

Morning and evening sky watching at Tahquitz Creek pedestrian bridge

Led by Robert Victor, astronomy columnist for Coachella Valley Independent

(1) Predawn Sky Watch: Sunday, May 6, 4:00 a.m.-5:00 a.m. PDT.

Our viewing site is in Palm Springs, on the pedestrian bridge crossing over Tahquitz Creek, at Camino Real between North and South Riverside Drives. The bridge is three blocks north of Cahuilla Elementary School. Parking is available on Camino Real, both north and south of the bridge. Be on time for the dark skies at the start of this session; before the sky brightens, we may spot a few meteors originally from Halley's Comet, view the Milky Way, and use telescope and binoculars to view a sampling of star clusters.

During the predawn sky watch on May 6: We'll preview stars in the same places you'll find them during evenings in late August, including the Summer Triangle of Vega, Altair, and Deneb nearly overhead; Scorpius and its red supergiant star Antares in SSW; and golden Arcturus in west. We'll also observe all three bright outer planets, including telescopic views of Jupiter and its four satellites discovered by Galileo; Saturn with its wonderful rings; Mars with its extensive late winter south polar cap; and a waning gibbous Moon appearing close by Mars that morning. All three planets will be prominent in the evening sky in August, in addition to Venus.

(2) Evening Sky Watch: Sunday, May 20, 8:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m. PDT.

Our viewing site is in Palm Springs, on the pedestrian bridge crossing over Tahquitz Creek, at Camino Real between North and South Riverside Drives. The bridge is three blocks north of Cahuilla Elementary School. Parking is available on Camino Real, both north and south of the bridge. Be on time for the start of this session, to catch Venus before it disappears below the San Jacinto Mountains nearby to our west.

During our evening sky watch on May 20: We'll begin with naked eye, binocular, and telescopic observations of three bright solar system bodies: Venus, a waxing crescent Moon, and Jupiter, all spanning an angle of 135° in the zodiac. As the sky darkens, we'll see an arch of four bright holdover winter stars in the western sky topped by the Pollux and Castor, the Twins of Gemini. We'll use the Big Dipper to locate the bright stars Arcturus, Spica, and Regulus, the heart of Leo, and not-so-bright Polaris, the North Star. We'll learn how to tell time using the two brightest stars of the Little Dipper. (One of them is the North Star.) We'll enjoy telescopic views of Jupiter's four bright moons, Venus' gibbous phase, lunar craters, double stars, and star clusters. By end of the session, we'll spot summer's first-arriving bright stars, blue-white Vega in northeast, and red supergiant Antares, heart of the Scorpion, in southeast.

For a free printable **May Sky Calendar** illustrating the month's gatherings of Moon, planets, and bright stars with an evening sky map, visit www.abramsplanetarium.org/skycalendar/

For a list of sky events to enjoy with unaided eye on your own, visit www.cvindependent.com/ and select "Astronomy" in the dropdown menu for "News."

Visit website of **Astronomical Society of the Desert** www.astrorx.org for listings of star parties.