

Thursday, October 1, 2026

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Maya: Good evening, and welcome to Marin Night Skies, your guide to what's up over Mahrin tonight, Thursday, October first.

Devon: We've got a busy weekend of astronomy ahead, Maya, but let's be honest about tonight first.

Maya: Right. Tonight is kind of a tease. The big show is building, but the clouds aren't really cooperating.

Devon: Let's start with the bright spot, though, literally. Saturn is the headline act right now. Opposition is Sunday, October fourth, so this weekend Saturn is at its biggest and brightest of the entire year, rising at sunset and up all night, highest around midnight.

Maya: And the view is only getting better. The rings are tilted about seven and a half degrees now, with the southern face toward us, so even a small telescope shows them clearly. A year and a half ago they were nearly edge-on and almost vanished, so this is a real comeback.

Devon: Plus there's a fun new discovery to impress your telescope buddies with. Hubble just found a ten-sided atmospheric wave swirling around Saturn's south pole, kind of like the famous northern hexagon, and it seems to be getting stronger. So you're looking at a planet with freshly discovered weather.

Maya: Saturn sits in the constellation Cetus, the whale, glowing golden in the east this evening. It's the brightest thing in that part of the sky besides the moon, so you can't miss it.

Devon: Speaking of the moon, we have a waning gibbous tonight, about seventy percent lit, and the good news is it doesn't rise until around ten P M. That gives us a nice dark-sky window early in the evening.

Maya: And late tonight, when the moon does come up, it'll be rising near Aldebaran and Capella, with the Pleiades nearby, which is a lovely grouping to catch through binoculars before dawn.

Devon: Venus is still hanging low in the western twilight just after sunset, but it's a tough catch from our latitude, so don't strain yourself. The real planet parade is in the morning hours. Jupiter rises around three A M, blazing in the east before dawn, and Mars comes up around one A M, fairly dim and high in the southeast.

Maya: So for the early risers, there's plenty. Now, meteor showers. Nothing is peaking tonight, but the Draconids start ramping up around October sixth, with the peak on the night of October eighth. This one's special because the Draconids are an evening shower, best right after dark, and this year the moon is a waning crescent, nearly new, so the skies will be wonderfully dark.

Devon: The rates are modest. maybe five to ten an hour. but the Draconids are famous for

the south around midnight as a tiny star. And October twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth, the moon passes right by the Pleiades, the Seven Sisters. Mark it down.

Devon: Now the viewing guidance, and Maya, I'll let you deliver the honest part.

Maya: Okay. Here's the truth about tonight. San Rafael is partly cloudy with a low around fifty-five, and the National Weather Service says the marine layer that stays hugging the coast during the day is going to expand into the North Bay valleys overnight. Fog is expected at Point Reyes after about nine P M, and patchy fog creeps toward Mount Tam around nine to ten as well.

Devon: So the play tonight is early. Get your Saturn and your early-evening planets in before nine, because after that the fog starts winning. The Tam summit sits high enough that it might poke above the fog deck, but that's a gamble, not a guarantee.

Maya: And if tonight doesn't work out, don't fret. Saturday night is looking like the better bet. Mostly clear skies, lows around sixty-two. That's the night I'd circle for a proper Saturn session.

Devon: Last bit, the space weather. The folks at Noah's Space Weather Prediction Center report quiet geomagnetic conditions tonight, with the planetary K index at just one. There's a minor G one storm watch for tomorrow, Friday, but the disturbance is expected to arrive around eight to eleven A M our time, so it hits during daylight. No aurora prospects for Northern California tonight, not even close.

Maya: So tonight's plan: look east early for Saturn, catch the moonrise with the stars of Taurus later, and get out before the fog rolls in. Saturday night is your encore.

Devon: Clear-ish skies, Mahrin. I'm Devon.

Maya: And I'm Maya. We'll see you up there tomorrow night.