

# Thanet Astronomy Group

## Astronomy for Everyone in Plain English

### What to see December 29<sup>th</sup>

**Constellation** (Orion) **Stars** (Betelgeuse, Bellatrix, Alnitak, Alnilam, Mintaka, Rigel, Saiph,)

**Asterism** (The Winter Triangle) **Stars** (Betelgeuse, Sirius, Procyon)

November to March the constellation **Orion the Hunter** is at its best. There are some 20 prominent stars in this constellation. The brightest and more easily observed stars are the 8 in the main body. The other stars form Orion's right arm with club, and a slain animal in his left hand. These stars are dimmer and difficult to see due to light pollution.

### At 8:00pm

Looking South East at 119° up to 30° you see the star **Betelgeuse**, the top left corner of Orion, a red super giant, more than 1½ billion kms in diameter.

Look at 127° up to 33° you see the star **Bellatrix**, the top right corner of Orion, at 8½ million kms in diameter.

Look at 128° down to 24° you see **Alnitak**, the first of three stars side by side, forming Orion's belt. **Alnitak**, **Alnilam** (at 128° 25°) and **Mintaka** (at 129° 26°). Probably one of the more easily recognised groups of stars in this area of sky.

Look at 137° down to 21° you see the star **Rigel**, the bottom right corner of Orion. A blue/white super giant, 108 million kms in diameter.

Look at 130° down to 16° you see the star **Saiph** the bottom left corner of Orion, nearly 31 million kms in diameter.



Orion Stars



Orion the Hunter

In August I wrote about The Summer Triangle. Now that the star **Sirius** has appeared above the horizon it's time to mention '**The Winter Triangle**'. This is not a constellation, but a name given to three stars that form a near perfect triangle.

Starting with **Betelgeuse**, (at 119° 30°) as above.

Look at 122° and only 3° above the horizon, you see **Sirius**, the second star. Sirius or (The Dog Star) is the brightest star in the sky and is 2½ million kms wide. It is the main star of the constellation **Canis Major** and part of a trinary system, (three stars locked in orbit with each other).

Look at 98° up to 13° and you see the third star **Procyon** also in **Canis Minor**, about twice the diameter of our Sun.



The Winter Triangle

**Contact us if you need help or more information.**

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