

Conjunction of the Long Night Moon with Antares at Dawn

At dawn on **December 27-29**, the waning crescent Long Night Moon sails past the bright, red-giant star **Antares** in the constellation Scorpius. On Dec. 28th the Moon will pass about 1° from Antares – making this a close conjunction along the “ecliptic” (the approximate path the Sun, Moon, and planets follow across the sky).

On these early mornings, look for the innermost, speedy, and elusive planet **Mercury**. It will be to the left of Antares, and, at a bright magnitude of -0.4, it easily outshines the red-giant star. Mercury is at greatest elongation west of the Sun (22°) on Dec. 24th – placing it in great observing position.

In late December Mercury is positioned about 100 million miles (9 light minutes) from Earth, while Antares is some 550 light years behind Mercury!

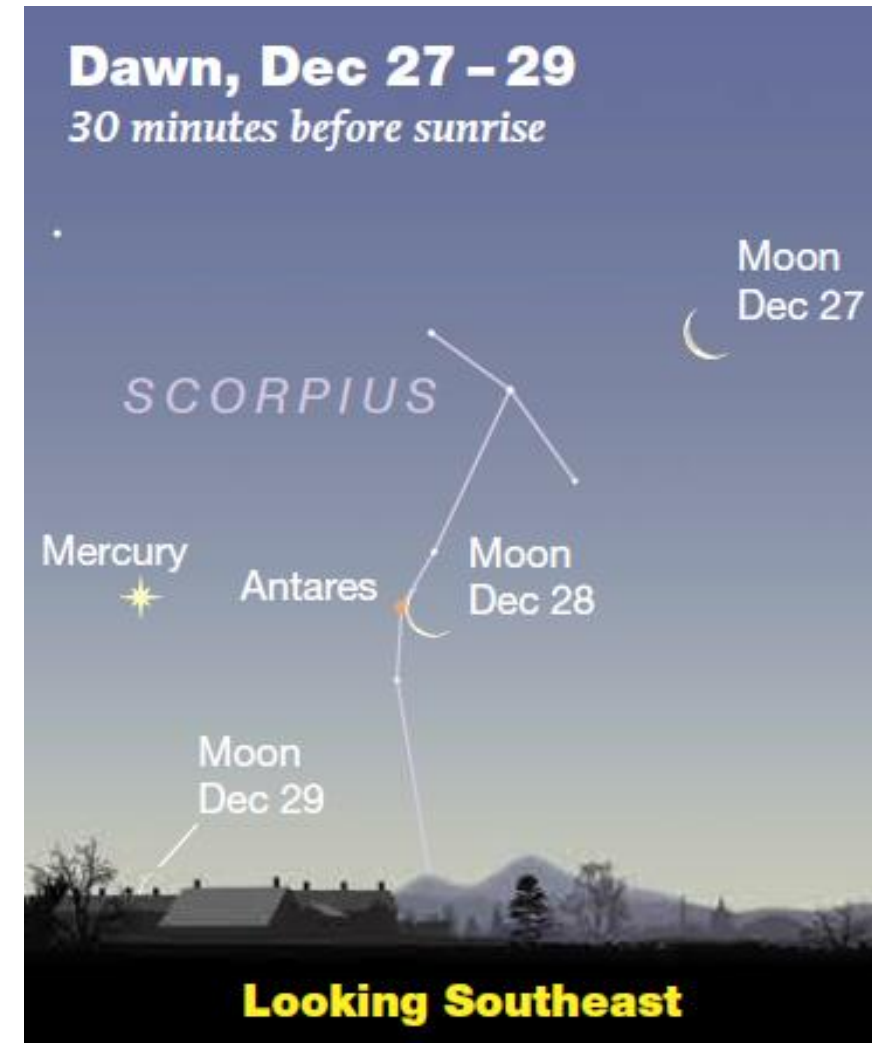


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