ESO Calendar 2026

European Southern Observatory



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Parading past the vicuñas and ALMA antennas on the Chajnantor plateau

January 2026

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
				2							3							4							5						

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The IC 2872 emission nebula: a chicken's head?

February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3
	6							7							8							9							10		
●								◑							●							◑							●		

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A full Moon rises behind the ELT

March 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
10								11							12							13							14		

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MUSE view of the Sculptor Galaxy

April 2026

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1
					15							16							17							18					

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Piercing the skies above Paranal

May 2026

Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
			19							20							21							22						

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The supernova remnant SNR 0509-67.5

June 2026

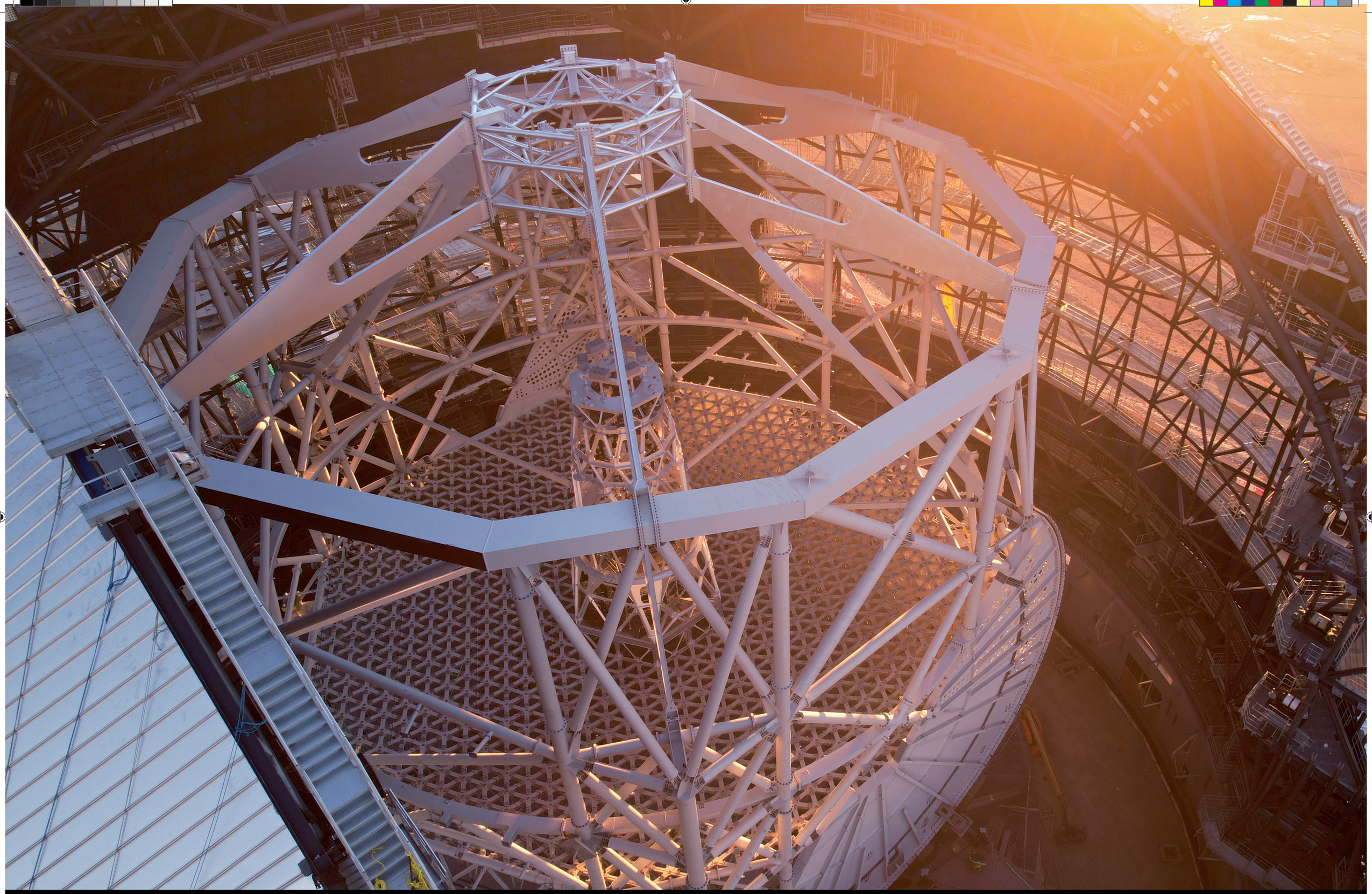
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1
23							24							25							26							27			

