

SEE VENUS IN THE NIGHT SKY

A FAMILY SCIENCE @ HOME ACTIVITY



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VENUS IN THE NIGHT SKY



Mythology



In mythology, Venus was the goddess of love and beauty. She was born from the foam of the sea. She is shown in many paintings and artwork rising from the sea in a clam. Venus tried to be nice to everyone, and tried to spread love and beauty everywhere she went. She was the mother of Cupid, the god of love and affection.

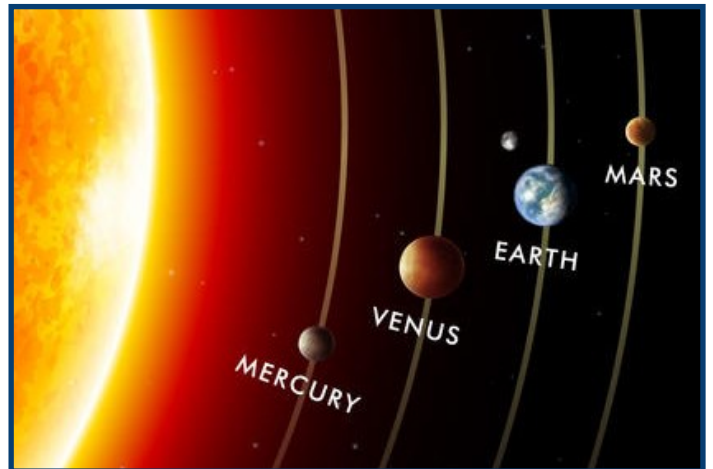


Our Solar System's 2nd Planet

In our solar system, the planet Venus was named after a Roman goddess. That is because the planet Venus is very bright and beautiful in the sky. During some times of the year, Venus is visible only in the morning, before sunrise. But right now, in Spring 2020, Venus is brilliant among the evening stars.

Venus is our neighbor in space, a bit closer to the Sun than we are. Right now, Earth is about 76 million miles away from Venus. That may seem far away, but in terms of the planets, it's relatively close. (Mars, our other neighbor, is 119 million miles away.) In some ways, Venus is a lot like Earth, and for that reason it is considered to be one of our "sister" planets. It's about the same size as Earth, and it is made up of the same minerals, rocks and metals as Earth.

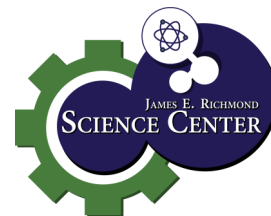
But, the Venusian atmosphere makes it very different. The air on Venus is almost entirely carbon dioxide, and the ground is very dry, like a desert. It is very hot, 863° Fahrenheit, which is the temperature inside a pizza oven. When we look at Venus, we're not looking at its surface, but at its thick white clouds, which are made from sulphuric acid. They completely surround the planet.



Those white clouds reflect so much sunlight that Venus is the 2nd brightest object in our night sky. (Our Moon is the brightest.) In the Spring of 2020, the orbits of Venus and Earth around the Sun place Venus in the perfect spot for a beautiful evening viewing experience, an alignment which will not be duplicated again until the year 2028.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

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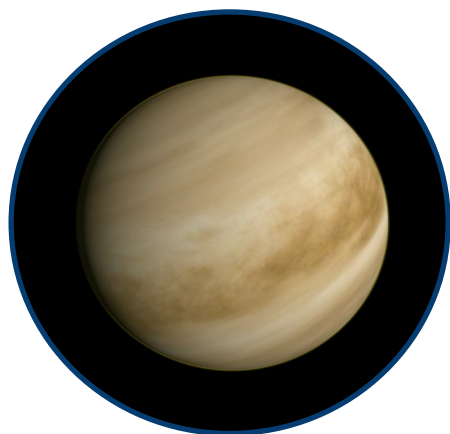
See For Yourself

On the evening of April 28, 2020, Venus will be at its closest point to Earth, so it will be the brightest on that night. In addition, it will be aligned with the waxing crescent Moon.

