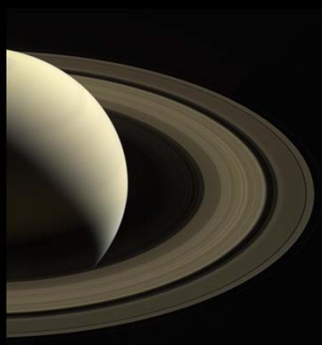
Marcham ASTRONOMY

18th February 2026

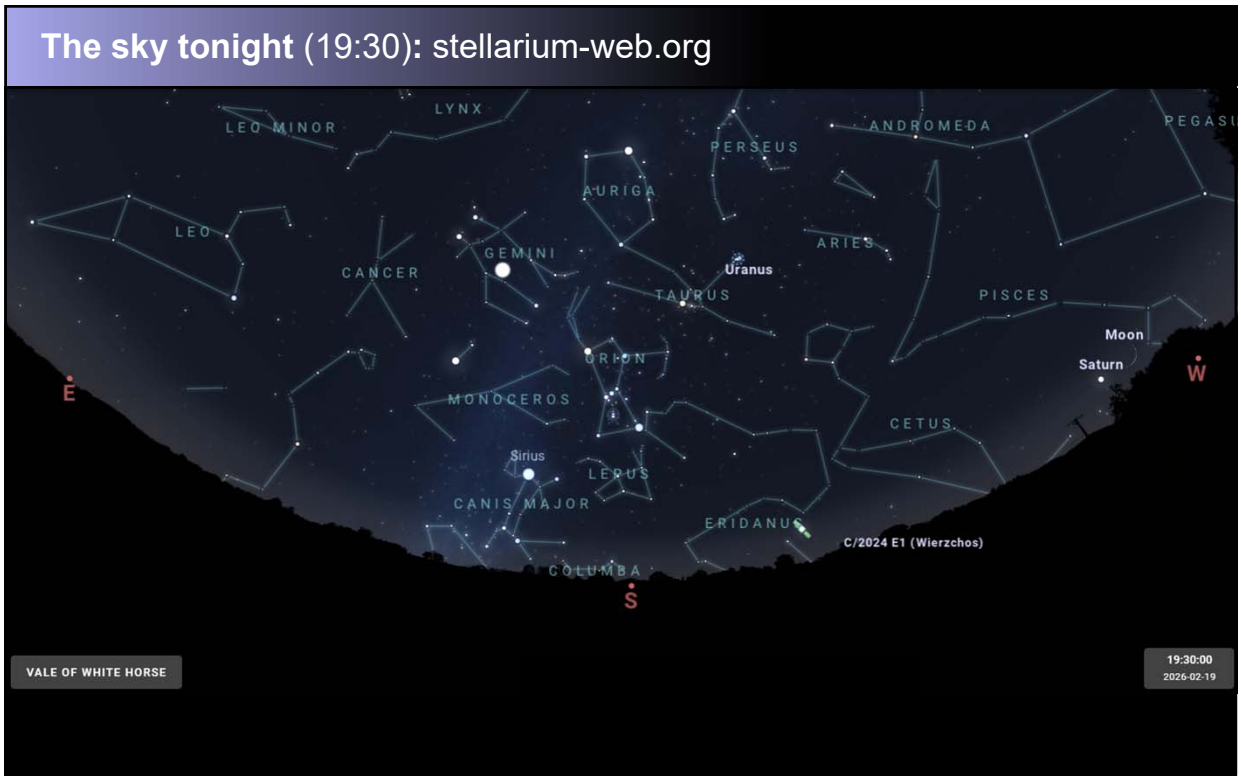
Tonight: Year 4 - Meeting No 30

- The sky tonight
- Recent news, sightings and Members' Matter
- Feature: "Three Stories about Saturn"
- Forward look



The sky tonight (19:30)**:** stellarium-web.org

The sky tonight (19:30)**:** stellarium-web.org



Follow-up to a question last month…

When/where was the Southern Cross visible?

Marcham: Winter solstice 4000BC

Callanish, Lewis: 7700BC

In the news…

Gladys West obituary: the unsung heroine of GPS

Mathematician whose data-mapping and modelling to measure the Earth's surface paved the way for the modern sat-nav dies aged 95

Wednesday January 28 2026, 5.00pm, The Times

Space

West's key contribution to modern life came to light only in the past decade

Gladys West spent much of her career recording satellite locations and making complex calculations, unaware of the impact that her work would have on the world. Today the armed forces, airlines, car manufacturers, mobile phone users, social media giants and parents tracking errant teenagers all use the Global Positioning System (GPS). "When you're working every day, you're not thinking, 'What impact is this going to have on the world?' You're thinking, 'I've got to get this right,' " she said.

