SkyNews Astronomical events for Indian observers

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Sun, Planets and Transitions

Beginning January 2026, the Sun, Mercury, Venus and Mars are all in Sagittarius, and move to Capricornus later in the month. The planets will be too close to the Sun for observations. We are not giving their ephemera in this issue. Their elongations are less than 10° in January 2026.

The Sun will be in Sagittarius, the Archer (*Dhanu*), on 1 January. Its angular diameter will be 32’31.8". On 3 January at 22:29 hours, the Earth passes through perihelion, that is, its closest distance from the Sun. After that, as the Earth recedes away from the Sun, the angular size of the Sun will start decreasing. The Sun moves to Capricornus, the Sea Goat (*Makara*) on 20 January. On 31 January, its angular diameter will be 32’28.2".

We also see a fascinating relative motion between two bodies. From Earth's vantage point, we see all the planets, the Sun, and the Moon moving from west to east with respect to the stars. This motion of planets is called normal or prograde motion. During prograde motion, the right ascension of these objects increases. However, the planets are sometimes seen moving in the opposite direction, that is, from east to west, for a short time. This motion is called retrograde motion. This month, all the planets are in prograde motion.

The two inner planets, after their superior conjunction, move eastwards with respect to the Sun. **Mercury’s** superior conjunction will be on 21 January, and that of **Venus** will be on 6 January. By the end of the month, both these planets will reappear above the western horizon after sunset. Mars will be in superior conjunction on 9 January, but as it is moving ‘slower’ than the Sun, it will reappear above the eastern horizon after sunrise.

List of Events in January 2026 (Time in IST)

Dt	Dy	Time	Event
02	Fr	03:13	Moon perigee: 360300 km
02	Fr	13:50	Moon north declination: 28.3° N
03	Sa	15:33	Full Moon
03	Sa	22:29	Earth at perihelion: 0.9833 AU from Sun
04	Su	03:04	Quadrantid shower: ZHR = 120
04	Su	03:31	Moon-Jupiter: 3.7° S
04	Su	08:22	Pollux-Moon: 3.0° N
05	Mo	06:39	Moon-Beehive: 1.3° S
06	Tu	21:28	Venus superior conjunction
06	Tu	21:50	Moon-Regulus: 0.5° S
07	We	16:52	Moon descending node
09	Fr	15:28	Mars conjunction
10	Sa	13:52	Jupiter opposition
10	Sa	21:18	Last quarter
11	Su	05:20	Moon-Spica: 1.8° N
14	We	02:17	Moon apogee: 405400 km
15	Th	00:58	Moon-Antares: 0.6° N not visible
16	Fr	10:55	Moon south declination: 28.3° S
19	Mo	01:22	New Moon
21	We	21:15	Mercury superior conjunction
22	Th	05:33	Moon ascending node
23	Fr	18:01	Moon-Saturn: 4.5° S
23	Fr	18:18	Moon - Neptune 3.1° S
26	Mo	10:17	First quarter
27	Tu	22:02	Uranus-Moon 5.2° S
28	We	02:37	Moon-Pleiades: 1.1° S
29	Th	19:25	Mercury-Venus 0.7° S
29	Th	22:32	Moon north declination: 28.4° N
30	Fr	03:23	Moon perigee: 365900 km
31	Sa	08:01	Moon-Jupiter: 3.9° S
31	Sa	18:38	Pollux-Moon: 3.1° N

These three planets will be visible easily from February.

Jupiter will be in Gemini, the Twins (*Mithuna*), in January. Gemini is the northernmost zodiacal constellation, and therefore, a planet in this constellation is always well-placed for observers in northern latitudes.

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Jupiter, which has been travelling through the Gateway of Heaven, has not exited. It passes less than half a degree from the 4th magnitude star, Wasat (Delta Geminorum), between 18 and 20 January.

Ephemeris of Jupiter:

Date	Alt*	Diam"	Mag	El°
01 Jan	-05° 12'	46.42	-2.7	169.8 W
10 Jan	+03° 51'	46.52	-2.7	179.7 O
20 Jan	+13° 45'	46.31	-2.6	168.3 E
30 Jan	+23° 48'	45.76	-2.6	156.9 E

Saturn will be in Aquarius, the Water-Bearer (*Kumbha*), on 1 January. It moves to Pisces, the Fishes (*Meena*) on 15 January. If you haven't spotted Neptune yet, Saturn can help (see **Finding Neptune**).

