

AstroUpdate – March 2018

Hi and welcome to the Stella Starwoman March AstroUpdate!

This month we have a special article on Peruvian cosmology and the stories the Incas projected onto the night sky. Plus if you missed all the excitement of January's super blue blood-red full moon and lunar eclipse, don't despair – we have another blue moon coming up in March!

Twice In a Blue Moon?



"Once in a Blue Moon" is a common expression meaning 'hardly ever', but what exactly is a blue moon? According to popular definition, it's the second full moon to occur in a single calendar month. The average interval between full moons is 29.5 days, whilst the length of an average month is roughly 30.5 days. This makes it unlikely that any given month will contain two full moons, though it does sometimes happen. On average, there are 41 blue moons every century, so we could say that *'once in a blue moon'* means about once every 2.5 years. This year however, we had two full moons in January and there will be two more in March: one in Virgo on the 2nd and one in Libra on the 31st. The Libra full moon is the blue one.



Stargazing in Peru



High in the Clouds at Machu Picchu

Peru, like Australia, is in the southern hemisphere and as the South Pole faces the centre of our Milky Way galaxy, those of us lucky enough to live in southern latitudes can enjoy spectacular views of the southern skies featuring brilliant stars such as Sirius, Canopus and Alpha Centauri; constellations such as the Pleiades, Orion and Southern Cross and of course, the glowing band of the Milky Way. The non-luminous part of the Milky Way, formed by overlapping dust clouds, is sometimes referred to as 'The Great Rift' or 'Dark River'.

On a recent trip to Peru to explore ancient megalithic sites and their solar and lunar alignments, I was keen to find out how the Inca and their ancestors viewed the cosmos. I discovered that at the height of its power in the mid-1500s, the Incan Empire of South America had 10 million subjects and stretched 5500 km from Colombia in the north to Chile in the south, covering plains, mountains, desert and tropical jungle. I also discovered that many cities and sacred sites attributed to the Inca had been built thousands of years earlier by megalithic cultures and that the Incas had simply modified or added to them.



Machu Picchu is one such site. One of Machu Picchu's original primary functions was to be an astronomical observatory. The beautifully crafted Intihuatana stone, carved straight from the bedrock at the top of the mountain and meaning 'hitching post of the sun', has been shown to be a precise indicator of the dates of the spring and autumn equinoxes. At midday on 21st March and 21st September, the sun stands almost directly above the hitching post, casting no shadow at all.



Hitching Post of the Sun (Intihuatana) at Machu Picchu

Inca Cosmology

The Inca worshipped the natural world, believing the sun and moon represented the divine masculine and feminine principles. Inca temples, important buildings, streets (and entire cities, in the case of Cusco) were laid out so that the sun, moon or a particular constellation would light up a passageway or shine through a window or door on an important cosmic day, such as the summer or winter solstice. The Inca saw themselves as descendants of the sun god, Inti and throughout the Andes today, the Festival of the Sun “Inti Raymi” is celebrated by indigenous cultures at the June winter solstice to mark the return of the light.



