

Find the Teapot, and our Galaxy's centre

On any moonless evening during a Northern Hemisphere summer or Southern Hemisphere winter, you can look in the evening hours toward the centre of our Milky Way galaxy. It's located in the direction of Sagittarius the Archer, with happens to contain a famous asterism – or noticeable pattern of stars – called the Teapot. From the Northern Hemisphere, you'll be looking south during the evening hours for this star pattern. From the Southern Hemisphere, look for the Teapot to climb high overhead around mid-to-late evening.

If you're blessed with a dark sky, finding all this will be easy. In a dark sky, you'll see a broad boulevard of stars – the edgewise view into our own Milky Way galaxy – which broadens and brightens in the direction of the galaxy's centre.

Or maybe you know the planets? If you have that dark sky, know that, in 2017, the starry band of the Milky Way passes between the Teapot and the golden planet Saturn. It lies about midway between the spout of the Teapot and Saturn this year.

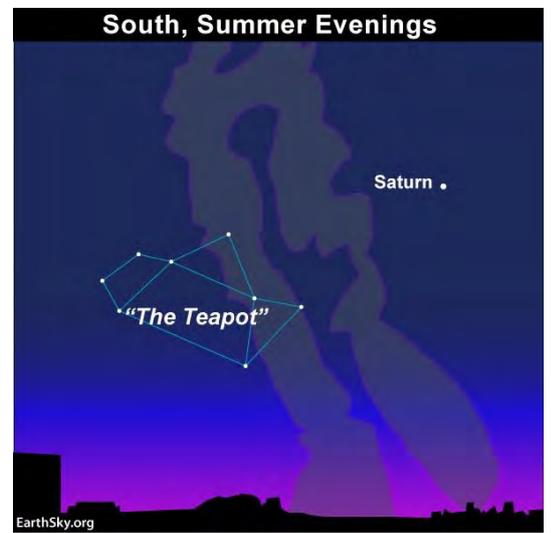
The chart on the right expands the view to include the constellation Scorpius, which is relatively bright and easy to spot for its curved Scorpion's Tail. Sagittarius the Archer – and its Teapot asterism – is next door to Scorpius on the sky's dome.

From the Northern Hemisphere, look southward in July and August evenings to see these stars.

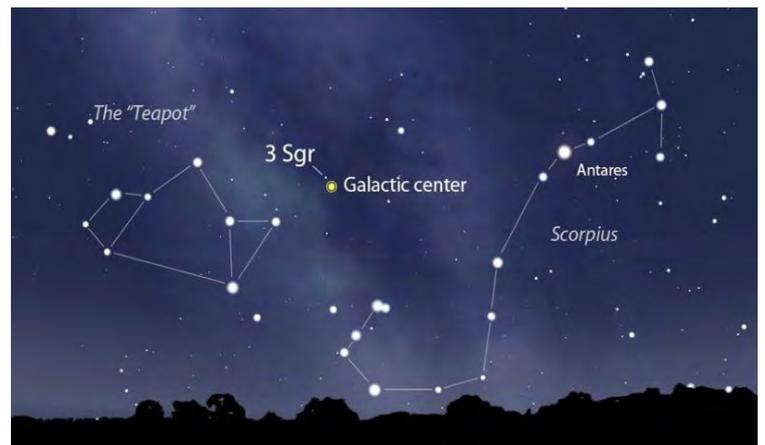
From the Southern Hemisphere, look generally northward, higher in the sky and turn this chart upside down.

We can't really see the galactic centre. It's heavily veiled by intervening stars, star clusters and nebulae (vast clouds of gas and dust). The centre of our Milky Way looms some 26,000 light-years away. But we can gaze toward this direction in space, and – if your sky is dark enough – it's a sight to behold!

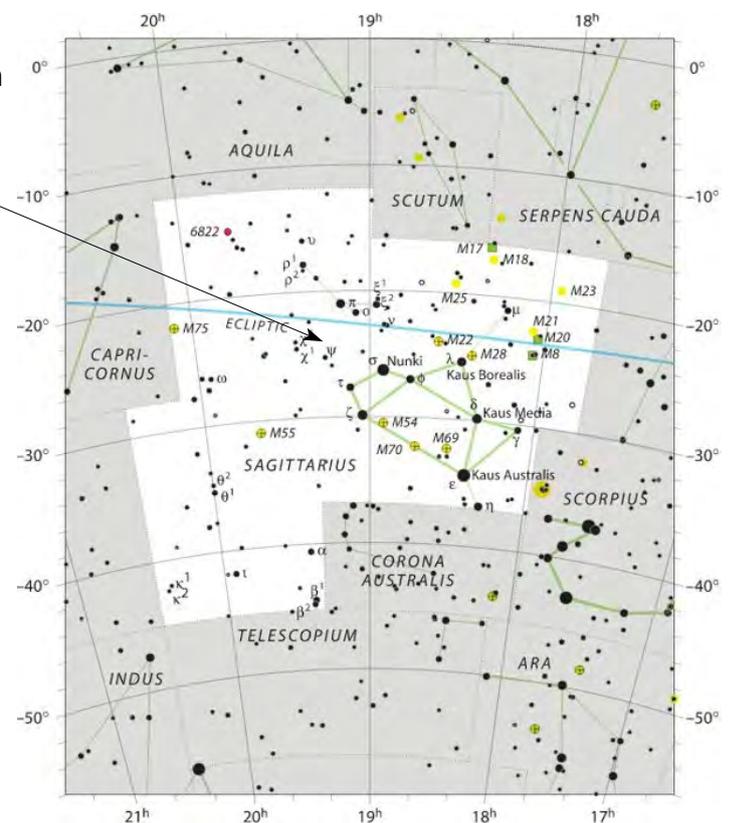
By the way, the Teapot makes up the western half of the constellation Sagittarius the Archer. Modern eyes have an easier time envisioning a teapot than a Centaur bodied Archer with a drawn-out bow.



The centre of the Milky Way – June 25, 2017



Sagittarius is the ninth astrological sign. The symbol of the archer is based on the centaur Chiron, who mentored Achilles, Greek hero of the Trojan War, in archery. AK, with Earth Sky Notes



Constellation Sagittarius, the Teapot asterism is outlined in green