As head of the Seasat radar altimeter project at the US Naval Proving Ground in Dahlgren, Virginia, West oversaw a team of five working on algorithms to measure variations in the forces that distort the Earth's shape. Using an IBM 7030 "Stretch" computer, she was able to deliver increasingly refined calculations. Along the way she constantly checked and rechecked her equations. "You had to be particular," she told The Guardian. In 1981 she published two technical papers offering precise measurements of the Earth's surface. Others followed, providing valuable contributions to the development of GPS.

Supermassive new theory on what lies at the heart of our galaxy

The centre of the Milky Way may not be dominated by a gargantuan black hole after all, research suggests

Rhys Blakely, Science Editor

Thursday February 05 2026, 5.23pm, The Times

For about half a century, astronomers have been largely convinced that our galaxy harbours a monstrous black hole at its heart.

That theory is now being challenged by a provocative rival idea: that the centre of the Milky Way instead contains a gargantuan knot of dark matter, a mysterious and invisible core with a gravitational pull powerful enough to shape the entire galaxy.

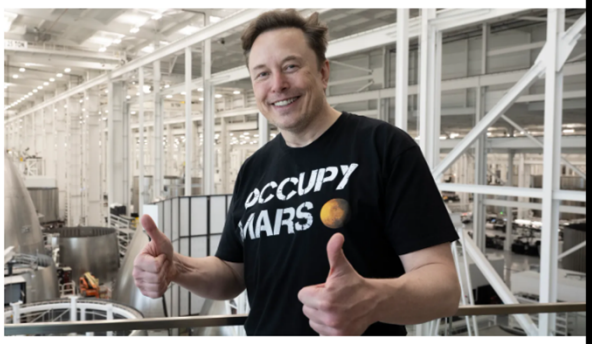
Elon Musk: I'll build a self-growing city on the moon in 10 years

The world's richest man said he had shifted his sights from Mars in the race to construct a self-sustaining settlement

Kaya Burgess, Science Correspondent

Tuesday February 10 2026, 7.40am, The Times

Social media | Space | Transport | Elon Musk | Companies



Elon Musk at Space X in Brownsville, Texas

Elon Musk has long said he will be the man to lead humanity's colonisation of Mars, but has now shifted his sights tens of millions of miles closer to home, pledging to build "a self-growing city on the moon".

The founder of the SpaceX company said in 2018 that humans must create a "self-sustaining base on Mars" in case an apocalyptic war broke out on our own planet. He told the SXSW festival eight years ago that the red planet was "far enough away from Earth that it's more likely to survive than a moon base".

Musk, the world's richest man, has now reset his plans, looking not at Mars, which sits 140 million miles from Earth on average, but at the moon, about a quarter of a million miles away.

"It is only possible to travel to Mars when the planets align every 26 months (six-month trip time), whereas we can launch to the Moon every 10 days (2-day trip time). This means we can iterate much faster to complete a Moon city than a Mars city."

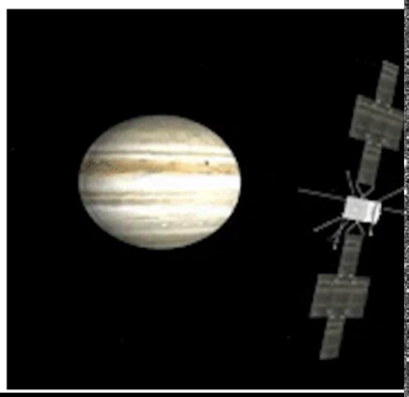
Jupiter-bound spacecraft turns gaze on solar system trespasser

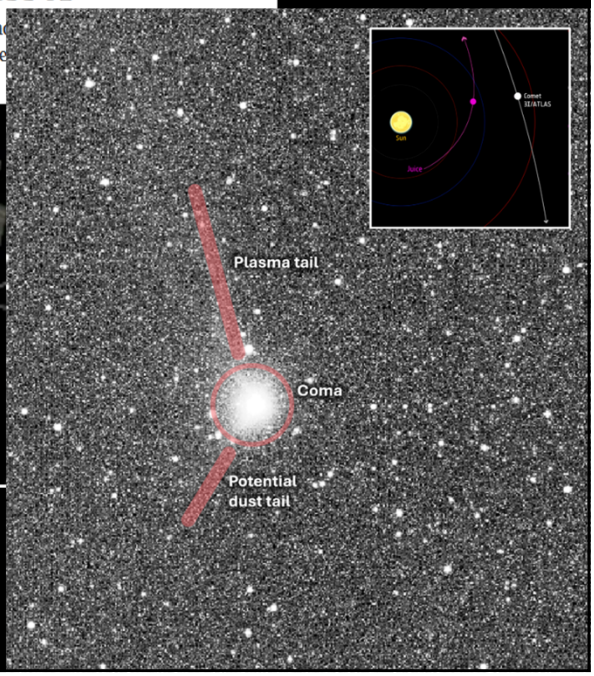
The Juice craft, built to explore the Jovian planet and
on 3I/Atlas, a comet potentially billions of years olde

