

## PICTOR and CHAMAELEON (pronounced PICK-ter and kah-MEE-lee-un)

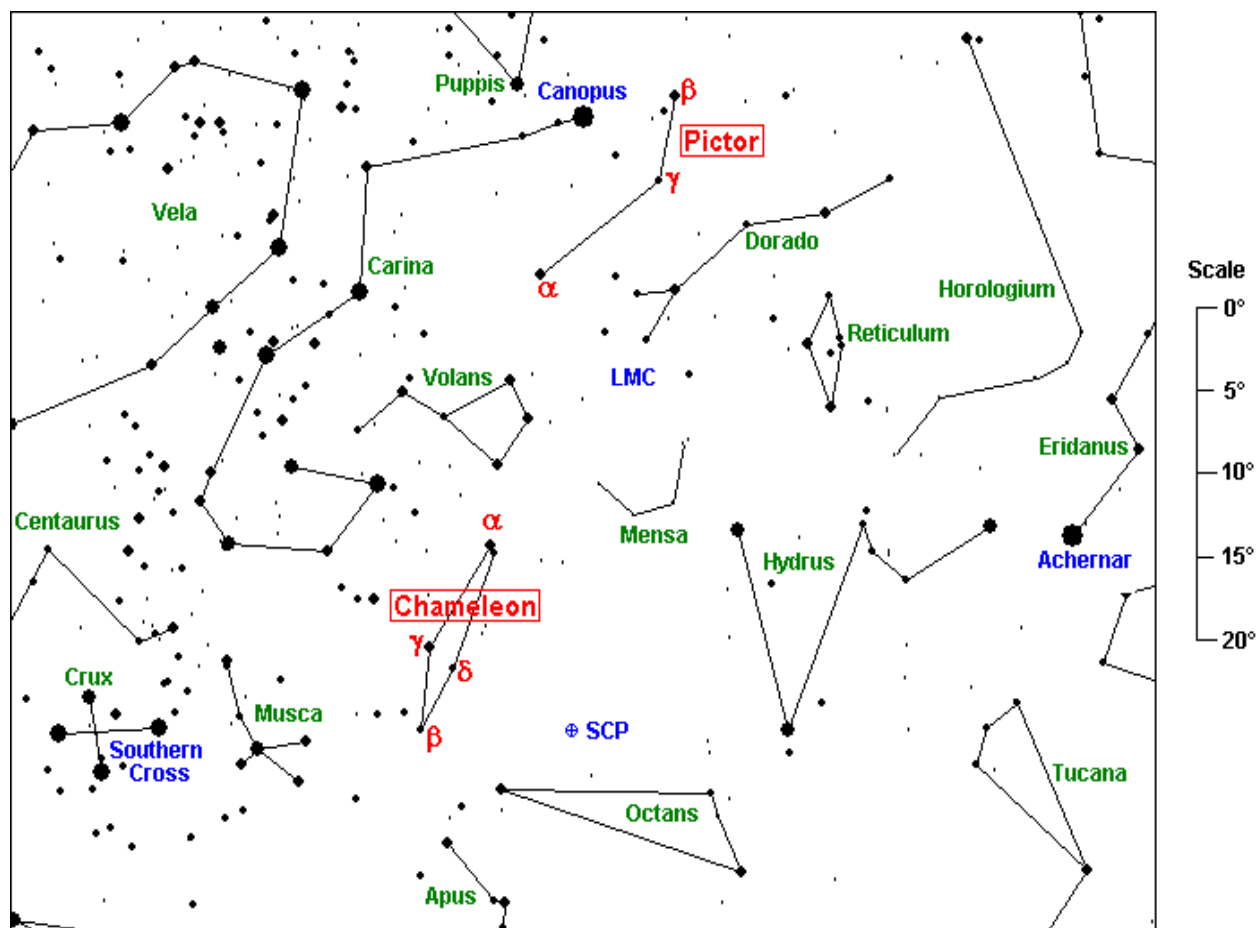
[Chart showing the constellations. \(/31-constellation/182-pictor#chart\)](#)

These are relatively modern constellations with Chamaeleon originating in 1603, by Johann Bayer, and Pictor by Nicolas Louis de Laicalle in the 1750's. Neither is easily identified, or obvious. Pictor was originally Equuleus Pictoris, but the name was shortened by Gould in 1877. It represents the Painter's Easel. Chamaeleon represents the reptile of that name.

One of the nearest regions of star formation to the Sun lies in Chamaeleon, and both dark and bright reflection nebulae are associated with it.

To find these constellations, look south late mid evening a little below the zenith. Use Achernar, Canopus and the Magellanic Clouds to help locate the constellations from the map. Most of the brighter stars are around magnitude 4, so a dark sky is needed.

**Chart showing the constellations as seen looking south about 10.30 pm mid February.**



### Details of some of the objects shown in the chart.

α Pictoris is a white star of magnitude 3.3, 52 light years away.

β Pic is a magnitude 3.9 white star, 78 light years away.

γ Pic is a magnitude 4.5 orange giant star, 260 light years away.

α Chamaeleontis is a white star of magnitude 4.1, 78 light years

β Cha is a magnitude 4.3 blue star, 360 light years away.

γ Cha is a magnitude 4.1 red-giant star, 250 light years away.

$\delta$  Cha consists of a wide pair of unrelated stars, clearly seen in binoculars.  $\delta 1$  Cha is a magnitude 5.5 orange star 360 light years away, while  $\delta 2$  Cha is a magnitude 4.5 blue star 550 light years away.

#### Visibility

Pictor is entirely circumpolar from the South Island of New Zealand and so visible all night. From the North Island the more northerly parts of the constellation will set for a few hours. The constellation is highest about 10pm (NZDT) during February.

Chamaeleon is considerably nearer the south pole in the sky, between declinations  $85^\circ$  south and  $93^\circ$  south. So it is reasonably well placed for viewing all the year. The constellation spreads through  $90^\circ$  round the pole; as a result the constellation is at its highest in the sky at 9pm NZST between mid March and mid June. In February when Pictor is at its highest, Chamaeleon is lower and somewhat to the left.