



SKY NEWS

January and February 2026

Volume 33 Number 1

FULL MOON NAMES

Have you ever heard of the Harvest Moon or perhaps the Hunter's Moon? In Indiana, Tippecanoe County has a Feast of the Hunter's Moon festival in the fall. Why are these terms used to describe our Moon?

Each month we experience at least one full moon. A full moon is a primary phase of the lunar cycle that occurs when Earth is between the sun and moon in its orbit. The Moon is called 'full' because, at that time, the Earth-facing side is 100% fully illuminated.

Each full moon has been given a name or term, with many having been translated from the Native American names for the moons. The names were a way to track the seasons and what usually happens during each. In January, we observe the Wolf Moon as the Wolves were known to howl from hunger during the cold winter month. February brings us the Snow Moon due to the large snowfalls during that month. Listed below are the names of the other full moons throughout the year. Can you guess why they received their names?

- January - Wolf Moon
- February - Snow Moon
- March - Worm Moon
- April - Pink Moon
- May - Flower Moon
- June - Strawberry Moon
- July - Buck Moon

- August - Sturgeon Moon
- September/October - Harvest Moon
- September - Corn Moon
- October - Hunter's Moon
- November - Beaver Moon
- December - Cold Moon



Jupiter

Our Largest Planet

Jupiter is the fifth planet from the Sun and is the largest planet in our Solar System. Coming in at 318 times as massive as Earth. Jupiter is not a rocky planet, it is a gas giant, composed mostly of hydrogen and helium. Even though Jupiter has the elements needed to become a star, astronomers call Jupiter a failed star since it did not have the mass to trigger a fusion reaction in its core. As large as it is, it would need more than 70 times its current mass to be able to ignite the nuclear fusion process to become a star.

On January 10th, Jupiter will be at its brightest. It will be at "opposition", meaning it will be directly across from the sun. This allows the sun to fully illuminate the planet's surface giving us an amazing view of this gas giant.

Jupiter will be best visible from early to late January 2026, when the planet rises in the east at sunset and is visible all night long. You will be able to see it as it passes near the constellation of Gemini, the twins.



Why does the Moon need money?
It's on it's last quarter.

ARTEMIS II

NASA's Artemis II Mission is scheduled to launch the Orion spacecraft no later than April 2026. There is a chance that it could launch sometime in February. This is the next step in the ongoing mission to eventually send humans to Mars. The Artemis II mission will send four astronauts into orbit around the Earth where NASA will test and check Orion's systems to determine if it will be safe to continue. If all is well, the next stage is to push into a high Earth orbit. This will be the first time in decades that humans have entered a high Earth orbit. During the orbits, NASA will continue to monitor and test the onboard systems and use the time to monitor the crew. As they orbit the Earth, the crew will be able to take off the Orion Crew Survival System suit. This will allow them to work, exercise, sleep, and eat. NASA will monitor their metabolic rates and the life support systems aboard the Orion. Once everything is a go, Orion will perform a propulsion move that will put it in the trajectory of the moon. Orion and its crew will then travel to the backside of the moon and then return home using the Earth-Moon gravity field to propel them back to Earth. The whole trip is scheduled to last about 10 days with four days allotted to travel to the moon and four days to travel back. If this mission is a success, the Artemis III mission is planned to put astronauts back on the surface of the moon. This should occur in 2027. Each step brings us closer to the Artemis program's goal of getting humans to Mars.



Sky Dates

January 2026

3 - Full Moon - This is the first or three supermoons for 2026 - the Wolf Moon

3 - Quadrantid meteor shower peak - may be able to view up to 40 meteors per hour. With the moon being full, only the brightest meteors are possible to be seen.

10 - Jupiter at opposition and at perigee (closest to Earth). Jupiter will be very bright and visible the entire night. This is a great time to try to photograph the planet.

18 - New Moon - This is a great time to view the night sky as the moon will not be visible.

February 2026

1 - Full Moon - The Snow Moon or the Hunger Moon

17 - New Moon - This is a great time to view the night sky as the moon will not be visible.

10 - Mercury - Mercury will be at its greatest eastern elongation bringing it to its highest point in the horizon in the night sky. Mercury will be located low in the western sky just after sunset.

Late February - Parade of Planets - Mercury, Venus, Saturn, Jupiter, Uranus, and Neptune will appear to be in a straight line.

The following sources were used for this issue of Sky News:

www.nasa.gov

skyandtelescope.org

<https://www.space.com/>