

15 Capella in the constellation Auriga

Distance

43 light years

Luminosity

79 / 73 times that of the sun

Colour

Yellow

Surface temperature

5,000 K / 5,700 K

Diameter

12 / 8.8 times the diameter of the sun

(To Planet Trail scale: 17 m

or 12 m)

Mass

2.6 / 2.5 solar masses

Evening visibility

November to May

Capella is the brightest star in the constellation Auriga and the fourth brightest fixed star that we can see in the sky. Only one star can be seen with the unaided eye, but Capella is actually a multiple star system. Two main sequence stars, which form a binary star and orbit each other in 104 days, contribute to its brightness. They both fall into the yellow giant phase of the star life cycle. These stars have finished fusing hydrogen into helium and are approaching the end of their lives.

The above data refers to these two stars.

Another binary pair also has a connection to the stars mentioned above. These are red dwarfs, which are significantly smaller and fainter.

In principle, Capella always remains above the horizon from our perspective but its very low position in the northern summer sky makes it less easy to see.

Capella forms the Winter Hexagon together with the stars Pollux, Procyon, Sirius, Rigel and Aldebaran.

Other bright stars in the constellation Auriga:

Menkalinan Distance: 81 light years

Mahasim Distance: 173 light years

Hassaleh Distance: 500 light years

Almaaz Distance: 1,300 light years

15 Constellation Auriga

The sprawling constellation Auriga is relatively close to the celestial pole and neighbours Taurus. The brightest stars form a hexagon (the southernmost star officially belongs to Taurus). This makes it relatively easy to find the constellation in the evening sky. The band of the Milky Way runs through the constellation, so several star clusters and nebulae are also present.

An earlier interpretation suggested that a shepherd carrying a goat on his back could be seen in the constellation. Capella translates as kid. The constellation was later given the name Auriga. It is depicted as a man holding a whip in one hand.

According to one myth about the constellation Auriga, the figure represents Myrtilus, the charioteer of King Oenomaus' racing team. The king promised the hand of his daughter to the suitor who could defeat him in a chariot race. As the king had the fastest team of horses, he caught up with all suitors despite their head start and cut off their heads from behind. The king's daughter fell in love with one of the suitors and didn't want to lose him. She asked Myrtilus to manipulate the king's chariot. Whilst travelling at high speed, the king's chariot lost its wheels. The king was killed. Instead of rewarding Myrtilus, the king's daughter pushed him off a cliff to his death.