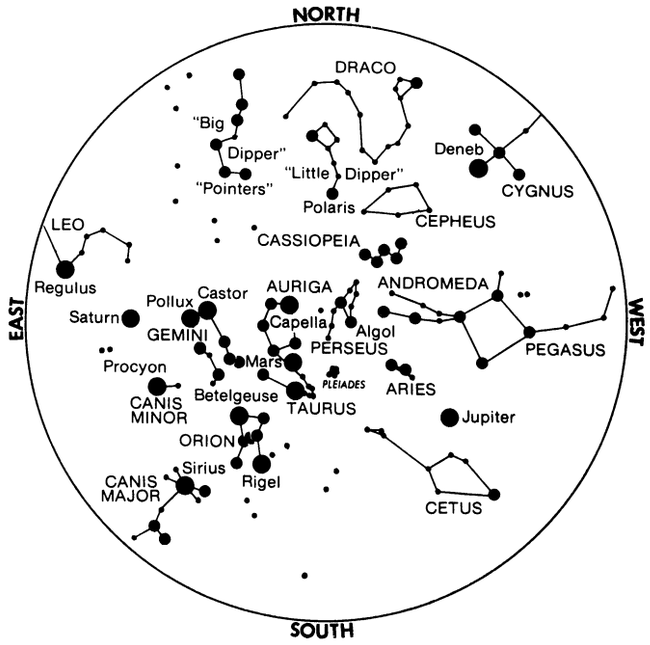
STARS OF JANUARY

CELESTIAL TIME TABLE

Jan.	1	9:40 am EST	New Moon
	4	6:00 am	Earth nearest sun, distance 91,140,000 miles
	6	midnight	Mercury farthest east of sun
	7	11:00 pm	Algol (variable star in Perseus) at minimum brightness
	8	noon	Moon farthest from Earth, distance 251,300 miles
	9	7:00 am	Moon passes north of Jupiter
	9	7:40 am	Moon in first quarter
	10	7:50 pm	Algol at minimum
	13	10:00 pm	Moon passes south of Mars
	15	11:47 pm	Full Moon
	17	8:00 am	Moon passes south of Saturn
	20	6:00 am	Saturn opposite sun
	20	8:00 am	Moon nearest, distance 228,000 miles
	23	1:00 am	Mercury between earth and sun
	23	6:04 pm	Moon in last quarter
	28	3:00 am	Moon passes north of Venus
	30	9:30 pm	Algol at minimum
	31	1:20 am	New Moon



BY JAMES STOKLEY

The region of the sky that we see in the south on January and February evenings is only a small fraction of the whole celestial sphere yet it contains more first-magnitude stars than any other area of similar size. That's what makes the winter evening skies so brilliant. In addition, the early sunsets at this time of year give us ample opportunity to see them.

This month we have the added attraction of three bright planets which add to the display. One is red Mars, which shines overhead in the constellation Taurus. It's gradually dimming, following a relatively close approach to earth of less than 53 million miles in mid-December. In mid-January it will be about 65 million miles away. However, it's still brighter than any of the stars except Sirius, the "dog star," toward the south in Canis Major.

To the west in Pisces stands Jupiter, usually even brighter than Mars, but its low altitude dims it.

The third and faintest of our planets is Saturn, toward the east in Cancer, and also brighter than any star except Sirius.

Not only are the planets very bright—they shine with a steadier glow than the stars with their characteristic twinkling. This is due to the bending of their rays by irregularities in our atmosphere, which affect the stars because they are so far away that they appear as points of light. The planets, being closer, are spread out into tiny discs, too small, however, to be discerned with the naked eye.

Above Sirius and to the right you'll see Orion with two first-magnitude stars: Betelgeuse, above, and Rigel, below and brighter. Still higher you come to Taurus with Aldebaran. This star, like Mars, is noticeably reddish but it's less than half as bright as the planet.

On Jan. 6, Mercury will be the farthest planet east of the sun. For a few evenings around this date you may be able to see it low in the southwest as the sky begins to darken after sunset.

Venus is still a conspicuous morning star, shining low in the east for more than an hour before sunrise. □

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