

Saturday, October 3, 2026

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Maya: Welcome to Marin Night Skies, your nightly look at what's up over Mahrin County. It's Saturday, October third, and I'm Maya.

Devon: And I'm Devon. Big night tonight, Maya, because Saturn reaches opposition tomorrow, which means tonight it's already up essentially all night, rises right around sunset, and it's the biggest and brightest Saturn gets all year.

Maya: That's the headline. Opposition means Earth sits directly between the Sun and Saturn, so Saturn is fully lit and closest for the year. Tonight and tomorrow night are the absolute best nights to see it.

Devon: And here's the best part: the Moon is out of the picture this evening. We're at about forty-five percent illumination, heading toward last quarter, and moonrise isn't until around twelve thirty tonight. So from full darkness at about eight fifteen until midnight, there's zero moonlight.

Maya: The darkest Saturday evening skies of October so far. Look for Saturn low in the southeast right after sunset. Our sky math puts it about thirty-five degrees up in the southeast once the stars come out. Even small binoculars will show those rings, and a small telescope will knock your socks off.

Devon: Find it by its warm golden color, it's unmistakable once you know where to look. Now, Venus: say your goodbyes. It's sinking lower in the western twilight every evening, heading toward what's called inferior conjunction on October twenty-fourth, when it passes between us and the Sun. Catch it low in the west right after sunset while you still can.

Maya: The morning planets are Mars and Jupiter. Mars rises around one in the morning, and mark this down: on Monday at dawn, the crescent Moon pays Mars a close visit. Jupiter is the bright cream-white beacon in the east before dawn.

Devon: And Jupiter has a showstopper of its own coming Tuesday morning, October sixth: the waning crescent Moon slides right in front of Jupiter, an occultation. The full occultation plays out in darkness across the eastern and central United States, but from California we'll still get a gorgeous close pairing before sunrise.

Maya: Moving to deep sky. The Milky Way's bright core is in its final weeks for the season, so catch it arching overhead in the early evening while you can. And high in the east, the Andromeda galaxy is climbing to its best position of the year, with the new Moon on October tenth giving us the darkest skies of the month. That's a naked-eye smudge of starlight from two and a half million light years away.

Devon: Seasonal constellations worth knowing tonight: the Summer Triangle is still high overhead, that's Vega, Deneb, and Altair, and the W shape of Cassiopeia is rising in the northeast. with Pegasus and Andromeda high in the east.

Halley's Comet, peak October twenty-first into the twenty-second, though a bright Moon will interfere that night.

Maya: Satellite watch: the International Space Station makes one low pass tonight at seven twenty-nine, peaking only about eight degrees above the southwest horizon. That's barely above the ridgelines, so only try it if you've got a wide-open view to the southwest. Otherwise, no confirmed bright passes to speak of tonight.

Devon: Viewing conditions, Maya? This is the good news part.

Maya: It is the good news part. The heat advisory runs through Wednesday night, with inland highs in the mid-nineties to low hundreds, but that warm offshore flow is giving us crystal-clear skies. The National Weather Service shows clear skies for San Rafael from six tonight straight through midnight, only turning partly cloudy after about two or three in the morning. Temperatures drop from the nineties into the upper seventies by eight and the low seventies by eleven, a warm, dry evening with dewpoints near fifty, so no marine-layer fog tonight.

Devon: So both Mount Tam and Point Reyes should be excellent. The Tamalpais summit stays clear, and Point Reyes gets those dark northern horizons. Best window: about eight thirty until midnight, full darkness, zero moonlight, and Saturn riding high.

Maya: One more reason to get out: space weather. Noah's Space Weather Prediction Center says a minor, G-one geomagnetic storm is likely over the next twenty-four hours, with the peak expected tonight between about eight and eleven Pacific time. For us, that's a Kp index around four to five.

Devon: Honest take: at G-one strength, an aurora reaching Mahrin is a long shot, these storms typically light up the northern tier of states. But if the storm overperforms, the oval can push farther south, so from a dark spot like Point Reyes or the top of Tam, it's worth a glance north after nine tonight. Low expectations, but you never know.

Maya: That's your night sky for Saturday, October third. Saturn at its best all year, zero moonlight until after midnight, and clear skies thanks to the heat dome. We'll be back tomorrow, with Saturn officially at opposition.

Devon: Clear skies, everyone.