

## The Cosmic Reporter

### "Finding the Planets in February"

By Tim Linder

Five of the nine planets can be seen during February. All of these planets can be seen in the early and late evening sky. Here's where to look for the planets this month:

**MERCURY** can best be seen between February 10th and 25th. Look for Mercury low in the west soon after sunset. Mercury will be farthest from the sun (18 degrees) on the 19th so this will be the best date to look for it.

**VENUS** is the very bright "star" high in the southwest at sunset. Venus is so bright (magnitude -3.5) that it is sometimes mistaken for a UFO. Presently Venus is at just over half full phase. On February 19th the moon will be near both Venus and Mercury. This should be a beautiful sight in the western sky.

**MARS** is now in the constellation of Leo and is of magnitude -0.9. Mars rises soon after sunset and is visible for the rest of the night. On February 25th Mars will make it's closest approach of the year to the Earth. At this time Mars will be 100 million

kilometers (161 million miles) away from the Earth.

**JUPITER** is now at magnitude -2 and is in the constellation of Leo. Jupiter is at opposition on February 24th therefore it rises in the east as the sun sets in the west. With the aid of a telescope at low power you will be able to see Jupiter's four brightest moons (Io, Callisto, Ganymede, and Europa).

**SATURN** rises in the east about 3 hours after sunset. The magnitude of Saturn is 1 and it is now in the constellation of Virgo. Presently Saturn's rings are edge-on as seen from the Earth and they are not visible. With the aid of a telescope you may be able to see Saturn's brightest moon, Titan.

That's it for this week, **HAPPY STARGAZING!!!!**

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