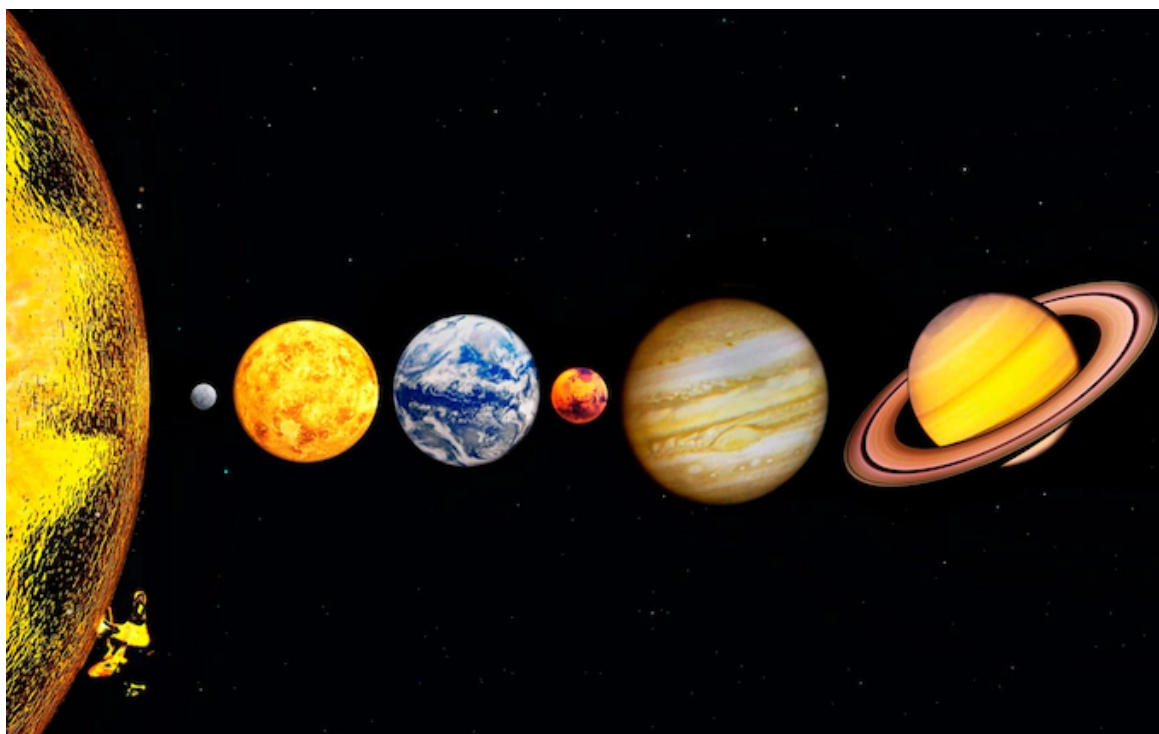


Planets Once Again Align in June after 20 Years

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. alignment /ə'laɪnmənt/ (noun) arrangement in a straight line, or in correct or appropriate relative positions.
Example: The tiles had slipped out of alignment.
2. catch their first glimpse (phrasal) to see someone or something for the first time for a very limited period
Example: Fans waited for hours at the airport to catch their first glimpse of their idol after the pandemic.
3. dawn /dɔːn,dæn/ (noun) the first appearance of light in the sky before sunrise.
Example: The rose-pink light of dawn is a very beautiful sight to behold.
4. crescent /'kres(ə)nt/ (noun) curved shape that is narrow at each end and wider in the middle:
Example: The croissant is shaped like a crescent.
5. visible /'vɪzəb(ə)l/ (adjective) able to be seen
Example: The church is visible from miles away.



A rare planetary **alignment** took place in June 2022 as Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn lined-up in the correct order for the first time in nearly 20 years. The rare event can be seen in the northern hemisphere throughout most of June shortly before sunrise, low in the sky in the East and rising towards the South. Stargazers were able to **catch their first glimpse** Friday morning of June 3, 2022 although Mercury was difficult to see until later in the month.

As Mercury climbed higher throughout June, and brightened significantly, the full line-up was easier to see. The alignment, which was last seen in 2004, peaked last June 24, when the planets were at their brightest and was visible for around an hour before **dawn**. The **crescent** Moon was also **visible** directly between Venus and Mars. Although it was common to see two, three or even four planets aligning, five is rare, and it was even more unusual for them to be arranged in their natural order from the Sun.

Dr Robert Massey, deputy executive director of the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS), said that for the UK, Mercury was really hard to see here, and Venus etc were low down. He said it was easier the further south people went. He encouraged people to look out on the morning of 24 June, and the days around that time, when Mercury was easier, and the other four planets were higher in the sky at dawn.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Would you like to go for a tour of the solar system? Where would you like to go?
2. What is the most interesting planet in the solar system?
3. What would you like scientists to find out about our solar system?
4. What would you explain about our solar system to an alien from another solar system?
5. Do you think governments on Earth will one day fight over who owns which parts of the solar system?