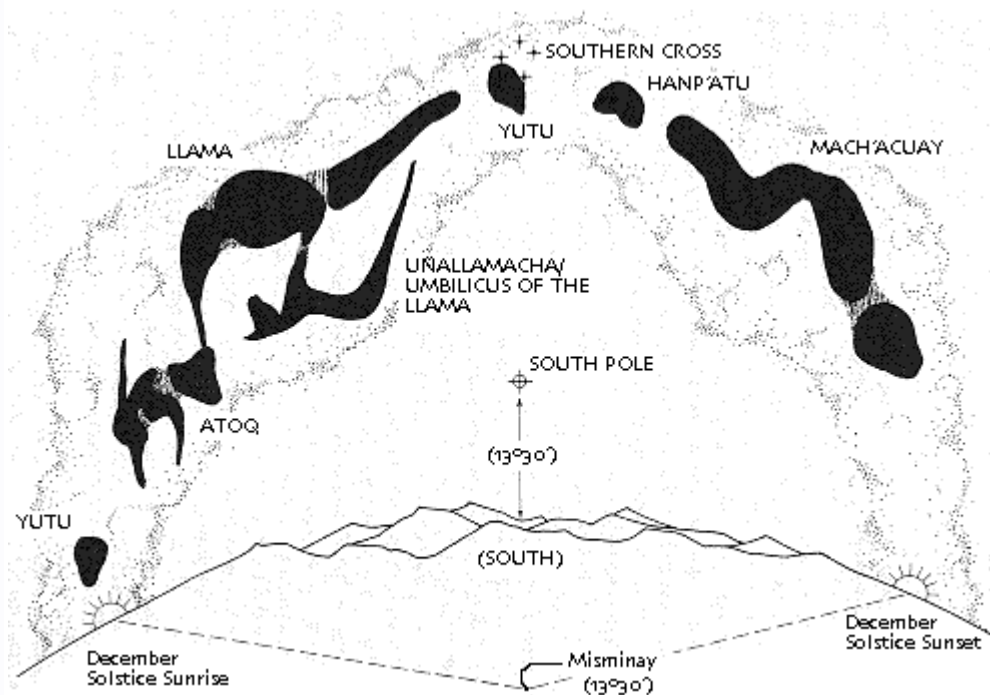


Festival of the Sun (Inti Raymi) at the Winter Solstice

The Inca called the Milky Way “Mayu” and saw it as a celestial, life-giving river mirrored by its earthly counterpart, the Urubamba River in Peru’s Sacred Valley high in the Andes. Constellations were grouped into two different types – bright star and dark cloud. Bright star constellations were similar to Western constellations with stars forming patterns in the sky, such as Orion, Scorpio or the Pleiades and were considered to be inanimate. By contrast, dark cloud constellations, formed by the dark spaces of the Milky Way, were viewed as sacred animals – puma, fox, llama, serpent or toad – drinking from the waters of the celestial river or Milky Way.

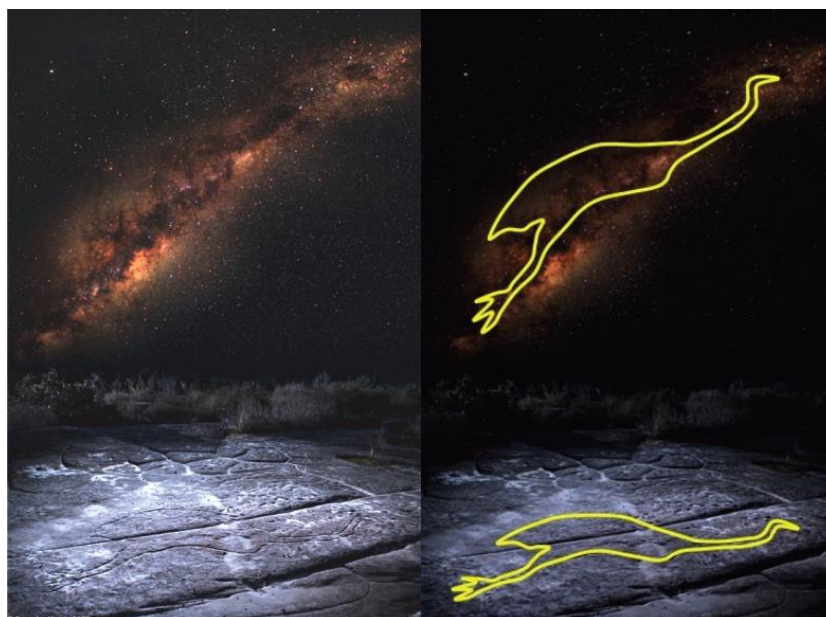
One of the Incans’ most important dark cloud constellations was Yacana – The Llama which rises above Cusco, the ancient Inca capital in November. Llamas were of great importance to the Incas, providing food, carrying heavy loads and acting as sacrifices to the gods. In the sky there are actually two llamas – Mother Llama, visible between the Southern Cross and Scorpio, and Baby Llama, suckling at her mother’s breast. Although Mother Llama is a dark cloud constellation, her eyes are formed by two bright stars from the constellation Centaurus - Alpha Centauri, the third brightest star in the night sky, and Beta Centauri.





Another well-known Inca dark cloud constellation is the Mach'acuay or Serpent – a wavy black ribbon between the star Adhara, in Canis Major, and the Southern Cross. The Serpent rises above Cusco in August and sets in February, a period when real live snakes are actually more active in the area.

The Emu in the Sky



Like their counterparts in South America, indigenous stargazers in Australia have always tracked the cycles of the moon and sun and have numerous myths relating to the Southern Cross, the Pleiades and other constellations. They also embrace the idea of dark cloud constellations, with the 'Emu in the Sky' featuring in traditional storytelling for thousands of years. To locate this celestial emu, look closely at the Southern Cross and you will see the emu's head as a dark smudge near the bottom left hand corner of the constellation. Its neck passes between the two pointer stars, and its dark body stretches the length of the Milky Way.