Rhys Blakely, Science Editor

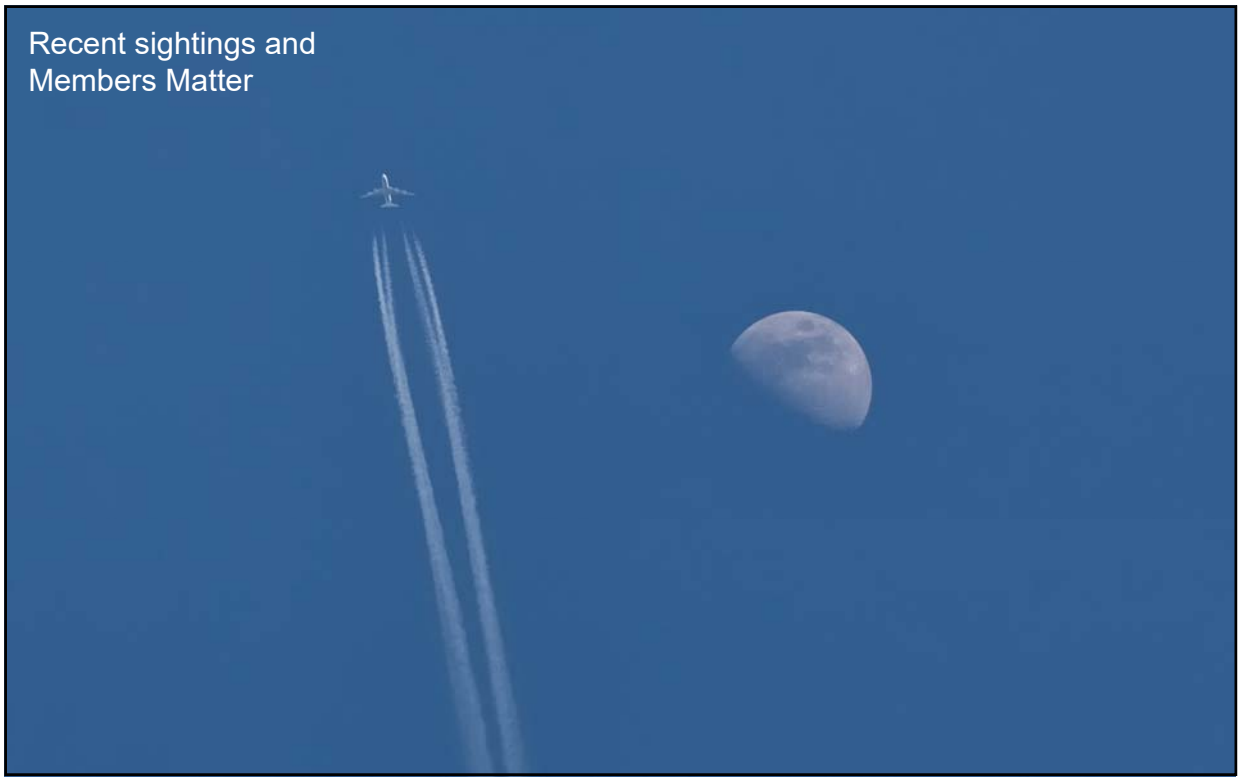
Thursday February 12 2026,
1.40pm, The Times

