



### Evening sky in February 2018

High above the northern horizon the asterism known as Orion's Belt can be identified easily. The three bright stars forming the Belt are named, from right to left, Mintaka, Alnilam and Alnitak. Extend their line towards the left and downwards to reach the bright star, Aldebaran, in the constellation of Taurus (Bull). This orange-hued star is a red giant around 65 light years away. It has expanded to 44 times the diameter of the Sun and now shines with 425 times the Sun's luminosity, although it only has about 50% more mass. In the same direction but more than twice as far away as Aldebaran at about 150 light years distant, are the Hyades, a v-shaped open star cluster. The Hyades and Aldebaran represent the nose and fiery red eye of the Bull. On the opposite side of the sky is Crux (Southern Cross), still low above the southern horizon but climbing higher every night.

Towards the end of the month Venus can be seen as the brilliant Evening Star low in the west soon after sunset.

The Moon is in the evening sky (at 9pm) on 1 February and again from 18 February.

The partial eclipse of the Sun on 15 February is not observable from southern Africa