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Sequence of VLT images of 3I/ATLAS

July 2026

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
													28							29							30				31



Peering inside the ELT

August 2026

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
		32							33							34							35							36	

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Comet Tsuchinshan-ATLAS meets the ESO Supernova

September 2026

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1
			37							38							39								40						

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The Sh2-46 nebula

October 2026

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
				41							42							43							44						

calendar_ESO_2026-final.indd 11 25.08.25 16:05



Two top hunters on a break

November 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1				

45 46 47 48 49

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A stellar nursery in the Running Chicken Nebula

December 2026

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
						50							51							52							53				

Cover

The RCW 38 cluster in infrared light



This is an 80-million-pixel picture of the star cluster RCW 38, located 5500 light-years away in the constellation Vela. RCW 38 is a young cluster containing about 2000 stars and is bursting with star-forming activity. The picture was taken with ESO's Visible and Infrared Survey Telescope for Astronomy (VISTA), operating in Chile's Atacama Desert. It shows a mixture of gas, dust and stars, creating an extravagant, yet spectacular landscape.

Credit: ESO/VVVX survey

January

Parading past the vicuñas and ALMA antennas on the Chajnantor plateau



Vicuñas — a relative of the llamas and the alpacas — roam the Chilean Andes. They feel at home here on the 5000-metre-high Chajnantor plateau, next to their neighbour, the Atacama Large Millimetre/submillimetre Array (ALMA), an ESO-partnered state-of-the-art telescope.

ALMA consists of 66 antennas, which can be picked up and moved by giant dark-yellow transporters, one of which features in this image. The antennas are located here for a good reason: the extremely dry conditions at Chajnantor, deep in the Atacama Desert, are perfectly suited for observing the coldest objects in the Universe.

Credit: S. Otarola/ESO

February

The IC 2872 emission nebula: a chicken's head?



Do you see a playful fox, a skulking hyena or... a chicken's head? Located in the constellation Centaurus, this gas cloud is part of a large nebula nicknamed the Running Chicken Nebula. Some people see the head of the chicken here, others see the chicken's rear end. Officially called IC 2872 or Gum 40, this section of the Running Chicken Nebula was imaged by the VLT Survey Telescope (VST), hosted at ESO's Paranal Observatory in Chile.

Credit: ESO/VPHAS+ team

March

A full Moon rises behind the ELT



The full Moon looms large behind ESO's Extremely Large Telescope (ELT). Taken at precisely the moment that the rising Moon appears to perch atop Cerro Armazones, this perfectly timed photo captures a striking halo created around the ELT's construction in March 2025.

If you look closely at the opening of the dome, you can peek at the telescope's main structure, which will hold the ELT's five mirrors. One of the two sliding doors that will cover this opening was being installed when this picture was taken.

Credit: J. Beltrán/ESO

April

MUSE view of the Sculptor Galaxy



This image shows a detailed, thousand-colour image of the Sculptor Galaxy captured with the Multi-Unit Spectroscopic Explorer (MUSE) instrument at ESO's Very Large Telescope (VLT). Regions of pink light are spread throughout this whole galactic snapshot, which come from ionised hydrogen in star-forming regions. These areas have been overlaid on a map of already formed stars in Sculptor to create the mix of pinks and blues seen here.

Credit: ESO/E. Congiu et al.

May

Piercing the skies above Paranal



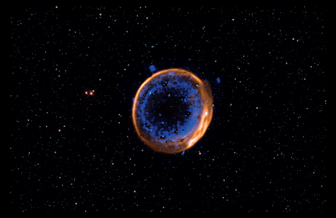
Framed against the star-filled sky of the Paranal Observatory, the Unit Telescope 4, one of the four 8-m telescopes of ESO's VLT , is much more than a passive observer. From within its dome, it pierces the peaceful night with four laser beams.

The lasers create points of light by exciting sodium atoms in the atmosphere, about 90 km above the ground, causing them to glow. These "stars" then act as guides, and by studying how they are blurred by the atmosphere, the telescope learns how to adjust for atmospheric turbulence — the same turbulence that makes every little star twinkle.

Credit: ESO/A. de Burgos Sierra

June

The supernova remnant SNR 0509-67.5



This image shows the supernova remnant SNR 0509-67.5. These are the expanding remains of a star that exploded hundreds of years ago in a double-detonation – the first photographic evidence that stars can die with two blasts.