Space





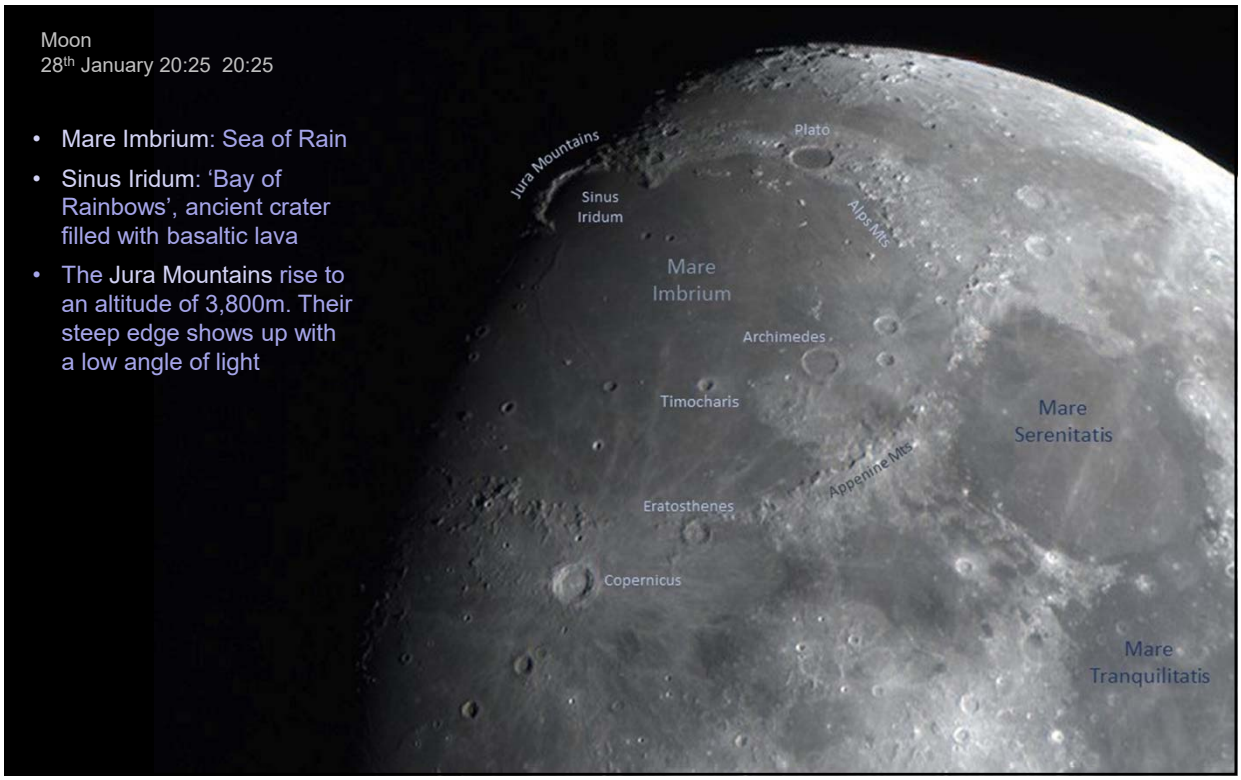
Recent sightings and
Members Matter



Moon passing the Pleiades
27th January 22:49

Moon
27th January 23:12


Moon
28th January 17:28


Moon
28th January 20:25 20:25
• Mare Imbrium: Sea of Rain
• Sinus Iridum: 'Bay of Rainbows', ancient crater filled with basaltic lava
• The Jura Mountains rise to an altitude of 3,800m. Their steep edge shows up with a low angle of light
Jura Mountains
Plato
Sinus Iridum
Alps Mts
Mare Imbrium
Archimedes
Timocharis
Mare Serenitatis
Appenine Mts
Eratosthenes
Copernicus
Mare Tranquilitatis

Julian Parfitt
28th January

Julian Parfitt
28th January 22:00

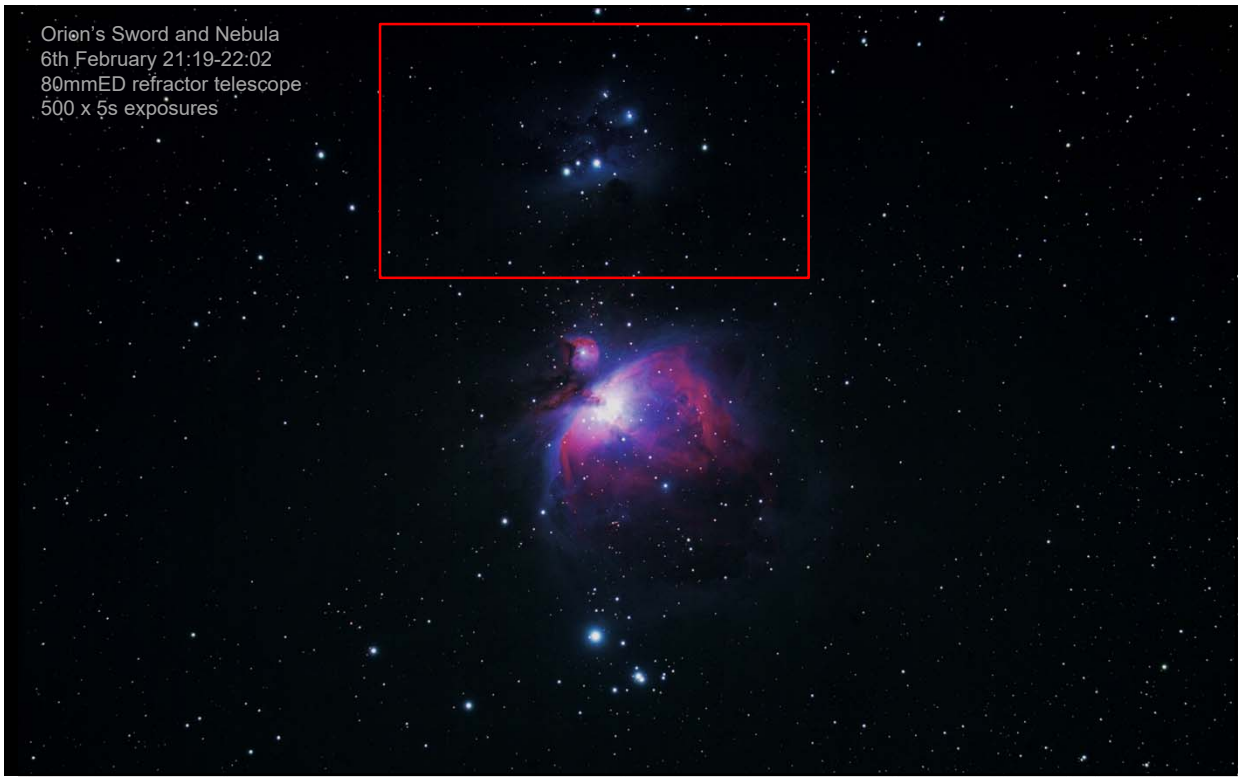
"Bay of Rainbows over looked by Jura Mountains - sounds like a great holiday destination!"

