

6 Regulus in the constellation Leo

Distance

79 light years

Luminosity

150 times that of the sun

Colour

Blue-white

Surface temperature

12,500 K

Diameter

3.2 times the diameter of the sun

(To Planet Trail scale: 4.5 m)

Mass

3.4 solar masses

Evening visibility

February to May

Regulus is the brightest star in the constellation Leo and the fifteenth brightest star we can see in the sky. It is a main sequence star, which means that, like our sun, it gains its energy through the fusion of hydrogen into helium.

The constellation Leo gives its name to the corresponding sign of the zodiac. This means that, seen from Earth, our sun passes by the constellation over several weeks in the daytime sky. The moon and, theoretically, the planets can move between the Earth and Regulus. The moon will cover the fixed star once in 2025 and again in 2026. An occultation by Venus won't take place again until 2044. It will not be occulted by other planets in the coming centuries.

Regulus forms the Spring Triangle together with Arcturus in Bootes and Spica in the constellation Virgo.

Other bright stars in the constellation Leo:

Algieba Distance: 126 light years

Denebola Distance: 36 light years

Zosma Distance: 58 light years

Algenubi Distance: 251 light years

6 Constellation Leo

The constellation Leo is an imposing constellation visible on spring nights in a southward direction. With a little imagination, you can make out the powerful (trapezoidal) body of a lion with its head raised. Leo is situated between the constellations Virgo and Cancer. The constellation is positioned along the ecliptic. This means that, seen from Earth, the sun, moon and planets pass by the constellation. The sun spends time in this constellation from mid August to mid September. When conditions are favourable, three galaxies can be seen in the constellation of Leo with the use of binoculars. The constellation is depicted by the figure of a lion with a mighty mane.

Greek mythology has the following interpretation of the constellation in the story of Hercules:

A lion destroyed the city of Nemea and the surrounding area. One of Hercules' twelve tasks was to rid the world of this beast. The lion had an extremely tough pelt, which made him unharmable as far as weapons were concerned. He hid in a cave with two exits. Hercules blocked one escape route and approached the lion from the other exit. Hercules is said to have strangled the animal with his bare hands. He pulled off its pelt using the dead lion's diamond-hard claws. Hercules later wore the lion's pelt as a cloak. It protected him like armour.