

Fact sheet: Tips for viewing Saturn

As Cassini ends its mission on the night of 15 September 2017, you might be wondering if you're able to take a peek at Saturn yourself. The good news is, if you head outside and gaze skyward, Saturn is clearly visible in all its glory to the unaided eye!

Where should I look?

Located in the Western sky, midway between the stars of the Pointers in the South-West and the bright star Altair in the North-West. (See Figure 2)

Facing West look for the constellation of Scorpius with the distinctive red star Antares. Saturn is on the right and up from Antares and brighter than it. As you look up on it think of the Cassini space probe hurtling in towards Saturn for the final time (although you won't be able to see its final moments).

Saturn's even better with binoculars or a telescope

If you have a pair of binoculars at home, give them a go as well. Saturn may appear as a slightly flattened or distorted sphere, but that's actually due to its rings.

If you have even a small telescope you should be able to see the rings and at least one of Saturn's moons, Titan. Titan lies below Saturn slightly closer to the ground, and along the same plane as the rings. The actual position will depend upon the type of telescope and eyepiece arrangement you use.

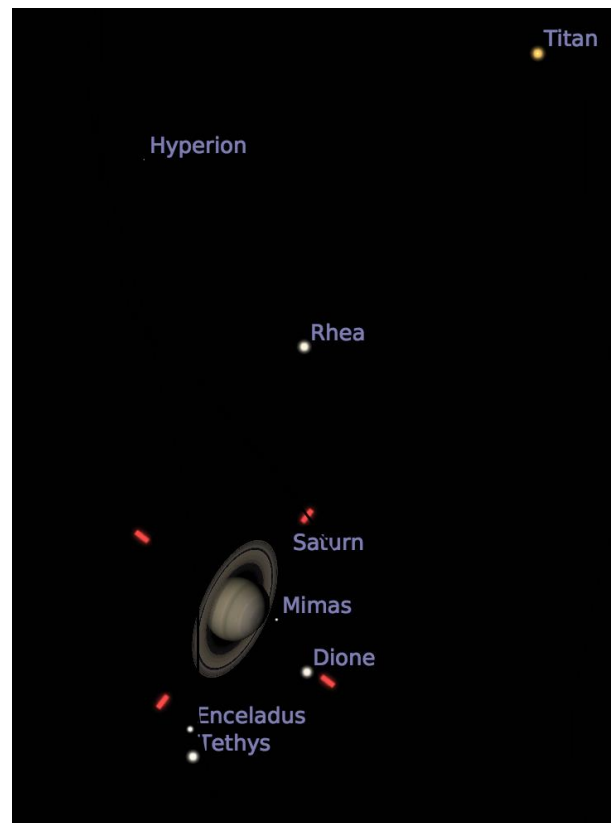


Figure 1. Close up of the Saturn system showing the positions of the larger moons. (Image: Stellarium)

Plan ahead and use apps as well

You can also plan ahead and simulate what to expect by using the excellent software *Stellarium* (www.stellarium.org) that's available for PCs, Macs and Linux machines as a free download.

On the night you can also use any one of a number of night sky apps available for smartphones and tablets. These use the sensors in your phone to help identify or find objects in the night sky, making your task much easier.

The Cassini end-of-mission is a wonderful opportunity to explore and engage with our night sky. Enjoy!

More information

Night sky

For more information about the night sky, try these sites:

- Monthly sky guide from Sydney Observatory, MAAS: <https://maas.museum/observations/category/monthly-sky-guides/>
- Subscribe to Skynotes from Melbourne Planetarium at Scienceworks: <https://museumsvictoria.com.au/scienceworks/visiting/melbourne-planetarium/skynotes/>
- Free monthly star charts: <http://skymaps.com/>

Cassini

For more information on Cassini, visit:

- CSIRO Cassini microsite: <https://www.csiro.au/cassini>
- CDSCC website: <https://www.cdsc.nasa.gov>
- NASA mission website: <https://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov>
- View the event on NASA LiveTV: <https://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/nasatv/index.html#public>
- Follow along with Cassini's 'Grand Finale' on social media (#CassiniAus, #GrandFinale)



Figure 2. Location of Saturn on Friday 15 September 2017. (Image: Stellarium)