

Brilliant Venus Meets Regulus at Dusk

The brightest solar system planet, as seen from Earth, meets up with the star Regulus in the constellation Leo, the Lion, at dusk in our western skies on **July 9th**. On this date, Venus and Regulus are separated by only 1°.

Cloud-covered Venus has the highest albedo (reflectivity) of all the solar system planets. It reflects 69% of the sunlight that strikes its cloud tops, compared to Earth at 37% and our Moon at 14%. Adding to Venus' brightness is its nearness to Earth – a close 90 million miles (nearer than our Sun) on July 9th.

Like Mercury, Venus goes through phases as seen from Earth. Use a small telescope to observe that Venus is not a full disk, but rather in a 66% illuminated, waning gibbous phase. If you continue to observe Venus for the next couple of months, you will notice that its phase will gradually shrink to a crescent shape!