Julian Parfitt
Jupiter and four moons
28th January

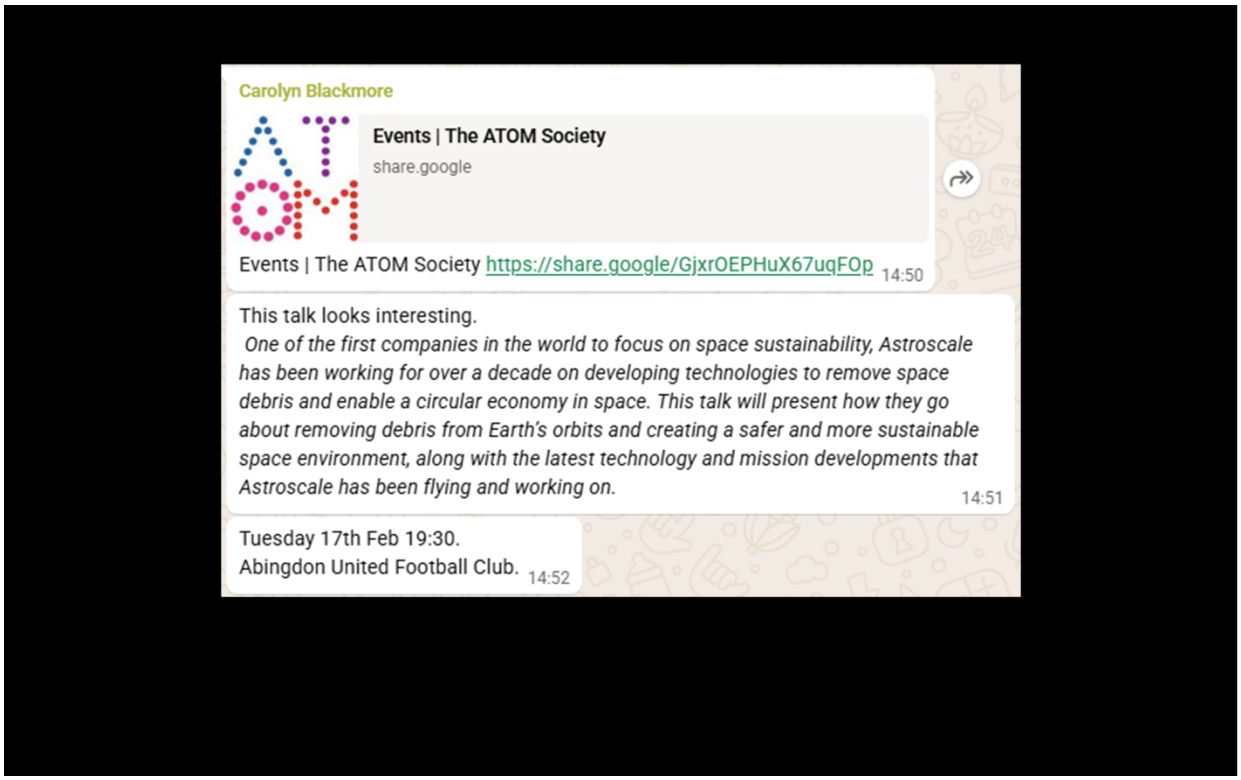
Julian Parfitt
Jupiter, Ganymede's shadow
4th February 18:41