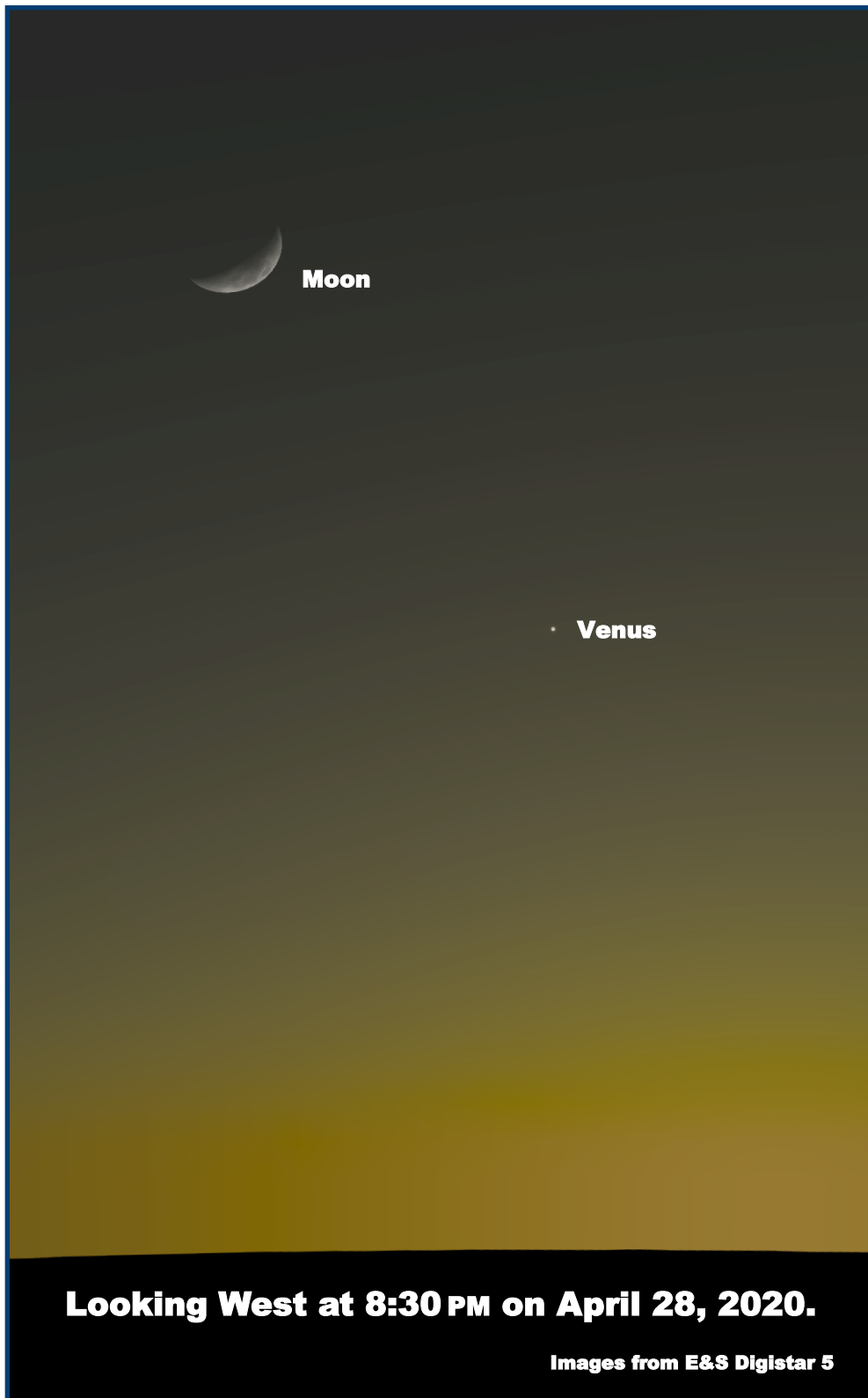
Go outside in the early evening, after sunset and face toward the West. (West is the direction where the Sun has set, so the sky in that direction will be brighter.) Then, look up.

You will see a very bright object below the crescent. Venus will be very bright, and will not twinkle, like a star. As the sky gets darker you will begin to see all of the stars in our night sky.

Venus will be in this general position for the next few weeks, visible after sunset.



Venus, as seen through a telescope.



Looking West at 8:30 PM on April 28, 2020.

Images from E&S Digistar 5

Take a family photo with Venus and share it with us on our Facebook page!