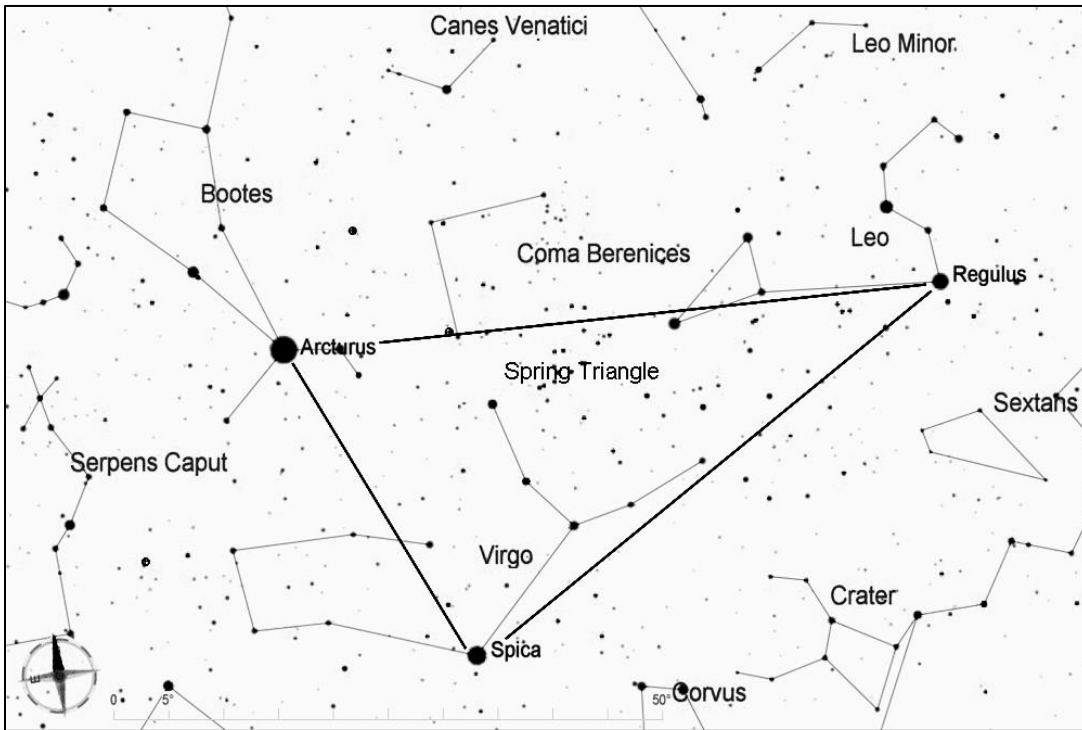


Messier 95, 96, and 105, Galaxies in Leo

Messier 95 is a barred spiral galaxy, Messier 96 is a spiral galaxy, and Messier 105 is an elliptical galaxy. This group of galaxies is about 30 million light years away. All three are about 9th magnitude, and their overall shapes can be seen with a small telescope. Much more detail is visible with larger telescopes, and two other galaxies (NGC 3371 and 3373) can be seen nearby.



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 Regulus in the constellation Leo, the lion.

The constellation Leo looks like a lion in profile, with its head to the west and its tail to the east. After finding Regulus, look for θ Leonis, one of the three stars that form the back end of the lion. About 60% of the way from Regulus to θ is a 5th magnitude star that will be visible in binoculars or a finder scope, the brightest star in that area. From this star, point the telescope about 1.6 degrees to the south to reach M105. As shown below, M96 is about 2/3 degree south of M105, and M95 is 2/3 degree east of M96. The inset shows the locations of these and two other galaxies.

