

New 2018 NASA telescope better than Hubble

Next year there's a new telescope in space, and it plans to deliver sights like we've never seen before.

With a planned launch date of October 2018, it will have the capability of finding a penny 39 kilometres away.

The James Webb Space Telescope is the next generation in space telescopes, and it's so massive that it will unfold at a distance four times from the moon (almost a million miles).

The giant mirror is made of 18 individual hexagonal, gold-glazed segments composed of lightweight beryllium. At three times the size of Hubble's mirror, the result is a light-collecting area seven times its predecessor yet with the same weight made with lighter materials.

Its goal is to spot liquid surfaces on planets outside our solar system. The



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The Sky's the Limit

project has a budget of just under \$9 billion (US) and has been over 20 years in the making.

One drawback is that this telescope, which has a life expectancy of 10 years, malfunctions in space, there's no way to recover or fix it.

You can monitor its progress at www.jwst.nasa.gov.

There will be more to come as the launch date approaches.

One feature to watch for will be live cameras like we have with the International Space Station.

Sky watch

On Saturday, March 4, look to the quarter moon as the star Aldebaran will show itself after 11:05 p.m.

On Sunday, March 12, set your clock ahead at 2 a.m. for daylight savings time.

Did you catch the Zodiacal Lights last month? It's a faint, roughly triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extended up from the vicinity of the sun along the ecliptic or zodiac. The best time to see it is from Tuesday, March 14 for two weeks in the west after the evening twilight.

The spring equinox starts on Monday, March 20 at 4:29 a.m. The days are getting noticeably longer.

Public events

Check out our stargazing event courtesy of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) on

Friday, March 10, starting at 7:30 p.m. A brief indoor presentation on "The Spring Sky" will be followed by observing the heavens through our 11-inch Celestron telescope. All are welcome to this free event. Refreshments are provided.

At our monthly stargazing events, which take place the second Friday of each month, experts are on hand to explain the heavens, teach telescoping skills and help you develop your knowledge of our sky.

For further information, contact Vulcan Tourism at 403-485-2994 or visit www.vulcantourism.com.

Neel Roberts is a member of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. He welcomes your questions and comments at 403-560-6574, and at Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com.