

A Rare Celestial Spectacle: Catch the Planet Parade While You Can

If you've ever dreamed of seeing the entire solar system in one sweep of the sky, Feb. 28, is your chance.

All seven visible planets—Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune—will line up in what astronomers call a “planet parade.” And while that term might sound like something straight out of a sci-fi movie, it's very real.

NASA says a “planet parade” occurs when four or more planets are visible together. But this event is even more special—catching all seven at once is a rare sight.

“When you look across the sky, you're looking out into the solar system,” Preston Dyches of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory says. “You're looking from within the plane of the planets, this circular racetrack that all the planets are racing around as they orbit the sun.”

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For the best view, start watching about half an hour after sunset. Mercury, Venus and Saturn will be low on the western horizon, while Jupiter and Mars will be high overhead. Uranus and Neptune? You'll need a telescope.

And if you're hoping to reunite with Pluto—sorry, it's below the horizon this time.

But wait, there's more!

A potential nova explosion in the T Coronae Borealis system, known as the “Blaze Star,” could outshine even this planetary

spectacle.

"We've been waiting for this sucker to flare up and get super bright for several months," Pamela Gay, a senior scientist at the Planetary Science Institute, says. If it happens, you won't need a telescope—it'll be visible to the naked eye.

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And if you miss the parade this time?

Great news, you'll get another shot in late August, though only four planets will be visible then. After that, mark your calendar for October 2028, when the next major lineup will occur.

So grab your binoculars, a star map or just your own two eyes—this heavenly show is one you don't want to miss.

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