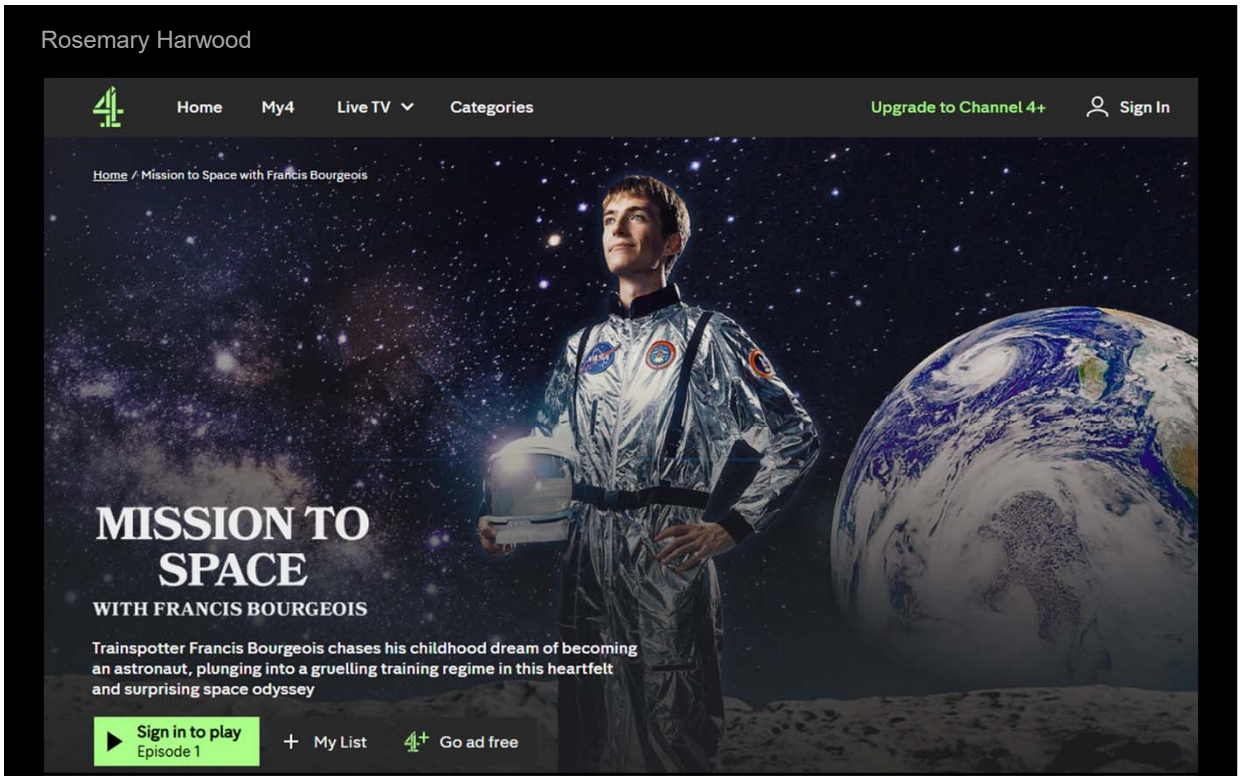

Jupiter, Ganymede and its shadow
4th February 17:30-20:30
8” Reflector telescope


Orion constellation


Orion's Sword and Nebula
6th February 21:19-22:02
80mmED refractor telescope
500 x 5s exposures


Running Man Nebula
6th February 21:19-22:02


Carolyn Blackmore
Events | The ATOM Society
share.google
Events | The ATOM Society https://share.google/GjxrOEPHuX67uqFOp 14:50
This talk looks interesting.
One of the first companies in the world to focus on space sustainability, Astroscale has been working for over a decade on developing technologies to remove space debris and enable a circular economy in space. This talk will present how they go about removing debris from Earth's orbits and creating a safer and more sustainable space environment, along with the latest technology and mission developments that Astroscale has been flying and working on. 14:51
Tuesday 17th Feb 19:30.
Abingdon United Football Club. 14:52


Rosemary Harwood
Home
My4
Live TV
Categories
Upgrade to Channel 4+
Sign In
Home / Mission to Space with Francis Bourgeois
MISSION TO SPACE
WITH FRANCIS BOURGEOIS
Trainspotter Francis Bourgeois chases his childhood dream of becoming an astronaut, plunging into a gruelling training regime in this heartfelt and surprising space odyssey
Sign in to play
Episode 1
My List
Go ad free

