

CAS Sky Notes for April 2026

The evenings are becoming much longer now that we have passed the vernal equinox near the end of March. Although observing has to begin much later, it is still dark enough at a reasonable time to do some observing.

Planets

Mercury.

Mercury remains a morning object throughout April. However, it will remain low in the sky before sunrise and will be a very difficult object this month. It reaches greatest western elongation on 3rd April (27.8°) but is very low in the sky.

Venus

Venus is now an evening object and increasing its elongation from the Sun throughout the month, reach nearly 28° by the end of April. It is still a tricky object as it is low in the sky. and may be difficult to pick up before the end of the month. The disc diameter is only about 11 arcsec and the phase decreases to 88% by the end of the month.

Mars

Mars reached conjunction in January and is still not observable in April, or for quite a few months yet.

Jupiter

Jupiter is well past opposition now, but is still well placed for observation in the early to late evening. It is a very prominent object in Gemini, just below the twin stars of Castor and Pollux. It is very well placed for observing and is still high in the sky, meaning it avoids a lot of the atmospheric turbulence lower down. I recommend the website <https://shallowsky.com/jupiter> which shows you the position of the Galilean moons and the Great Red Spot at any time you pick.

Saturn

Saturn reached conjunction with the Sun on 25th March and is therefore not observable this month.

Uranus

Uranus remains visible throughout this month. It lies in Taurus, a little below the Pleiades. Its coordinates: RA 03h 46m , Dec +19.7°, and magnitude +5.7.

Neptune

Neptune is not observable this month as it is too close to the Sun

Moon Phases:

2nd April: Full Moon

17th April: New Moon

10th April: Last Quarter

24th April: First Quarter

Occlusions

On the evening of 19th April, the Moon occults the **Pleiades**. This should be well worth watching and offers some interesting photographic opportunities.

Meteor Showers

The April Lyrids could be favourable this month and run between 14th and 30th. The peak is on the 22nd April.

Sun

The Sun is much higher in the sky now and is still fairly active as it is still near solar maximum, so do watch out for large Sunspot groups. Remember to **never look at the Sun directly without a proper solar filter**.

Aurora

Aurora may still be visible this month although the northern skies are getting dark much later. Watch out for any exceptional activity though, using one of the many aurora alert apps.

Deep Sky Objects

The **Orion Nebula** is still observable, as well as the **Pleiades**. To the east of Gemini (where Jupiter is) lies the sickle of Leo. Between these is Cancer. Look for the beautiful open cluster *Praesepe* M44, which is a lovely open cluster and a good target for astrophotography. The Whirlpool Galaxy (M51) is becoming well placed, below Ursa Major, as well as the Pinwheel galaxy (M101) just above the handle of the Plough.

Neil Havard.

Any questions or for more information, contact Neil at coordassist@cotswoldas.org.uk