Ephemeris of Saturn:

Date	Alt*	Diam"	Ring#	Mag	El°
01 Jan	+64°45'	17.02	38.6	1.1	75.1 E
10 Jan	+60°19'	16.77	38.1	1.1	66.5 E
20 Jan	+53°57'	16.53	37.5	1.1	57.1 E
30 Jan	+46°47'	16.31	37.0	1.1	47.9 E

Angular diameter of the major axis of ring.

***** Altitudes of a planet are given for the beginning of civil twilight if the planet is to the west of the Sun, or for the end of civil twilight if the planet is to the east of the Sun.

(*Disclaimer: We categorically mention here that we do not believe in astrology and believe that the only influence a planet has on us is to give us the viewing pleasure of its beauty. The sole purpose of giving the transition of planets and the Sun is to acquaint the reader with the Indian nomenclature of planets and constellations and also to show that the actual positions of the Sun and planets, which are based on modern computing, are very different from those given in astrology tables.*)

March of the Moon

The month begins with the 95% illuminated Moon well above the eastern horizon at sunset. On 3 January, the Full Moon will rise above the Gateway of Heaven, an asterism in the constellation Gemini. Jupiter will be to the east of the Moon. On 7 January, the Moon will be to the east of Jupiter.

On 11 January, the Moon will be seen southeast of Spica (*Chitra*). On 14 and 15 January, the Moon will be travelling in Scorpio (*Vrushchika*). On 17 January, it will be in the pot of the teapot asterism of Sagittarius.

A thin lunar crescent will be seen above the western horizon at dusk on 20 January. Three evenings later, on 23 January, the Moon will be north of Saturn and Neptune (see **Finding Neptune**).

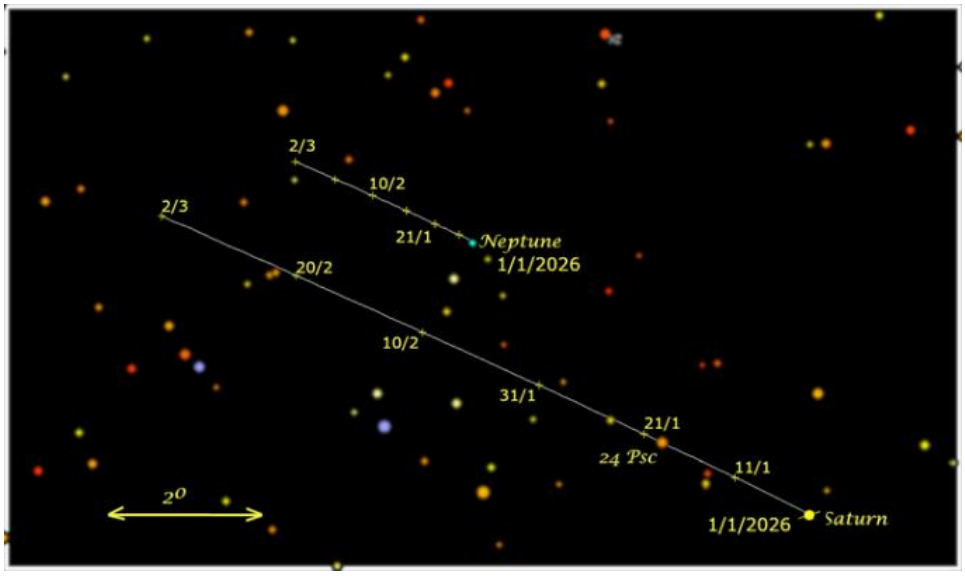
On 25 January, the Moon will be south of the 3.6 magnitude star Eta Piscium. On 27 January, the Moon will be north of Uranus and west of the Pleiades (*Kruttika*). On 30 and 31 January, the Moon will once again pass through the Gemini constellation.

Finding Neptune

This and next month, you can spot Neptune with the help of Saturn, which you surely know where to find. Saturn is moving towards Neptune. On 1 January, Saturn (mag. 1.1) is less than three and a half degrees from Neptune (mag. 7.9). See the map showing the tracks of Saturn and Neptune.

