

The Moon Sails Past Venus and Mars

During the early evening hours of **June 21-23**, watch the waxing crescent Moon glide by the two rocky planets, Venus and Mars. This action takes place in the zodiac constellations of Cancer and Leo.

Cloud-enshrouded Venus is 275-times brighter than orange-tinted Mars on these nights! This is explained because Venus is not only closer to us Earthlings but also has a much higher “*albedo*” – reflectivity of the sunlight striking the planet.

Venus is only 52 million miles away during this juxtaposition, while Mars is about 200 million miles away. Venus has the highest albedo of all the planets, reflecting some 75% of the sunlight striking its cloud tops, while Mars only reflects 25% of that sunlight our way. Earth, by comparison, has an average albedo of 31%. So, head out on these early evenings, and enjoy the reflected sunlight from our two neighboring planets!