Rosemary Harwood

Radio 4 · 13 Feb 2026 · 14 mins

Life Without the Moon

Life Without >

▶ Play + Bookmark Subscribe

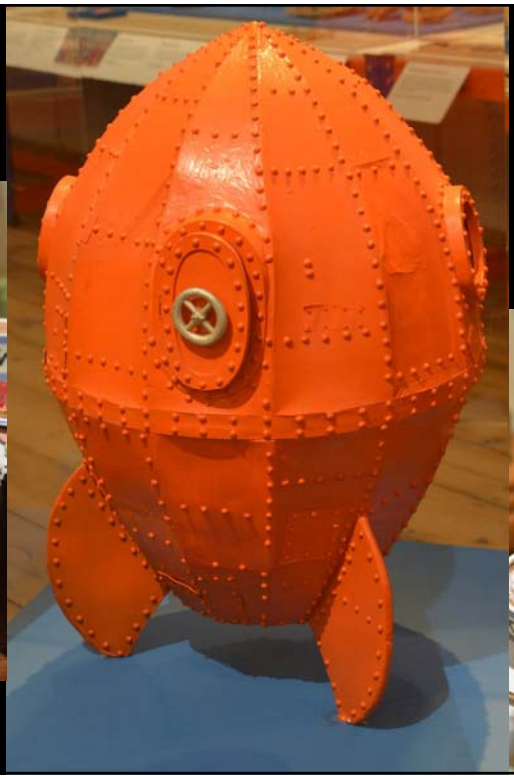
Available for over a year

Full moon, half-moon, total eclipse. What happens when we look up and the moon is missing? In this episode of Life Without, our host Alan Davies imagines a world where the moon just ceases to exist, the Earth's natural satellite gone.

What would happen to our tides and how would creatures who depend on moonlight to hunt survive? The loss of the Moon would also have a huge impact on our psyche and connection to the lunar calendar.

This episode features Sara Russell a Merit Researcher in Cosmic Mineralogy and Planetary Science and artist Luke Jerram who toured the world with his replica in Museum of the Moon.

Inside Aardman Exhibition
Young V&A, London
16th February



Rosemary Harwood

6 | METRO | Wednesday, February 18, 2026 METRO.co.uk

News / WORLD

Lost in Space... Missing Moon probe 'found'

A 60-year-old mystery surrounding the first spacecraft to land on the Moon may finally have been solved.

Luna 9 (left) sent the first images of the lunar surface back to Earth in 1966. Part of the Soviet's Ye-6 programme, it bounced across the Moon in a spherical case before petal-like panels opened to expose the camera. It took pictures for three days until losing power, with its location unknown.

Now Russian scientist Vitaly Egorov says he has found it – by poring over Luna 9's images and data on LROC QuickMap, which is like a Google Street View version of the Moon. 'One day, a place looked familiar. It was the place Luna 9 had seen,' he said.

Using the same app, University College London said it has found the probe but in a different location. 'I'm optimistic, maybe, it's Luna 9,' Dr Lewis Pinault said.

Looking forward…

What to see in the coming month

February

- 18th: Moon between Venus and Mercury (evening twilight and before 19:00)
- 19th: Mercury at greatest eastern elongation (18:15-19:00); highest altitude on 20th
- 26th: Venus and Mercury in conjunction (18:00) + Moon near Jupiter (evening) ~16° apart

Planets visible: Me, (V), J, S, U, (N) Moon: Full: 1st Feb New: 17th Feb

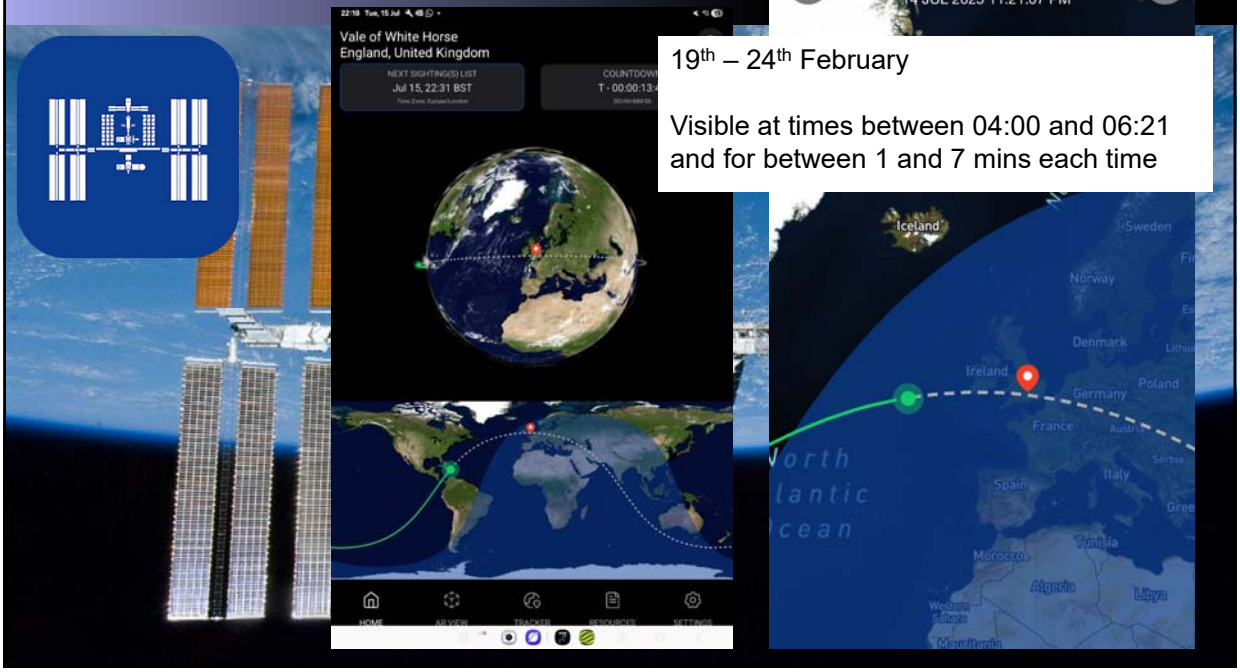
March

- 7th: Venus (low-altitude), Saturn and Neptune within 1.5° circle
- 11th: Jupiter ends retrograde motion
- 19th: very thin crescent Moon after sunset
- 20th: Crescent Moon and Venus in conjunction (daytime) and Spring Equinox

