

## 11 Vega in the constellation Lyra

Distance

25 light years

Luminosity

37 times that of the sun

Colour

Blue-white

Surface temperature

7,600 K

Diameter

2.7 times the diameter of the sun

(To Planet Trail scale: 3.8 m)

Mass

2.2 solar masses

Evening visibility

June to October

Vega is the brightest star in the constellation Lyra and the third brightest fixed star we can see in the sky.

Vega is a main sequence star like our sun. It fuses hydrogen to helium in its core. The star is significantly younger than our sun. Vega's great luminosity means that its lifetime is only about a tenth of that of our Sun, although it has a much greater mass and consequently more hydrogen. It forms the Summer Triangle together with Altair in Aquila and Deneb in Cygnus. Because of their relative brightness at twilight in the summer months, the three fixed stars of the Summer Triangle are among the first stars to become visible.

Other bright stars in the constellation Lyra:

Sulafat            Distance: 550 light years

Sheliak            Distance: 1,000 light years

## 11 Constellation Lyra

Lyra is a relatively small, modest constellation. Apart from Vega, its other stars are all relatively low in brightness. And yet the constellation is fairly easy to find in the sky on summer and autumn evenings. Four stars form a small parallelogram close to Vega. The parallelogram is said to resemble a lyre, a musical instrument.

With the help of a small telescope, you can see a nebula between the stars Sulafat and Sheliak, the so-called Ring Nebula (M 57). It is the remains of an exploded star. The nebula is 2,300 light years away. When viewed through a telescope, it looks ring-shaped. Lyra is depicted as a musical instrument.

There are several myths about the constellation Lyra. We will limit ourselves to one such version here:

Apollo, the god of music, gave Orpheus a lyre. Orpheus improved the instrument by adding two more strings and became a famous singer. After the death of his wife, Orpheus descended into the underworld to bring her back. He almost succeeded. As he left the underworld he looked back one last time, something which was forbidden. His wife had to stay in the underworld because of this offence. After Orpheus' death, Zeus placed the lyre in the sky in memory of the greatest of Greek singers.