

Astronomy Club of Asheville
May 2023 Sky Events

A young waxing crescent Moon joins Venus and Mars after dark

Two rocky solar system planets will entertain a lunar visitor and form a wonderful juxtaposition in the early evenings of **May 22nd - 24th**. You will need a clear view to the west to observe this event. Venus, our bright “evening star”, is in the zodiac constellation Gemini, while Mars is near the Gemini border in the zodiac constellation Cancer.

The two bright stars of the constellation Gemini, Pollux and Castor (the Twins), will join this celestial spectacle. Observing cloud-enshrouded **Venus** in a small telescope on these nights will disclose that it's only 56% illuminated, while the waxing, crescent Moon will be between 11% and 26% illuminated on these same three nights.

It is difficult to perceive a 3rd dimension (depth) when observing objects in the night sky, but below are some distances that will hopefully improve your perspective of the scene on these evenings. The Moon is about 246 thousand miles away, while Venus is some 74 million miles out, and Mars is about 180 million miles distant. The stars Pollux and Castor are about 34 and 51 light years, respectfully, behind the planets. And one light year is about 6 trillion miles --- you do the math!