Planets visible: Me, V, J, S, U Moon: Full: 3rd Mar New: 19th Mar

ISS visible from Marcham

From SpotTheStation NASA App



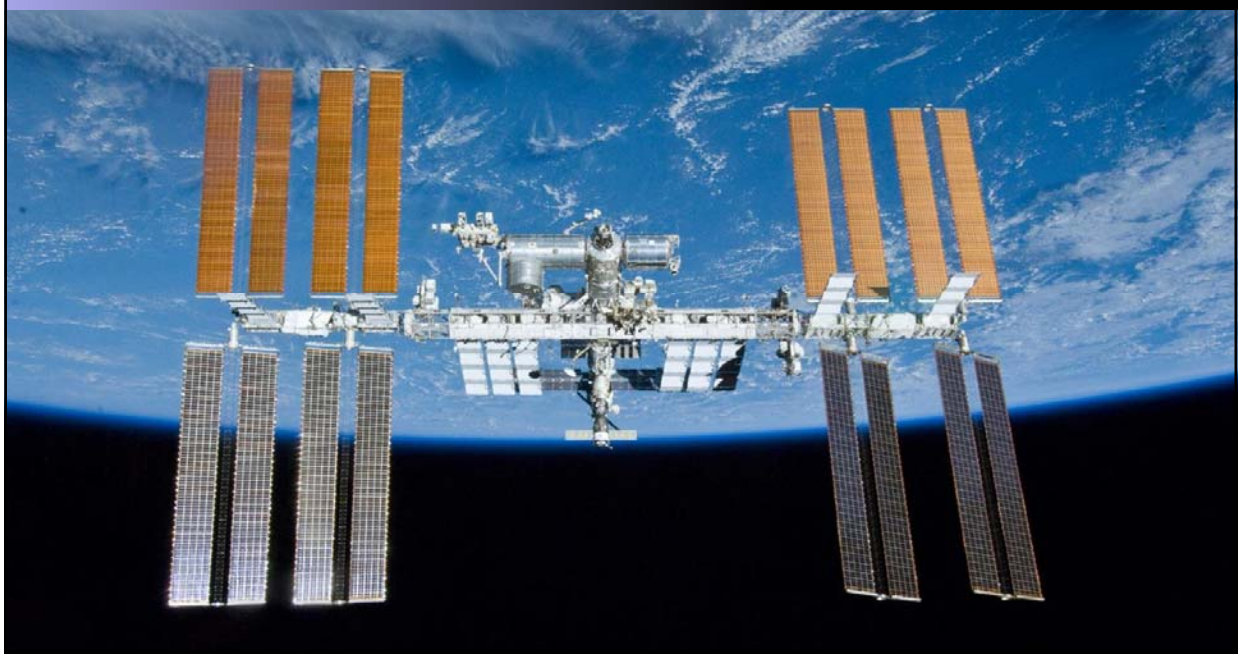
19th – 24th February

Visible at times between 04:00 and 06:21 and for between 1 and 7 mins each time

ISS transits visible from Marcham

transit-finder.com

No transits predicted



Future meetings…

- Mar 18th *: "Games in Space"* – Mark Buckley
- Apr 15th *: "The Long Crendon Observatory"* – Gordon Rogers
- May 13th*: "Robotic exploration of asteroids, Comets and KBOs"*
  – Jon Pineau, Stellar Solutions

All Wednesdays at 7:30pm

Marcham ASTRONOMY

Starry Night – Family Stargazing Evening

February 20, 2026

Science Oxford Centre

Science Oxford Presents Starry Night, an evening of family stargazing, planetarium show and activities.

Science Oxford
Part of THE OXFORD TRUST

Stargazing: Step outside to gaze at the night sky and look through telescopes with local astronomers from Abingdon Astronomical Society and Marcham Astronomy Group who will share their passion and knowledge as your cosmic tour guides.

https://scienceoxford.com/whats-on/starry-night/

Marcham ASTRONOMY

WhatsApp Group

Marcham Star Gazers – 17 members

- To share images with group members
- Alerts: what's happening now
- Notify last-minute telescope sessions

Marcham Star Gazers
WhatsApp group