



Evening sky in DECEMBER 2015

Bright stars are often used as markers to find less well-known constellations. Overhead are Fomalhaut, Achernar and Canopus, indicating the positions of the constellations Piscis Austrinus (Southern Fish), Eridanus (River) and Carina (Keel) respectively. Low above the southern horizon are the two bright stars known as the Pointers, Alpha and Beta Centauri, "pointing" to the Southern Cross (Crux). In Sotho and Tswana tradition the two brightest stars of the Cross and the Pointers are known as four giraffes, Dithutlwa. To the east the three bright stars in a row show where Orion, the Hunter from Greek mythology, is hunting the Bull (Taurus) followed by the Dogs (Canis Major and Canis Minor). In Canis Major (Big Dog) is the brightest star in the night sky, Sirius.

The observing prospects are favourable for the December Phoenicid (max. 6 December) and Geminid (max. 14 December) meteor showers.

Planet Mercury moves from Ophiuchus to Sagittarius and is low in the west after sunset. The four other planets visible to the naked eye, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are all low in the east at dawn towards the end of the month.

Summer solstice is on the 22 December.

The Moon is in the evening sky from 13 December until 26 December.