There is a famous emu rock carving at Elvina Track in Kuringai Chase National Park north of Sydney. Professor Ray Norris of CSIRO and his son, Barnaby, photographed both the engraving and the night sky, finding that the carved emu aligns to her image in the night sky at the time of year emu eggs are ready to be collected (late May and early June).

Mercury Retrograde – Foot in Mouth Disease?



From 23rd March to 15th April, communication planet Mercury will be travelling backwards through the supremely tactless, but brutally honest fire sign Aries. When Mercury is retrograde, our unconscious and intuitive sides are particularly active and the best laid plans often come to a halt. If things start to go wrong or you find yourself wishing you'd never opened your mouth, consider it a wake-up call. And let's face it, sometime the truth needs to come out!



Lunar Cycles & Emotional Balance



The everlasting monthly cycle between the moon and earth has always had a profound effect on our weather, tides, birds, fish, animals, plant growth and of course on we humans. The age old traditions of seafaring, fishing, agriculture and wine-making are all founded on an intimate knowledge of the moon's cycles, though today, many are unaware of this rich heritage.

To attune yourself to the moon's monthly cycle, simply go outside and watch the moon each night growing bigger and smaller and note how it rises and sets as our ancestors did. If the moon is growing bigger (waxing) it means energy is on the increase, peaking at the full moon for a three day period. As the moon grows smaller (waning) energy decreases right down to the lowest point of the cycle when the moon disappears for three days, hidden by the rays of the sun. Then there's the excitement of the beautiful new crescent moon appearing on the horizon as the cycle begins again. To see how this rise and fall of energy plays out in your own life check the dates for new and full moons in the moon tables in AstroUpdate or via a moon calendar/diary and see how you feel on those days. Withdrawn? Excited? Angry? Peaceful? Living daily life in tune with the rhythms of the moon and the seasons is one of the easiest ways of achieving emotional balance.



Everyone can see when the moon is full, but here's a little trick to help you tell the difference between the waxing moon (moon getting bigger and more powerful) and the waning moon (moon becoming smaller and less powerful). Think of the word "COD" (reversed to "DOC" if you are in the northern hemisphere). The "C" shaped moon appears during the waxing cycle as we move from new moon to full moon. The "O" represents the full moon, and the "D" moon appears during the waning cycle as we move from full moon to new moon.

In Australia if you can see the crescent moon (C) near sunset (west) it means it is waxing or growing bigger and if you can see the crescent moon (D) near sunrise (east), the moon is waning or growing smaller. Have fun!

Autumn Equinox & Emotional Balance



Speaking of emotional balance, March 21st, the autumn equinox, is a key date in the astrological calendar as the Sun moves from Pisces to Aries and day and night are of equal length. Many ancient civilisations considered the equinox and solstice points the most important days of the calendar, with all life in balance. But then for the next six months, nights become longer than days, which means it's time to start withdrawing energy from the outer world and prepare for the cooler months ahead. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) takes the view that external changes of season

are also reflected internally. If you adjust your daily habits (sleeping, eating, clothing) to reflect the seasonal changes, you are more likely to stay healthy.

