

## Offered Title: Summertime Night Sky Sightseeing

It's summer and it's hot, what else is new?

After the Sun takes its leave and night air slowly cools, take the opportunity to enjoy our summer night sky. Here are some celestial treats to check out.

### The Summer Triangle

Made up of three alpha stars from three constellations, the summer triangle is a very big asterism (not a constellation itself, but a recognizable shape). The stars are: Deneb in Cygnus (the swan, also called the northern cross), Vega in Lyra (the lyre), and Altair in Aquila (the eagle). After dark look nearly straight up to find Vega. Deneb is to Vega's northeast and Altair is to Vega's southeast.

### The "Teapot" of Sagittarius

Sagittarius is a *centaur* (human upper body and horse lower body) with bow and arrow in Greek mythology. The most recognizable part is the teapot, an asterism that forms the upper front of this constellation. At our latitude the teapot floats about 20 degrees above the southern horizon well after sunset. The bright planet Saturn will help as it is located just above the teapot's lid. Its spout is to the right and handle to the left. With binoculars look at the area above and around the lid. Along with bright Saturn explore several nebulae and star clusters.

### Scorpius

Scorpius is the constellation shaped most like its name, the scorpion. Well after sunset look to the south, just to the right of Sagittarius and Scorpius is there in all its scary beauty. From the three-star head to its stinger Scorpius winds around in the southern sky. Bright, orangish star Antares, Latin for rival of Ares (Mars), lies at its heart and is the constellation's alpha star. If you have a telescope, look at Antares with low power. Move it around in the field of view and maybe you will spot the globular cluster M4 just a bit west of Antares. It is dim compared with Antares, but their juxtaposition is remarkable in the eyepiece.

### Ursa Major, Boötes, and Hercules

The big bear, the plowman, and the strongman complete this tour. Find the Big Dipper in the northwest. The big dipper is an asterism and forms the rear and tail of Ursa Major. It's an unusually long tail for a bear, but mythological creatures don't always agree with their real-life counterparts. Anyway, find the big dipper and follow the curve of its handle around to a bright star. That's Arcturus, the alpha star of Boötes. The rest of Boötes is northeast of Arcturus and kite shaped. Going back to the Big Dipper's handle, use the two stars just in from the end star and follow a line southeast to straight overhead. Look for a keystone shaped asterism. This is Hercules' body, his arms going north and his legs south. Along the west side of the keystone lies M13, a beautiful globular cluster easily seen in binoculars.

## What's in the Sky?

Jupiter in the southwest and Saturn in the south southeast. Mars is rising later.