Article for 10/28/2026 or 11/4/2026

Begin

As the days get shorter and the nights longer it is much easier to find the time to admire the night sky; take a moment after dinner or while you drink your morning coffee and step outside to enjoy the constellations. One such constellation that currently stands out is Andromeda. Andromeda's brightest star is Alpheratz, with a magnitude of 2.1. Right next to Alpheratz is the Andromeda Galaxy or Messier 31. The Andromeda Galaxy is the closest galaxy to us at just 2.5 million light years away. It can be seen with the naked eye as a fuzzy patch, and has been crucial in furthering our understanding of our own Milky Way Galaxy due to the fact that it is also a spiral galaxy. This allows us to use it as a proxy galaxy to study both our own galaxy and other spiral galaxies alike.

Both the Andromeda galaxy and the constellation are named for the Greek mythological character; in the myth Andromeda was a beautiful princess, and her mother often bragged about her daughter's looks. This angered the nearby sea nymphs who implored the god Poseidon to send a sea monster, Cetus, to terrorize Andromeda's kingdom. In order to save their kingdom Andromeda's parents attempted to sacrifice her to Cetus, by chaining her to a cliff by the ocean, but before Cetus could devour Andromeda, the hero Perseus swoops in on Pegasus and slays Cetus, rescuing Andromeda. The two go on to be married, and their story is immortalized in the stars. When you look into the sky, you can find Andromeda connected to Pegasus near Perseus and the circumpolar constellations of Cepheus and Cassiopeia.

Andromeda is not the only celestial object to observe in November. The Milky Way will also be visible, but that visibility is quickly starting to fade, so make sure to catch it while you can. Keep an eye out for Saturn which will be shining brightly yellow for the majority of the night, and Venus, Jupiter, and Mars rise in the early morning before sunrise in a stunning planet parade, and Jupiter and Mars will be very close together November 14-16. November 4th is the peak of the Taurid meteor shower, and November 9th is a New Moon so the likelihood of catching a glimpse of meteors overhead is very high.

Finally stargazing is only possible if light pollution is kept under control. Remember to turn off all unnecessary lights, and for the lights that must remain on throughout the night, make sure that they are shielded so that the light beam is targeted only to the area that must be illuminated. This drastically cuts back on light pollution, keeping it so that even areas that must be lit during the night do not prevent our ability to see the brilliant night skies. Happy stargazing!

End

Written by Georgia West

Image courtesy of NASA
https://www.nasa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/m31.jpg