The data was captured with the MUSE instrument at the VLT. MUSE allows astronomers to map the distribution of different chemical elements, displayed here in different colours. Calcium is shown in blue, arranged in two concentric shells, which signal the double detonation. Hydrogen is in orange.

Credit: ESO/P. Das et al.
Background stars (Hubble): K. Noll et al.

July

Sequence of VLT images of 3I/ATLAS



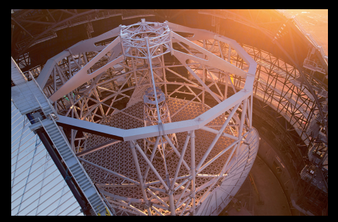
ESO's VLT was one of the first telescopes to capture the interstellar object 3I/ATLAS in 2025. Identified as a comet, 3I/ATLAS is only the third visitor we have encountered from outside our Solar System. The shape of its orbit gave away its interstellar origin.

Here, several VLT observations have been overlaid, showing the comet as a series of dots that move to the right of the image over the course of approximately 13 minutes on the night of 3 July 2025. The data were obtained with the FORS2 instrument.

Credit: ESO/O. Hainaut

August

Peering inside the ELT



Bathed in a golden sunset, ESO's ELT is steadily progressing in its construction in Chile's Atacama Desert, as this image from early 2025 shows.

From here, the ELT's white web-like altitude structure is eye-catching. With no humans for scale, the steel structure may appear modest in size; however, it's more than 50 metres high, and the roof opening is 41 metres wide. If you want to take the stairs and walkways from the entrance of the ELT's dome all the way to the top, you will need about 30 minutes.

Credit: ESO/G. Vecchia

September

Comet Tsuchinshan-ATLAS meets the ESO Supernova



Pictured above the ESO Supernova Planetarium & Visitor Centre, the comet C/2023 A3, also known as Tsuchinshan-ATLAS, visited us from the distant Oort Cloud, a gigantic cluster of icy objects that envelops the Solar System. As it got closer to the Sun, it heated up and developed tails of dust and gas observed by comet watchers around the world, including at ESO Headquarters in Garching bei München, Germany.

The comet was first detected in early 2023 by two independent facilities: the Tsuchinshan observatory in China and a telescope from the Asteroid Terrestrial-impact Last Alert System (ATLAS), located in South Africa.

Credit: ESO/J. C. Muñoz-Mateos

October

The Sh2-46 nebula



This VST image shows the nebula Sh2-46, also named Gum 80, situated roughly 6000 light-years away. The big blue-white star at the centre of the image is HD 165319, an O type star, one of the brightest, but rarest types of stars in the Universe. The star is largely responsible for the red tones around it, caused by the ionisation of hydrogen atoms that make up the nebula. This star, however, should not be here, as it likely was born somewhere else: in the nearby Eagle Nebula.

This image was released in May 2025 on the occasion of the 100 years of the Planetarium, with a full-dome version shown at the ESO Supernova Planetarium & Visitor Centre.

Credit: ESO/VPHAS+ team

November

Two top hunters on a break



Despite its excellent camouflage, the fuzzy face and pointed ears are a dead giveaway for the presence of a culpeo fox, who seems to be basking in the warm sunlight of the Atacama Desert. This particular culpeo appears to have a passion for astronomy, since our furry friend has parked itself in front of a significant piece of ESO's history. The ESO 3.6-metre telescope hosts one of the most successful exoplanet-hunting instruments ever — the High Accuracy Radial velocity Planet Searcher (HARPS).

Credit: F. Murgas/ESO

December

A stellar nursery in the Running Chicken Nebula



This image is a tiny part of a 1.5-billion-pixel image of the Running Chicken Nebula, located about 6500 light-years from Earth. All around the nebula, orange, white and blue stars are dotting the sky like fireworks. The pink glow seen here is hydrogen gas, illuminated by the intense radiation from newborn stars. The nebula is also crossed by dark lanes of cosmic dust that block the light behind them. The data for this image was captured by the VST, a facility of the Italian National Institute for Astrophysics hosted and operated by ESO.

Credit: ESO/VPHAS+ survey

ESO

European Southern Observatory

The European Southern Observatory (ESO) enables scientists worldwide to discover the secrets of the Universe for the benefit of all. We design, build and operate world-class observatories on the ground — which astronomers use to tackle exciting questions and spread the fascination of astronomy — and promote international collaboration in astronomy. An intergovernmental organisation supported by 16 Member States and two partner countries, ESO has headquarters in Germany and operates three observing sites in Chile.

Moon phases are indicated in Universal Time.

Produced by the ESO Department of Communication.

2026

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