

The Night Sky

OCTOBER

The Square of Pegasus dominates the scene.

Autumn is well advanced and observers will welcome the return of earlier nightfall. The late-evening sky has the Summer Triangle stars heading over to the southwest, while Hercules, Corona Borealis and Boötes are in the low western sky.

High in the south, the Square of Pegasus fills a large area of sky. The sides of the Square are useful guides for finding a couple of bright stars which hang low over the southern autumn evening horizon. The western side points downwards to Fomalhaut, most southerly of the first-magnitude stars visible from the British Isles. The eastern side of the Square of Pegasus,

meanwhile, points downwards to Diphda, a slightly reddish second-magnitude star marking the tail of the whale Cetus.

Fomalhaut and Diphda are the only reasonably bright stars in the low southern autumn sky. Between them lies the distinctive 'Cirlet' of Pisces, comprised of fourth-magnitude stars and lying just below the Square of Pegasus.

Trailing eastwards from the northeast corner of the Square of Pegasus are two straggling lines of second and third-magnitude stars making up Andromeda. Just above the mid-point of the upper line, the Andromeda Galaxy is visible on a transparent, moonless night, as a fourth-magnitude hazy spot.

High in the northeast, Perseus pursues Andromeda, and is followed by Capella in Auriga. Below Perseus' feet, the Pleiades are becoming more prominent by late evening, joined by the 'V' of the Hyades in Taurus, with the Bull's red eye, Aldebaran, in the foreground. A real indicator that the year is on the turn is Orion's entrance, the Hunter rising due east around 11 pm.

Mars remains prominent among the stars of Aquarius, low to the south during October evenings. Saturn returns to the late night sky among the stars of Gemini, rising around 11 pm and well-placed for viewing in the early-morning hours.

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