On 19 January, it passes less than a minute of arc away from the 6th magnitude star 24 Piscium.

The map below shows the tracks of Saturn and Neptune. The positions of the planets are marked with '+' at an interval of 10 days, starting on 1 January until 2 March. You can use this map to star-hop to Neptune from Saturn. The faintest star on the map is of magnitude 8.5.



Tracks of Saturn and Neptune from 1/1/26 to 2/3/26

Events Involving the Moons of Jupiter

In the table below, we list the events visible from India. The table gives the timings of eclipses, occultations, transits and shadow transits of the moons of Jupiter, suitable for Indian observers. The timings are given in Indian Standard Time (IST).

The output is given as per the following abbreviations and notations:

Columns: 1 = date; 2 = time; and 3 = satellite number.event type.phase.

Satellite numbers: 1 = Io; 2 = Europa; 3 = Ganymede; and 4 = Callisto.

Event type: Ec = eclipse; Oc = occultation; Tr = transit; and Sh = shadow transit.

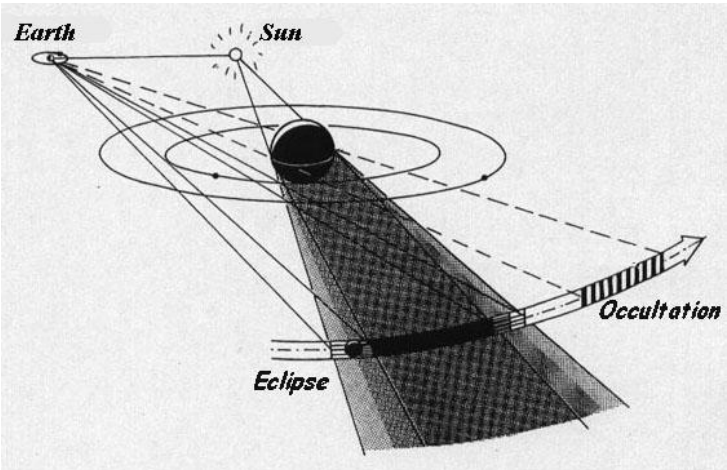
Phase: D = disappear; R = reappear; I = ingress; and E = egress.

Example:

01	21:15:00	1.Ec.D
	23:45:24	1.Oc.R

Means that

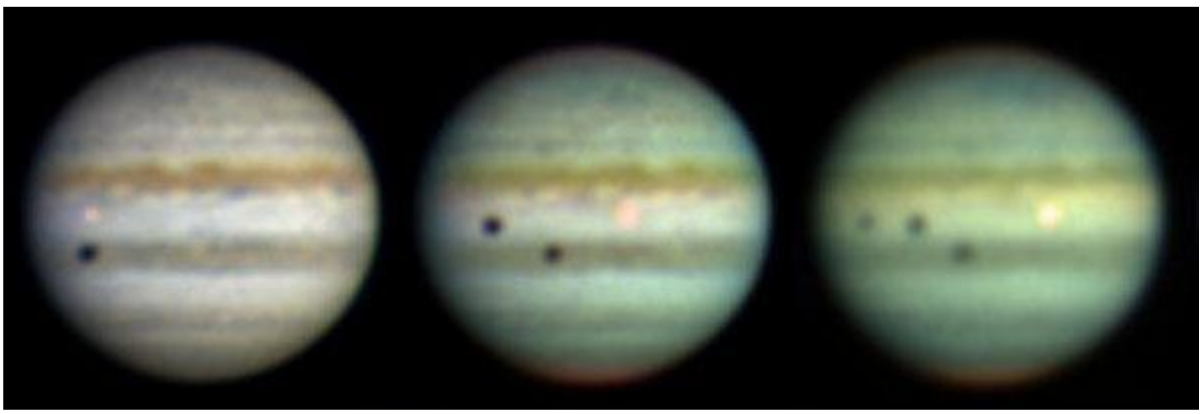
On 1 January, at 21:15 hours, Io will disappear behind Jupiter's shadow. Later at 23:45:24 hours it will reappear after being eclipsed and then occulted.



