

# Transit of Mercury

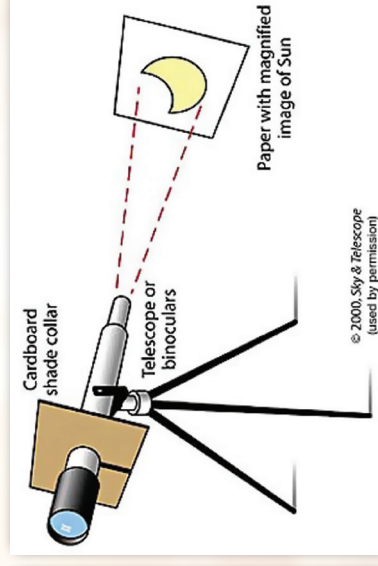
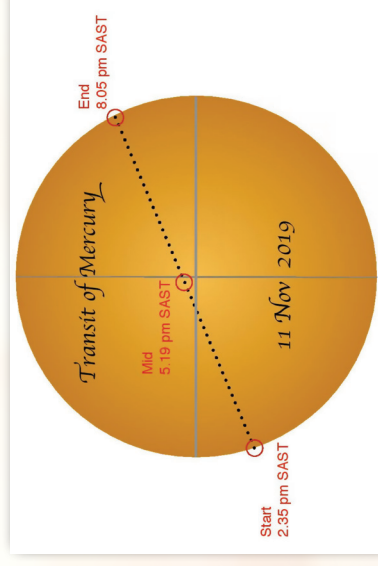
11 November 2019

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On 11th November 2019, the planet Mercury will pass in front of the Sun. This transit of Mercury will be visible across all of Africa by simply using a small telescope.

It will take the planet 5.5 hours to move completely across the disc of the Sun, starting at 14:35 (2:35 pm). The Sun will have already started to set by the time Mercury reaches the mid-point of its transit, depending on your location. (Sunset in Johannesburg will be at 18:31 (6:31 pm) and Cape Town at 19:23 (7:23 pm))

## Transits are rare



Transits like these are rare as Mercury's orbit is at an angle to that of the Earth. For example, the last time Mercury transited the Sun was in May 2016 and the next one will only be on 13 November 2032.

**Please note, however, that in order to see the transit, you must take some serious precautions. You can watch Mercury transit the Sun but YOU MUST BE CAREFUL!**

- **Firstly**, you will need a telescope (a small one with metal (not plastic) parts will do). You won't be able to see the transit with binoculars or spotting scope as they are not powerful enough.

- **Secondly**, you will need a sheet of clean paper on which to project the image of the Sun through the telescope.

**DO NOT LOOK DIRECTLY  
AT THE SUN THROUGH THE TELESCOPE  
OR WITH YOUR NAKED EYES!!**

If you do, you will permanently damage your eyes and possibly even go blind. Only look at the transit indirectly by looking at the projection on the paper. This is the safest way to witness this rare event. Contact your nearest university, science centre or amateur astronomy club to locate the nearest venue where you can see the transit safely.