



Breaking News for sky aficionados

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About Me

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Friday, December 11, 2009

Moon-free Geminids and a lunar micro-eclipse conclude International Year of Astronomy

From an observational point of view the International Year of Astronomy was not that outstanding, with respect to both planned and unplanned sky events, apart perhaps from the [longest total solar eclipse of the century](#) and surprisingly [strong - but Moon-lit - Perseids](#). The final month, though, brings perhaps the best "unlit" meteors of the year and concludes with a shallow partial lunar eclipse on new year's eve (though it's already 2010 then in Asia).

- Dec. 14 around 5:10 UTC: (Broad) peak of the [Geminids](#); their performance is [tracked here](#) and some previews are [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), plus thoughts about [their origin](#).
- Dec. 16: Jupiter just [7' from 6 mag. star](#) 45 Cap.
- Dec. 18 evening: Very young [Moon close to Mercury](#) which just begins a poor evening visibility, lasting til about Dec. 23.
- Dec. 21: [Jupiter and Neptune in conjunction](#) - at 0.5° - for a third time this year but close to each other the whole month.
- Dec. 31 18:52-19:54 UTC: [Partial eclipse of the Moon](#), but even at the 19:23 UTC peak only 2.5% of the disk will be in the umbra.

The celestial "highlight" of the past two weeks was man-made: A failed Russian military rocket test launch created an amazing luminous spiral in Norway's skies early on Dec. 10. News and blog reports, often with great pictures, are [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [hier](#), [hier](#), [hier](#), [here](#), [here](#) ([earlier](#)), [here](#) and [here](#). Amazingly the phenomenon was [repeated over Siberia](#) just a day later ... • Talking about natural sky shows, a [late report](#) on the South African bolide, an [analysis](#) of the Utah bolide - and [comet 107P did not form a coma](#) on Dec. 4 (or before or since), so it's probably truly dead.

In other news the stellar occultation of (234) Barbara led to [this shape](#), discussed in [this movie](#) and based on [these observers](#). So the [U.S. effort](#) worked very well; in Europe [only a few](#) were successful, too. • Epsilon Aurigae news from [Dec. 8](#) and [amateur spectra](#); also of [Nova Scuti](#) and [Nova Eridani](#) ([which is really one](#)). • A solar prominence on [Nov. 28](#). • Exciting [lunar](#) and [solar](#) halos from Finland - and the [top places](#) to see the aurora. • Stories about the Chromoscope website [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), a [Hubble advent calendar](#), a [comic](#) (!) about the 1994 Jupiter impact observations with Hubble and the [whereabouts of all our spacecraft](#) in the solar system this month.

Posted by Daniel Fischer at 11:24 PM

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