8° of Venus, being closet at 2° on the end. Mars is 0.9° right of Saturn with both a giant (near the ‘lid’ star) with Saturn 9° March opens, Mars is 10° above this gas planet. On the 21st, the Red Planet will have close encounters with Jupiter and Saturn is impressive (see above). Mercury returns to the morning sky for a favourable apparition, visible just before dawn for most of March.

**THE PLANETS**
When it comes to naked-eye planets in the evening sky in March, brilliant Venus is in a class of its own, setting shortly after the end of twilight. Venus spends the first half of the month within 8° of Venus, being closest at 2° on the horizon and giving it a bright appearance.

**STARS AND CONSTELLATIONS**
The northern evening sky is home to some of the brightest stars and star clusters. For example, Eta Carinae, a blue supergiant, is a brilliant star that can be seen in the southern sky. The Rosette Nebula is a large gas cloud that can be observed through a telescope. Regulus, the brightest star in the constellation Leo, is also visible in the southern sky.

**DEEP-SKY OBJECTS**
We visit to two open star clusters in eastern Carina, a region blessed with many such objects. Commencing at the 3rd magnitude star Lambda Centauri, head west, crossing into Carina, to discover IC 2714 (RA 11h 17.4m, dec. –62° 44'). Through binoculars, this 8th magnitude cluster appears as a faint, hazy patch. Telescopes reveal dozens of stars of similar brightness (magnitudes 10 to 12) and spread across 0.1 arcminutes, many arranged in curved lines. On the southern edge is a distinctive 8th magnitude star.

There’s a challenge: from IC 2714 move 6° SSE to Melotte 105. In contrast to IC 2714, this cluster is faint and compact (0.5 arcmin). Consisting of 13th to 15th magnitude stars, most instruments under 200mm show it as an unresolved ‘cloud’. Patience and anverted vision can help reveal some of the brightest members.