

## CONSTELLATIONS: LEO



**Leo** is a large constellation, some 30° across, and well-placed for observation at this time of year, high above the southern horizon.

The first of Hercules' fabled twelve tasks was to bring King Eurystheus the skin of a terrible lion whose hide was known to be invulnerable to spears and arrows. Hercules didn't have much bother with the lion: he cornered the beast in its lair and strangled it to death by ramming his fist down its throat. When he returned with the lion's body, the King was so terrified he ran from the sight of it. Hercules wasn't fazed: he skinned the lion and took its hide as armor.

The Leo "Triplets" (M65, M66 and NGC 3628) are a nice grouping. The two Messier objects are brighter but the third triplet is visible too and, if you use averted vision, surprisingly large; it looks elongated and edge-on-ish.

In the same field of view, the whole grouping looks like eyes and a mouth. M95, M96 and M105 are not so bright, but make an interesting group for comparison.

**Regulus**, the brightest star in Leo and the 21st brightest star in the sky, has a faint double sometimes visible in binoculars.

**Algieba** is one of the best doubles in the sky, with two yellow components that orbit one another every 620 years.

**Denebola**, a blue-orange pair, is an optical double: the stars are far apart in space, not connected in any way, but lie along the same line of sight.