

WEEKLY SKY REPORT

December 28 – January 3, 2026

SPACE STATIONS

The Chinese space station Tiangong has a few good passes visible from Berkeley:

Dec 28 5:23pm West, Altitude 20°; 5:25pm North, Altitude 45°; Magnitude -1.5

Dec 30 6:40pm North West, Altitude 20°; 6:42pm North West, Alt. 62°; Magnitude. -2.0

Dec 31 5:41pm North West, Altitude 20°; 5:43pm North, Altitude 50°; Magnitude -1.8

Jan 1 6:19pm North West, Altitude 20°; 6:22pm South West, Altitude 76°; Mag. -2.1

Jan 3 5:59pm West, Altitude 20°; 6:01pm South West, Altitude 42°; Magnitude -0.9

CONSTELLATIONS AND ASTERISMS

Lyra is over San Francisco as it gets dark and is home to Vega, the second-brightest star in the northern hemisphere. Cygnus the swan is next to Lyra. Cygnus is also known as the asterism, or unofficial constellation, the Northern Cross. It has one of the prettiest objects that is visible with binoculars or with our library telescope (see next page!). At the base of the long end of the cross the binary star Albireo. One star is yellow (it is itself a trinary star system) and the other blue, which makes a beautiful contrast. Cygnus is also the home of bright star Deneb, at the other end of the cross. Together with Vega and Altair in the constellation Aquila, they make the Summer Triangle, another asterism. Those other asterisms, the Big and Little Dipper, are visible to the north. Meanwhile to the east, Taurus the bull rises as it gets dark. Its tail is home to the asterism the Pleiades, or the Seven Sisters, which Subaru has appropriated as the emblem (with six stars) of their company.

PLANETS

Saturn is easy to spot over as it hangs over the southern sky right after sunset. It is the brightest object in that part of the sky. It will be visible in our night sky until March 2026, so now is a great time to put a hold on our library telescope! And in other exciting news, Jupiter is rising over the Berkeley hills just after 7pm.

WWW.BERKELEYPUBLICLIBRARY.ORG

Telescopes @ Berkeley Public Library!

We have a Orion StarBlast Astro Reflector Telescope that you can borrow for 1 week. Place a hold on it and then pick it up from your branch when it is ready. It is fairly easy to carry at 13 lbs., and stands about 2 feet tall.

Here's what you get:

"A great compact grab-and-go telescope designed for entry-level and intermediate astronomy enthusiasts. Substantial 4.5" aperture and fast f/4 focal ratio provides bright, detailed views of solar system targets like the Moon and planets, as well as wide-field celestial objects like nebulae and star clusters."

We also have a couple of pairs of binoculars to check out!



Much of the information for this report comes from the wonderful web site, Heavens Above. You can enter your home city location and bookmark it for easy access: <http://www.heavens-above.com>. Other stellar sources include: <http://www.space.com> and <http://www.nasa.gov>. And check spacex.com for launches.

Binoculars @ Berkeley Public Library!

Thanks to a generous donation from the Cal Falcons program, we have 9 Vortex-Raptor binocular kits that you can put on hold and pick up at the location of your choice.

Here's what you get:

Porro prism performance in a mid-size, wide-angle design, the Raptors deliver a bright, crisp image with excellent color fidelity - even in low light conditions. With a wide range of interpupillary distance, they can easily be adjusted to fit anyone in the family, making them ideal for serious, hard-core youth hunters. The kit comes with a copy of The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western America and a pocket guide to local birds of the SF Bay Area. But it is also great for looking at planets, the moon and the stars!



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