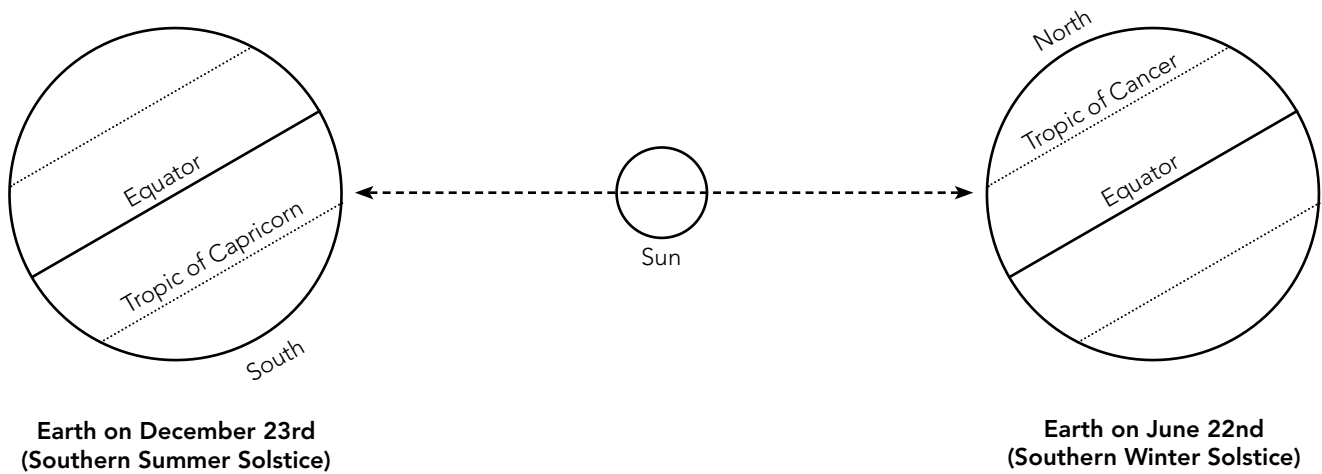


Summer and Winter Solstices

Because of the tilt of the Earth's axis, the Sun appears to move either side of the equator as the Earth orbits around it. The maximum distance south of the equator is reached on December 23rd each year: and this occasion is known as the Southern Summer Solstice. On this date, the Sun is exactly above the Tropic of Capricorn, and we enjoy our maximum hours of daylight, and the shortest length of night.

On the 21st of June each year, the Sun reaches its most northerly position, and on this date it is above the Tropic of Cancer. This is known as the Southern Winter Solstice, and we have our longest hours of night, and shortest hours of daylight.



The Equinox

As the Earth continues in its orbit, the Sun crosses the equator twice each year: once heading South to bring us our Summer, and once heading North as we move through Autumn to Winter. When the Sun appears exactly above the Equator, the occasion is known as the Equinox.

Our Spring Equinox occurs on September 23rd, and our Autumn Equinox is on March 22nd. On these two dates the Sun rises exactly in the East, and sets exactly in the West. the word "equinox" means "equal"; so on these two days the Sun is visible for the same length of time as it is night (all around the Earth).