Eclipses occur when the satellites pass in the shadow of Jupiter. Occultations occur when the satellites pass behind Jupiter for a terrestrial observer. (Picture courtesy: https://promenade.imcce.fr/en/pages3/365.html)

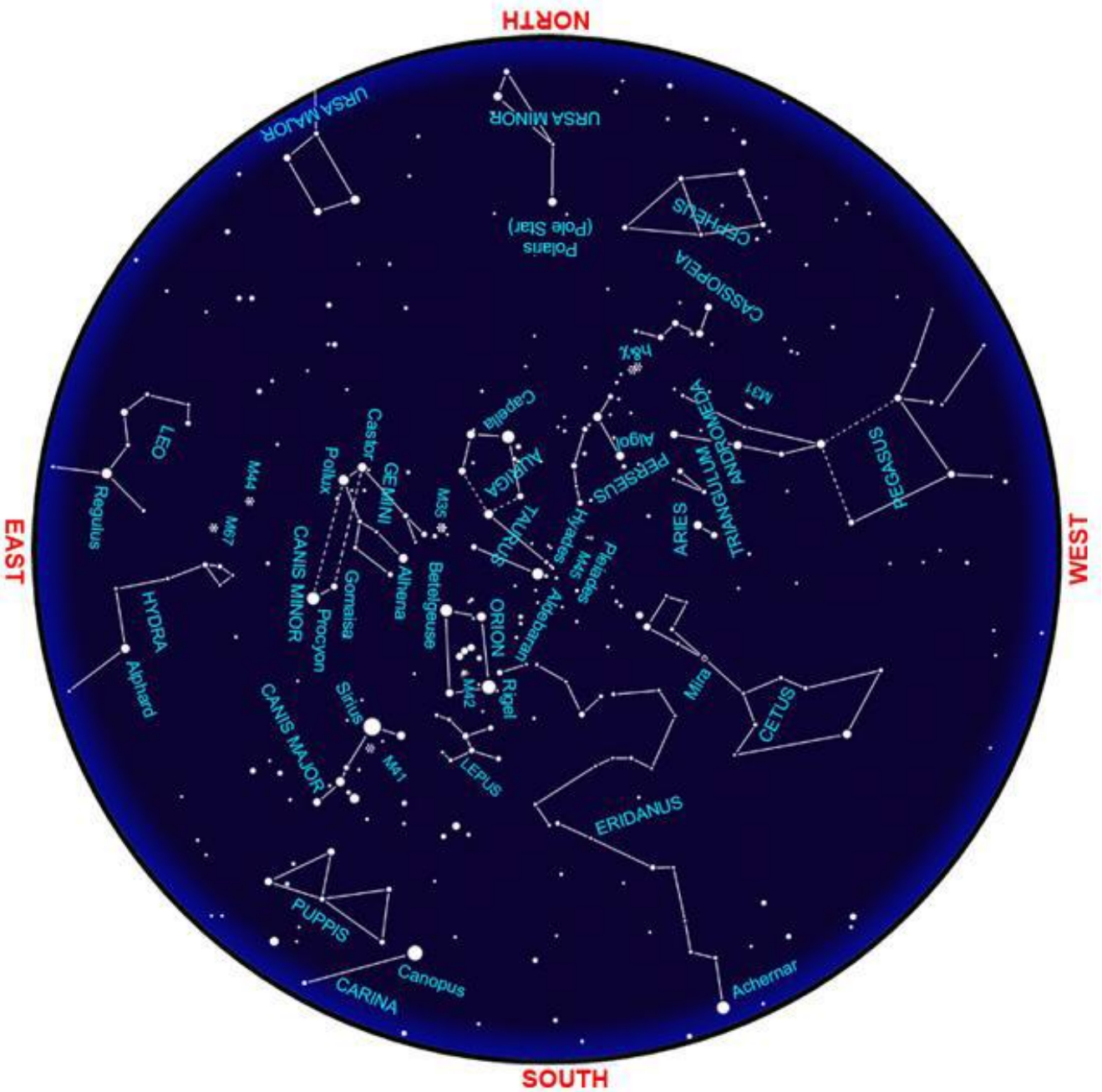
Satellites of Jupiter in January 2026

1	2	3		1	2	3		1	2	3		1	2	3
01	21:15:00	1.Ec.D		09	20:18:48	1.Tr.I		18	00:38:18	3.Oc.D		25	18:12:24	1.Tr.I
	23:45:24	1.Oc.R			22:34:12	1.Sh.E			04:43:42	3.Ec.R			18:35:06	1.Sh.I
02	01:40:54	4.Ec.D			22:35:18	1.Tr.E			18:44:48	1.Tr.E			20:28:48	1.Tr.E
	18:23:36	1.Sh.I		10	04:17:18	2.Ec.D			18:57:18	1.Sh.E			20:51:48	1.Sh.E
	18:35:24	1.Tr.I			19:55:06	1.Ec.R			23:41:36	4.Ec.R		26	03:50:42	2.Tr.I
	20:40:00	1.Sh.E			21:23:24	3.Oc.D		19	01:35:24	2.Tr.I			04:37:42	2.Sh.I
	20:51:54	1.Tr.E		11	00:44:06	3.Ec.R			02:01:24	2.Sh.I			18:13:00	1.Ec.R
03	01:42:18	2.Ec.D			23:20:54	2.Tr.I			04:26:00	2.Tr.E		27	02:39:54	4.Tr.I
	04:55:18	2.Oc.R			23:25:12	2.Sh.I			04:52:30	2.Sh.E			21:54:00	2.Oc.D
	18:11:18	1.Oc.R		12	02:11:42	2.Tr.E		20	19:39:06	2.Oc.D		28	01:37:12	2.Ec.R
	21:27:36	3.Oc.R			02:16:12	2.Sh.E			23:01:12	2.Ec.R			19:31:00	3.Sh.I
04	20:49:00	2.Sh.I		13	20:25:24	2.Ec.R		21	18:50:12	3.Sh.E			20:58:48	3.Tr.E
	21:06:36	2.Tr.I		15	03:36:24	1.Tr.I		22	05:20:18	1.Tr.I			22:49:54	3.Sh.E
