

Dark Sky at LGFC – what to look out for in 2017



Below is a list of what to look out for in the night sky from LGFC at different times of year during 2017. To get your directions – when you come out of the front door of the main building, you will be facing due south. To your right, looking towards the Lake is west. To your left, looking up to the head of the valley is east and directly behind you is north.

To obtain the best view, the skies will need to be clear of clouds, make sure that you turn lights off outside and give your eyes a few minutes to adjust to the dark. The best way to watch for meteors is to sit or even lie down if you have something warm to lie on.

It is also possible to get a good view of the International Space Station as it passes over Ennerdale. Visit <https://spotthestation.nasa.gov/> to see exact times when it will fly over. It's easy to spot the ISS shortly after sunset as it looks like a very bright star moving rapidly across the sky – it flies at 17,500 mph at a height of 250 miles.



January 3-4 – Quadrantids meteor shower

The Quadrantids meteor shower will peak on 3rd and 4th January, though you should be able to see meteors from 1st to 5th January if skies are clear. At peak times up to 40 meteors per hour will be seen. The meteors can appear anywhere in the sky but will appear to radiate from the constellation Bootes which is close to the Pole Star.

March 29-30 – Mercury/Mars/Moon triangle

Shortly after sunset on the evening of the 29th you can see the crescent of the moon forming a triangle with Mercury and Mars (Mars at the top of the triangle). When this happens Mercury is at its highest and brightest position in the sky.

April 7-8 – Jupiter opposition

On April 7 Jupiter will reach opposition, this is the point in its orbit where it is closest to Earth. Jupiter will appear brightest on April 7th but will still be bright in the weeks leading up to and after April 7.

April 10-11 – Moon meeting Jupiter

On April 10 Jupiter will appear to be close to the full moon. Look out for Jupiter and the moon rising together in the East shortly after the sun sets in the west.

April 21-22 – Lyrids meteor shower

The Lyrids meteor shower produces about 20 meteors per hour at peak which will be on April 21-22, though some meteors should be visible from 16th to 25th April. The meteors can appear anywhere in the sky but will appear to radiate from the constellation Lyra which will be in the North-East around 10pm.

May 5-6 – Eta Aquarids meteor shower

The Eta Aquarids meteor shower is fairly low intensity and at its peak (between 2:00am and 4:00am on the morning of May 6th) should produce about 10 meteors per hour. The meteors can appear anywhere in the sky but will appear to radiate from the constellation Aquarius in the East at 3am on May 6.

August 12-13 – Perseids meteor shower

The Perseids are one of the stronger meteor showers and may produce 60 meteors per hour at its peak on the night of August, though you may be able to see meteors between July 17th and August 24th. The meteors can appear anywhere in the sky but will appear to radiate from the constellation Perseus in the North-East. The meteors originate from the tail of the Swift-Tuttle comet.



October 21-22 – Orionids meteor shower

The Orionids meteor shower produces about 20 meteors per hour and is created by dust from Halley's comet. The meteors can appear anywhere in the sky but will appear to radiate from the constellation Orion which will be in the east at midnight on the night of October 21-22.

November 17-18 – Leonids meteor shower

The Leonids meteor shower produces about 20 meteors per hour at its peak and is created by dust from the comet Tempel-Tuttle. The meteors can appear anywhere in the sky but will appear to radiate from the constellation Leo which will be in the east in late evening/early morning of November 17-18.

December 3-4 – Supermoon

A Supermoon happens when a full Moon coincides with the Moon's closest approach to Earth, the Moon appears much larger than normal.

December 13-14 – Geminids meteor shower

The Geminids meteor shower will peak on the nights of 13th and 14th December late in the evening and before dawn the following day, though meteors could be visible between 6th and 19th December. At peak times between 60-100 meteors should be seen if the skies are clear and the Geminids are usually one of the most spectacular meteor showers of the year. The meteors can appear anywhere in the sky but will appear to radiate from the constellation Gemini in the east at 9pm on December 13. Unlike most meteor showers, the Geminids are associated with dust from an asteroid rather than a comet.

December 23-24 – Ursids meteor shower

The Ursids meteor shower will peak on the night of 23rd December. About 10 meteors per hour can be expected. The meteors can appear anywhere in the sky but will appear to radiate from the constellation Ursa Minor which will be in the north on the evening of Dec 23. *Photos courtesy of NASA – below the Milky Way*

