

## **Transcript:**

What's Up for July? Mars is closest to Earth since 2003!

Hello and welcome. I'm Jane Houston Jones from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

If you've been skywatching for 15 years or more, then you'll remember August 2003, when Mars approached closer to Earth than it had for thousands of years. It was a very small percentage closer, but not so much that it was as Mars was an awesome sight: in binoculars, where some large features could be seen, and especially through telescopes. Astronomy clubs everywhere had long lines of people looking through their telescopes at the red planet, and they will again this month!

If you are new to stargazing, this month and next will be a great time to check out Mars. Through a telescope, you should be able to make out some of the light and dark features, and sometimes polar ice. Right now, though, a huge Martian dust storm is obscuring many features, and less planetary detail is visible.

July 27th is Mars opposition, when Mars, Earth, and the Sun all line up, with Earth directly in the middle. A few days later on July 31st is Mars' closest approach. That's when Mars and Earth are nearest to each other in their orbits around the Sun. Although there will be a lot of news focusing on one or the other of these two dates, Mars will be visible for many months.

By the end of July, Mars will be visible at sunset. But the best time to view it is several hours after sunset, when Mars will appear higher in the sky. Mars will still be visible after July and August, but each month it will shrink in apparent size as it travels farther from Earth in its orbit around the Sun.

On July 27th a total lunar eclipse will be visible in Australia, Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America. For those viewers, Mars will be right next to the eclipsing moon!

Next month will feature August's summer Perseids. It's not too soon to plan a dark sky getaway for the most popular meteor shower of the year!

You can catch up on NASA's missions to Mars and all of NASA's missions at:  
[www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov)

That's all for this month. I'm Jane Houston Jones.