	23:40:00	2.Sh.E			03:43:24	1.Sh.I			05:46:00	1.Sh.I		29	19:48:48	2.Tr.E
	23:57:36	2.Tr.E			06:01:00	1.Tr.E			18:10:24	2.Sh.E			20:46:30	2.Sh.E
06	18:02:00	2.Oc.R			06:00:00	1.Sh.E		23	02:39:30	1.Oc.D		30	04:24:06	1.Oc.D
07	04:40:48	1.Ec.D		16	00:55:36	1.Oc.D			05:15:36	1.Ec.R		31	01:30:54	1.Tr.I
08	01:49:12	1.Sh.I			03:21:00	1.Ec.R			23:46:18	1.Tr.I			02:01:06	1.Sh.I
	01:53:00	1.Tr.I			22:02:18	1.Tr.I		24	00:06:24	1.Sh.I			03:47:18	1.Tr.E
	04:05:42	1.Sh.E			22:12:00	1.Sh.I			02:02:42	1.Tr.E			04:17:42	1.Sh.E
	04:09:30	1.Tr.E		17	00:18:48	1.Tr.E			02:23:06	1.Sh.E			22:50:18	1.Oc.D
	23:09:24	1.Ec.D			00:28:36	1.Sh.E			21:05:36	1.Oc.D		01*	01:39:00	1.Ec.R
09	01:28:54	1.Oc.R			19:21:30	1.Oc.D			23:44:18	1.Ec.R				
	20:17:42	1.Sh.I			21:49:36	1.Ec.R		25	03:54:36	3.Oc.D		* Night of 31 Jan / 1 Feb		



Credit : Karkoshka et Murrell, NMSU (tel. de 60cm). Shadows of the Galilean satellites Io, Callisto and Ganymede on 10 November 1987 on Jupiter. (Picture courtesy: https://promenade.imcce.fr/en/pages3/365.html)

This sky map for January is drawn for mid-northern latitudes, to be used around 9:30 p.m. local time



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These pages are contributed by:
Arvind Paranjpye (paranjpye.arvind@gmail.com) (http://arvindparanjpye.blogspot.com/) and Anjanee Rao (rao.anjanee@gmail.com)