

## Beyond the Naked Eye

It's hard to say when in our lives each of us become aware of this thing called "astronomy". But it is safe to say that at some point on our lives, each and every one of us has that moment when we are suddenly stunned when we come face to face with the enormity of the universe that we see in the night sky. For many of us who are city dwellers, we don't really notice that sky up there on a routine basis. The lights of the city do a good job of disguising the amazing display that is above all of our heads all of the time.

So it might be that once a year vacation to a camping spot or a trip to a relative's house out in the country that we find ourselves outside when the spender of the night sky suddenly decides to put on it's spectacular show. If you have had that kind of moment when you were literally struck breathless by the spender the night sky can show to us, you can probably remember that exact moment when you could say little else but "wow" at what you saw.

That "Wow" moment is what astrology is all about. For some, that wow moment becomes a passion that leads to a career studying the stars. For a lucky few, that wow moment because an all consuming obsession that leads to them traveling to the stars in the space shuttle or on one of our early space missions. But for most of us astrology may become a pastime or a regular hobby. But we carry that wow moment with us for the rest of our lives and begin looking for ways to look deeper and learn more about the spectacular universe we see in the millions of stars above us each night.

To get started in learning how to observe the stars much better, there are some basic things we might need to look deeper, beyond just what we can see with the naked eye and begin to study the stars as well as enjoy them. The first thing you need isn't equipment at all but literature. A good star map will show you the major constellations, the location of the key stars we use to navigate the sky and the planets that will appear larger than stars. And if you add to that map some well done introductory materials into the hobby of astronomy, you are well on your way.

The next thing we naturally want to get is a good telescope. You may have seen a hobbyist who is well along in their study setting up those really cool looking telescopes on a hill somewhere. That excites the amateur astronomer in you because that must be the logical next step in the growth of your hobby. But how to buy a good telescope can be downright confusing and intimidating.

Before you go to that big expense, it might be a better next step from the naked eye to invest in a good set of binoculars. There are even binoculars that are

suited for star gazing that will do just as good a job at giving you that extra vision you want to see just a little better the wonders of the universe. A well designed set of binoculars also gives you much more mobility and ability to keep your "enhanced vision" at your fingertips when that amazing view just presents itself to you.

None of this precludes you from moving forward with your plans to put together an awesome telescope system. Just be sure you get quality advice and training on how to configure your telescope to meet your needs. Using these guidelines, you will enjoy hours of enjoyment stargazing at the phenomenal sights in the night sky that are beyond the naked eye.

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