

16 Sirrah in the constellation Andromeda

Distance

97 light years

Luminosity

200 times that of the sun

Colour

Blue-white

Surface temperature

13,000 K

Diameter

2.7 times the diameter of the sun

(To Planet Trail scale: 3.8 m)

Mass

3.8 solar masses

Evening visibility

March to October

Sirrah (also known as Alpheratz) is the brightest star in the constellation Andromeda. Although not among the brightest stars in the sky, it is easy to find because it belongs to the Great Square of the autumn months. In addition to Sirrah, the Great Square is made up of three other stars from the constellation Pegasus. The four stars form a large trapezium in an area with relatively few stars. In 1930, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) redefined the constellation boundaries. Until then, Sirrah was part of the constellation Pegasus.

Sirrah is a blue subgiant. Some stars enter this phase of the star life cycle once they no longer fuse hydrogen in their cores.

Other bright stars in the constellation Andromeda:

Mirach Distance: 200 light years

Almach Distance: 355 light years

16 Constellation Andromeda

Andromeda is a very well-known constellation. Sirrah, Mirach and Almach lie roughly along a line starting from the Great Square of Pegasus. The constellation Andromeda contains the Andromeda Nebula (M 31). It lies to the north of Mirach, halfway to the adjacent constellation Cassiopeia. On a clear and dark night, it is possible to see our neighbouring galaxy with the naked eye.

The Andromeda Nebula is around 2.5 million light years away from us. This means that the galaxy we see today is as it looked 2.5 million years ago. Andromeda is usually depicted as a chained female figure.

In Greek mythology, Andromeda was the only daughter of the Ethiopian king Cepheus and his wife Cassiopeia.

Cassiopeia was very confident of her beauty and very vain. The sea god Poseidon sent out a sea monster in the form of a whale to punish her for her vanity. This monster caused devastation on the Ethiopian coast. Cepheus asked an oracle for advice. To appease the monster, Andromeda was chained to a rock. Perseus came by on his winged horse Pegasus and discovered the chained woman. He destroyed the monster and freed Andromeda. To honour this story, Andromeda, Perseus, Cepheus, Cassiopeia, Pegasus and the whale (Cetus) each appear as a constellation in the sky.