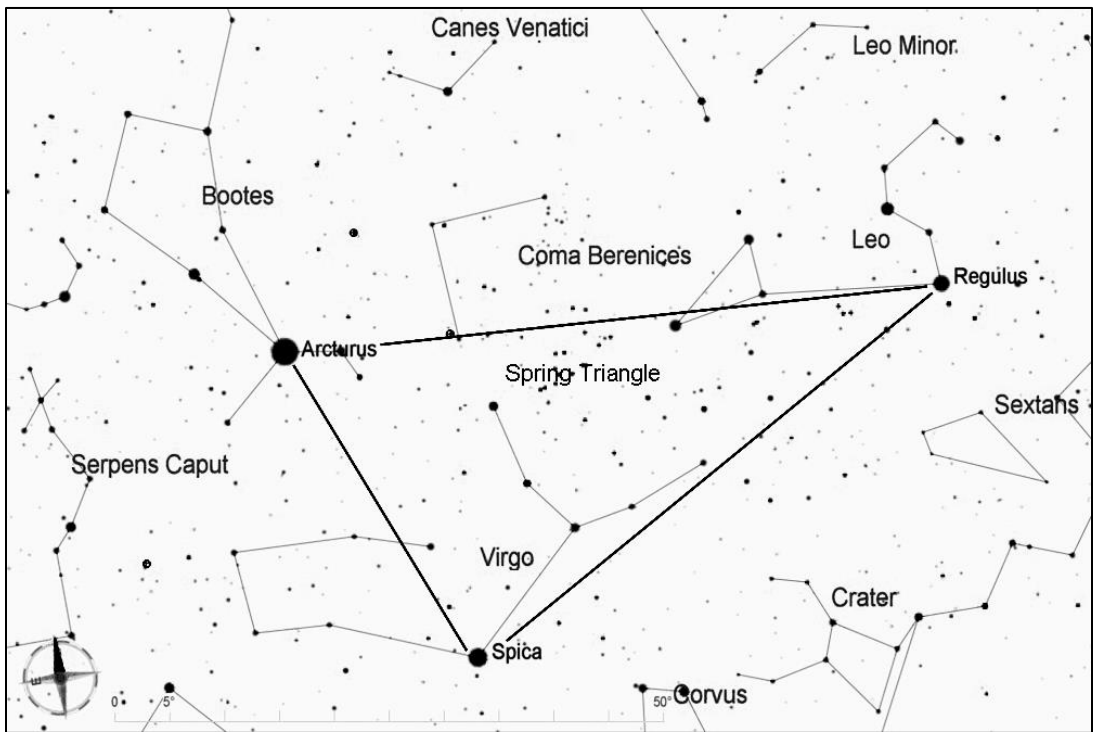


Messier 104, the Sombrero Galaxy

As it crosses through the southern sky each spring, the Sombrero Galaxy is a popular target for galaxy observers. It can be seen with telescopes large and small. Its bright nucleus and sharply pointed arms are fairly easy to see. The lower half of the galaxy, below the broad dust lane, is dimmer and requires a reasonably dark sky to see well.



Start by finding the Spring Triangle, which consists of three widely-separated first magnitude stars--Arcturus, Spica, and Regulus. The Spring Triangle is high in the southeast sky in early spring, and in the southwest sky by mid-Summer. (To get oriented, you can use the handle of the Big Dipper and "follow the arc to Arcturus").

For this star hop, begin at Spica in the constellation Virgo.

Look about 20 degrees to the southwest of Spica to find the distinctive four-sided shape of Corvus, the crow. Using binoculars or a finderscope, look a few degrees north of δ Corvus and you should see an arrow-shaped pattern of four 5th and 6th magnitude stars, as shown below. M104 is about 1 degree to the northeast of the tip of this arrow shape.

