

Astronomical Events of January 2018

- January 1** - **Mercury at Greatest Western Elongation.**
The planet Mercury reaches greatest western elongation of 22.7 degrees from the Sun. This is the best time to view Mercury since it will be at its highest point above the horizon in the morning sky. Look for the planet low in the eastern sky just before sunrise.
- January 2** - **Full Moon, Supermoon.**
The Moon will be located on the opposite side of the Earth as the Sun and its face will be fully illuminated. This full moon was known by early Native American tribes as the Full Wolf Moon because this was the time of year when hungry wolf packs howled outside their camps. This moon has also been known as the Old Moon and the Moon After Yule. This is also the first of two supermoons for 2018. The Moon will be at its closest approach to the Earth and may look slightly larger and brighter than usual.
- January 3, 4** - **Quadrantids Meteor Shower.**
The Quadrantids is an above average shower, with up to 40 meteors per hour at its peak. It is thought to be produced by dust grains left behind by an extinct comet known as 2003 EH1, which was discovered in 2003. The shower runs annually from January 1-5. It peaks this year on the night of the 3rd and morning of the 4th. Unfortunately the nearly full moon will block out all but the brightest meteors this year. If you are patient, you should still be able to catch some of the brightest ones. Best viewing will be from a dark location after midnight. Meteors will radiate from the constellation Bootes, but can appear anywhere in the sky.
- January 31** - **Full Moon, Supermoon, Blue Moon.**
The Moon will be located on the opposite side of the Earth as the Sun and its face will be fully illuminated. Since this is the second full moon in the same month, it is sometimes referred to as a blue moon. This is also the last of two supermoons for 2018. The Moon will be at its closest approach to the Earth and may look slightly larger and brighter than usual.
- January 31** - **Total Lunar Eclipse.**
A total lunar eclipse occurs when the Moon passes completely through the Earth's dark shadow, or umbra. During this type of eclipse, the Moon will gradually get darker and then take on a rusty or blood red color. The eclipse will be visible throughout most of western North America, eastern Asia, Australia, and the Pacific Ocean.