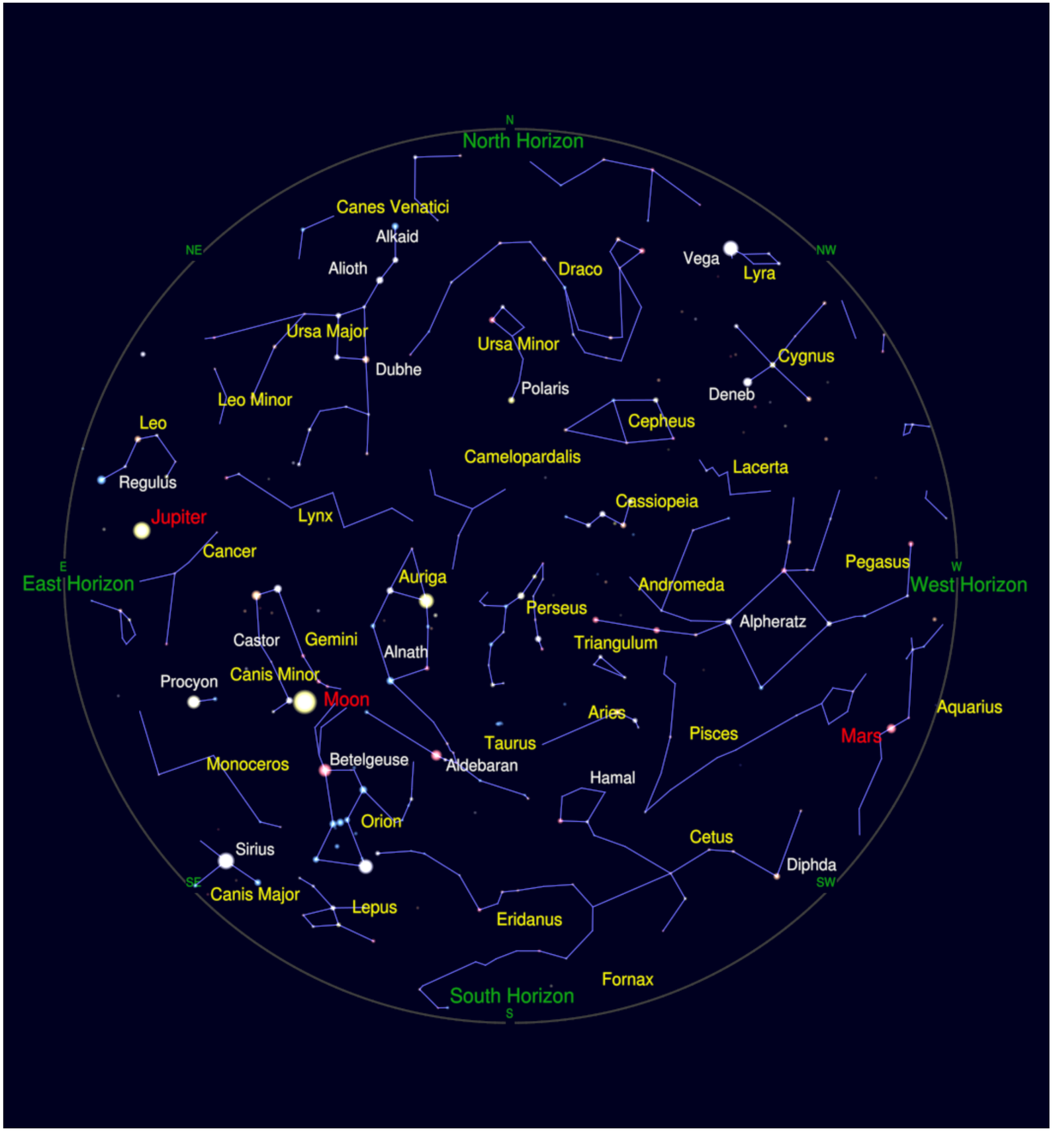


THE NIGHT SKY ABOVE YORK
FOR JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2015

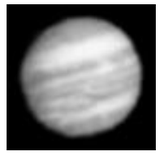
This chart is orientated for 8pm 17th January, 7pm 31st January, 6pm 14th February, but can be used at any time.

To use the chart, hold it up to the sky. Turn the chart so that the direction you are looking is at the bottom of the chart. If you are looking to the South then have the 'South Horizon' at the bottom edge. As the Earth turns, the stars appear to rotate anti-clockwise around the North Celestial Pole, marked by the star Polaris. Stars rise in the East and set in the West just like the Sun. The sky makes a small westward shift every night as we orbit the Sun.

PLANET WATCH

Jupiter is usually the brightest object in the early evening sky in the late winter, apart from the Moon! Using a telescope or binoculars you can see Jupiter's four largest moons and make out the bands on the surface of the planet. These bands are cloud structures in the atmosphere of Jupiter. If you are looking at the right time, you may also see the great red spot - a storm in the clouds which is twice as large as the Earth!

You will notice when looking through a telescope that Jupiter looks grey rather than the lovely burnt orange and red colours of professional photos. This is because your eyes are much better at detecting light than measuring the colour. With most astronomical objects you see, they will appear grey because there isn't enough light for your eye to construct the colour image. You can, however, see incredible detail considering the planet is 778 million km away!



Jupiter with cloud bands
(as seen through a small telescope).

CONSTELLATION WATCH

The Bull, Taurus, is one of the Zodiac constellations and is best seen in the winter. Humans have called this constellation 'The Bull' for a long time, maybe even tens of thousands of years. He can be spotted by his bright red eye, which is the star Aldebaran. The beautiful 'Seven Sisters', or Pleiades cluster, can also be found in Taurus. This is a collection of hot blue stars that are very young - only 100 million years old. Also in the constellation is the Crab Nebula – a remnant of a Supernova that was seen in 1054 AD. At the time, it was so bright you could see it in the daytime, but now it has faded and can only be seen through a telescope.

The constellation of Andromeda is best seen from late summer to late winter. Andromeda is known as 'The Chained Lady' because, in Greek mythology, Andromeda was chained to a rock to be eaten by a sea monster. By her right knee is the closest large galaxy to our own, the Andromeda galaxy. It looks like a faint smudge on the sky, but a small telescope will show the spiral shape, similar to our own galaxy. At 2.5 million light years away, it is the farthest thing you can see with the naked eye.