

Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn

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Dec. 7, 2020: Something special is happening in the sunset sky. It's a Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. The two giant planets are converging for a close encounter the likes of which have not been seen since the Middle Ages. Shahrin Ahmad of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, photographed the pair on Dec. 7th:



“Jupiter and Saturn are about 1.5° apart this evening, ” says Ahmad. “Even under a light polluted sky, both can easily be seen.”

They’re about to get *much* closer. On Dec. 21st, the two planets will lie just 0.1 degrees apart. That’s so close, some people will perceive them as a single brilliant star. Viewed through binoculars or a small telescope, ringed Saturn will appear as close to Jupiter as some of Jupiter’s moons:



Although Great Conjunctions between Jupiter and Saturn occur every 20 years, they’re not all easy to see. Often the two planets are hidden in the glare of the sun. This year is special because the conjunction happens comfortably away from the sun. In fact, the last time the two worlds were so close together *and* so easy to see was the year 1226, astronomer Michael Brown [told the Washington Post](#).

The show is underway. Jupiter and Saturn are already a tight pair in the evening sky, and they will grow rapidly and noticeably closer together every night for the next two weeks. Dates of special interest include Dec. 16th and 17th, when the crescent Moon joins the planets, and, of course, Dec. 21st when they are almost touching