

INFERIOR CONJUNCTION OF VENUS: There's a tiny crescent in the sunset sky. It's Venus. Radu Anghel photographed the second planet on Jan. 2nd from Bacau, Romania:



"I caught Venus after sunset shining brightly only 3 degrees over the western horizon," says Anghel. "The crescent shape was not visible to the unaided eye, but my Canon 6D camera recorded it easily." On Jan. 8th, Venus will pass almost directly between Earth and the sun--an event astronomers call "inferior conjunction." Around this time Venus looks like a crescent because it is turning its night side toward us.

During some inferior conjunctions, Venus transits the face of the sun. Not this year, though. At closest approach on Saturday, Venus and the sun will be separated by almost 5 degrees. This means careful daytime shots of Venus will be possible.

Anthony J. Cook, recently retired from the Griffith Observatory, offers some observing tips: "Find a tall building to shade your telescope at noon. This should make finding and observing Venus relatively easy and safe to do from the northern hemisphere. Just be sure the telescope is entirely inside the building's shadow and observe within 15 minutes of local noon." The photo below was taken yesterday by Argentine astronomer Mariano Ribas using just such a trick:



"To protect myself from sunlight, I placed my Meade LX90 12" telescope and a ZWO ASI 385 camera under the shadow of a wall in my house," explains Ribas. "The image of Venus in the eyepiece at 300x was really awesome: the planet seems a giant and ultrathin C."

When Venus is very close to the sun, the crescent can close upon itself, making [a complete circle](#). That probably won't happen this year. The 5 degree sun-Venus separation is too wide. To see what to expect in 2022, look at [this photo of Venus](#) taken during a similar conjunction in 2018.