Seven Top Tips for a Fruitful Autumn

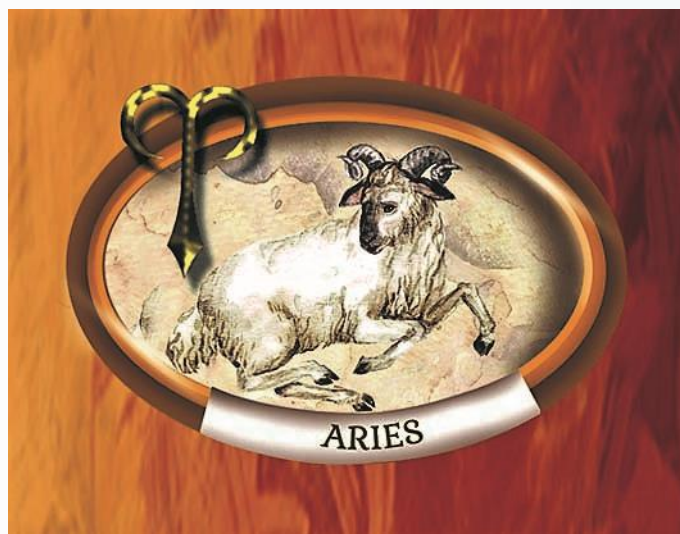


- 1) Stock up your pantry and freezer with all the delicious autumn produce available at markets, orchards and if you're lucky, your own garden.
- 2) Adjust your sleeping habits to follow the sun. As the days grow shorter, do less in the evenings, enjoy a hot bath, go to bed earlier and rise with the sun.
- 3) Autumn is a season of golden days and cool nights. Spend half an hour each morning in March and April putting your home and garden in order – you'll feel fantastic.
- 4) Dust off the stock pot and make a large pot of soup or warming stew to share with friends. Then do it again!
- 5) As the weather cools down, get plenty of fresh air, but dress warmly. Give your wardrobe an overhaul making sure you have plenty of warm clothes you feel good in, rather than reaching for that same old sweater or jacket.
- 6) Enjoy five minutes of deep breathing each day when you finish work. Lie on your bed, on the couch or on the floor and pull air into all parts of your lungs and chest, then release it slowly along with all the tensions of the day. Put your hands on your abdomen and feel the rise and fall of your breath, enjoying the beautiful experience of being alive! A great exercise to do with children.



- 7) Light the fire, put the kettle on, cut yourself a piece of cake and curl up on the couch with that book you've been meaning to read for ages, the curly crossword...or that knitting pattern...or?

Happy Birthday Aries



From the 21st March to the 20th April, the Sun travels through masculine fire sign Aries. Aries is the first sign of the zodiac, the seed, the new beginning, the hero. Its keywords are “I am” and “I initiate”. The symbol for Aries is the horned ram who rushes fearlessly into new situations, heedless of danger with no consideration for others. Arians are true individuals, keen to build their own personality and ego. The typical Arian is youthful, independent and adventurous, displaying strength, boldness, initiative and courage. Negatively they can be angry, headstrong, selfish, domineering and arrogant. Arians need to learn how to cooperate with others, complete projects they have started and conserve their energy to avoid burnout. If you want to annoy an Aries, boss them around or tell them to calm down! Each zodiac sign rules a part of the body. For Aries this is the head. When Arians are out of balance they often suffer from headaches, dizziness, migraines and injuries to the head or in more severe cases strokes and seizures. And the Aries colour is red. When we get angry we talk about ‘seeing red’.



March & April Moon Calendar

Launch projects a couple of days after the New Moon, bring them to completion in the period from just before the Full Moon to the Third Quarter phase and wind them down and reflect on developments in the week before the next New Moon.

The period between the New Moon and the Full Moon is the waxing moon (moon getting bigger and fuller). The period between the Full Moon and the New Moon is the waning moon (moon getting smaller and thinner).

You can use this moon table to select the most favourable days to slow or increase hair regrowth. Full instructions can be found in my [Lunar Hair Care](#) guidelines but to get you started I've marked the best dates for waxing/shaving to slow regrowth in yellow and the best dates to cut hair for thicker, lusher growth in green. If you're serious about Lunar Hair Care – why not purchase a moon calendar, available at most esoteric book stores, then you'll know exactly what time of day the moon changes from one zodiac sign to the next, meaning you can fine-tune your activities with confidence.

Date	Moon Sign	Element	Moon Phase
MARCH			
Date	Sign	Element	Moon phase
1 st	Leo	Fire	
2 nd -3 rd	Virgo	Earth	Full Moon 2nd
3 rd -6 th	Libra	Air	
6 th -8 th	Scorpio	Water	
8 th -10 th	Sagittarius	Fire	Third Quarter
10 th -13 th	Capricorn	Earth	
13 th -15 th	Aquarius	Air	
15 th -18 th	Pisces	Water	New Moon 18th
18 th -20 th	Aries	Fire	
20 th -22 nd	Taurus	Earth	
22 nd -24 th	Gemini	Air	
24 th -26 th	Cancer	Water	First Quarter
26 th -29 th	Leo	Fire	
29 th -31 st	Virgo	Earth	
31 st -2 nd	Libra	Air	



APRIL

Date	Sign	Element	Moon phase
1 st -2 nd	Libra	Air	
2 nd -4 th	Scorpio	Water	
4 th -7 th	Sagittarius	Fire	
7 th -9 th	Capricorn	Earth	Third Quarter
9 th -12 th	Aquarius	Air	
12 th -14 th	Pisces	Water	
14 th -16 th	Aries	Fire	New Moon 16th
16 th -18 th	Taurus	Earth	
18 th -21 st	Gemini	Air	
21 st -23 rd	Cancer	Water	
23 rd -25 th	Leo	Fire	First Quarter
25 th -27 th	Virgo	Earth	
27 th -29 th	Libra	Air	
29 th -2nd	Scorpio	Water	Full Moon 30th

Thanks for being part of AstroUpdate. If there's something you'd like to see featured, or have something you think would interest others, please contact me at stella@stellastarwoman.com

Happy Stargazing

Stella Woods

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