

Time to see Mercury rising

The Transit of Mercury, visible from nations in and around the Pacific on November 8-9, occurs roughly 13-14 times a century. They are more frequent than transits of Venus, as Mercury is closer to the sun and orbits it more quickly



Plane of Earth's orbit

Plane of Mercury's orbit

Perihelion

MERCURY

Length of transit:
4hrs, 58 min

SUN

Orbital planes align twice each year but as planets travel at different speeds transit occurs few times. In November, Mercury reaches perihelion – furthest point from sun – where its faster orbital motion makes alignment most likely

TRANSIT

Start:
19:12GMT

Greatest:
21:41GMT

End:
00:10GMT

Telescope of 30 times magnification – with solar filter to protect eyes – required



Full transit visible

Transit at sunset

No transit visible

Transit at sunrise

Full transit visible