17°	WSW
25-Jan	-3.5	06:42	17:20	10°	W	72°	17:27	10°	ESE
25-Jan	-2.3	03:41	18:57	10°	W	31°	19:01	28°	S
26-Jan	-2.6	06:05	18:08	10°	W	41°	18:14	12°	SE
26-Jan	-0.7	01:06	19:46	10°	WSW	12°	19:47	12°	SW
27-Jan	-3.0	06:34	17:20	10°	W	53°	17:26	10°	ESE
27-Jan	-1.1	04:18	18:57	10°	W	17°	19:01	11°	S
28-Jan	-1.5	05:33	18:08	10°	W	24°	18:13	10°	SSE
30-Jan	-0.6	03:12	18:08	10°	WSW	13°	18:11	10°	S

*you can also install these apps to check for passes*

**Android:**  
ISS Detector  
Satellite Tracker



**IOS:**  
ISS Spotter



Plenty of evening passes this month, we just need some clear skies. Always worth trying a long exposure photograph, just plan to get yourself in place in advance. As always check the Heavens-Above website for the latest forecasts.  
[source: <https://www.heavens-above.com/>]

## METEOR SHOWERS

### Quadrantid meteor shower

This shower is among the strongest and most consistent meteor showers, with a maximum rate of 120 meteors per hour on a clear night. It is usually active between the end of December and the second week of January, and peak around January 3-4 but unlike other meteor showers the peak period of the Quadrantids only lasts a few hours.

This years peak unfortunately coincides with the Moon being at Full, so you may only see the brightest meteors.

The shower gets its name to the now-defunct constellation Quadrans Muralis. This constellation was left off the list made by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) in 1922, but because the shower had already been named after Quadrans Muralis, its name was not changed. The Quadrantids is also sometimes called Bootids after the modern constellation, Boötes. It is associated with asteroid 2003 EH1 which takes about 5.5 years to orbit around the Sun.

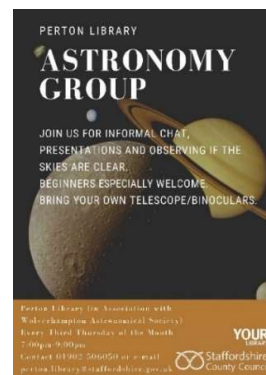
## PERTON LIBRARY ASTRONOMY GROUP

The group meets on the third Thursday of every month of the year at Periton Library from 7pm to 9pm. No subscription, no need to book, all free, just drop in at any time during the evening.

*(Location WV6 7QU or on what3words ///saints.empty.stands)*

The group is a relaxed and friendly gathering with the occasional talk.

We are particularly suited to beginners who very often bring their telescopes along for advice on how to set up, and we have experienced members who can help with this. If the skies are clear we do try to do some observing with library and member equipment.



## WOLVERHAMPTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY LECTURE PROGRAMME

The Wolvas annual subscription remains a bargain at £10 per annum and you can sign up now our website [www.wolvas.org.uk](http://www.wolvas.org.uk) and pay your subscription, preferably by bank transfer.



We put together a yearly 16 lecture programme and some of this year's programme is shown below.

The host location for our live talks remains the University of Wolverhampton in the city centre. Access and facilities are excellent - details are available on the Wolvas website. Lectures in person or online will only be available to paid-up members of the Society. Members will receive regular emails with invitations to the Zoom sessions and reminders of the in-person lectures.

Non-members may attend the talks live for £2 on the door.

Our lecture season has now resumed for the 2025/26 season.

Here is a list of the upcoming lectures, please keep an eye on our website for updates and also synopses of the individual talks:

12-Jan-26	Dr Steve Barrett	ABC of Stellar Evolution
19-Jan-26	Andrew Thornett	Getting started in radio astronomy: Equipment, software, projects
02-Feb-26	Gary Poyner	T Corona Borealis - The Jewel in the Crown
16-Feb-26	Kieron Nixon	Understanding Special Relativity (without the maths)
02-Mar-26	Fran Bagenal	NASA's Juno Mission to Jupiter (live from Colorado)
16-Mar-26	Simon Banton	The Astronomy of Stonehenge
13-Apr-26	Simon Holbeche	The Women who discovered what stars are made of
11-May-26	Jacco van Loon	Mysterious matter in interstellar space
08-Jun-26	Paul Fellows	Once around the moons of Pluto

As well as our website we will be posting details of events on social media, so keep an eye on our Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/wolvasuk>) and X [Twitter] (<https://twitter.com/wolvasuk>) pages for the latest news.