

## March 2026 Highlight

### The Zodiacal Light

- ★ March is the season to find the elusive “zodiacal light” in the early evening sky.
- ★ But what is zodiacal light?
- ★ Zodiacal light is sunlight reflected from numerous dust grains located along **the plane of the inner solar system** → **the ecliptic** or “zodiac”. The “ecliptic” is the approximate path that the planets, Sun, and Moon follow across our sky, and it’s the zone of the “zodiac” constellations.
- ★ These dust grains are left over from the formation of the solar system (a type of **cosmic interplanetary dust**), and their supply is continuously fed by particles from comets and asteroid collisions.
- ★ The evening **ecliptic is nearly vertical to the horizon** this month, providing good opportunities to observe the zodiacal light.

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- ★ Zodiacal light is seen as a “**cone**” of light, widest at the horizon and pointing upward, toward the Pleiades star cluster in Taurus this month.
- ★ With an **unobstructed view low to the western horizon**, look for it beginning about 80 minutes after sunset.
- ★ The approximate 40-minute viewing window closes about 2 hours after sunset.
- ★ Pick a **very dark** location far from artificial lights and **without moonlight**.
- ★ The best evenings this month to see the zodiacal light, without interfering moonlight, will be from **March 6-19**.
- ★ In the fall, when it is visible in the morning sky, it is often called the “**false dawn**”.



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