

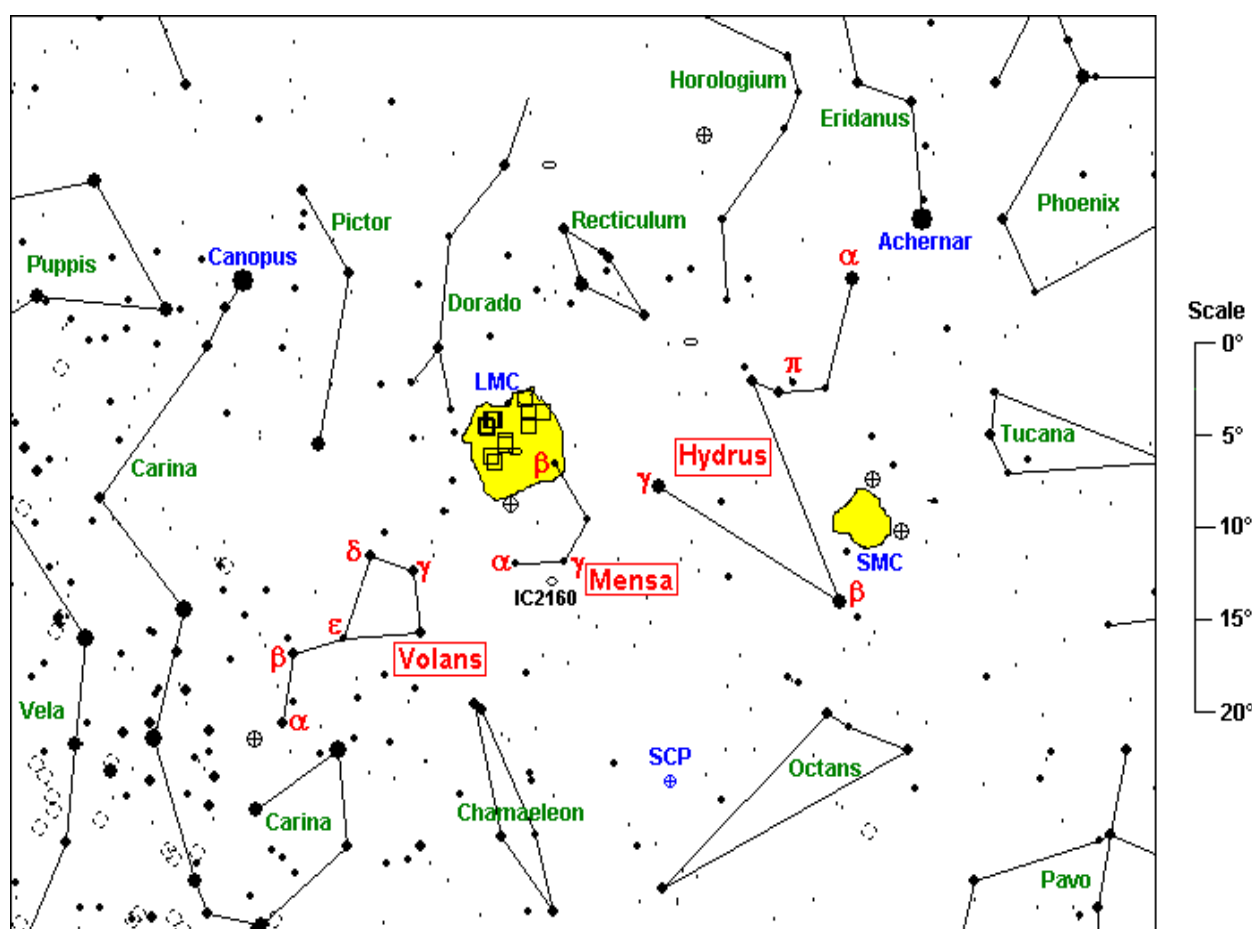
**MENSA, pronounced MEN-sah,
VOLANS, pronounced VOH-lanz,
HYDRUS, pronounced HY-druss.**

[Chart showing the 3 constellations. \(/31-constellation/196-mensa#chart\)](#)

Two of these constellations, Volans representing the Flying Fish, and Hydrus, the Lesser Water Snake or Sea Serpent, were introduced by the German celestial cartographer Johann Bayer in his famous sky atlas Uranometria in 1603. The constellation Mensa, the Table Mountain (at the Cape of Good Hope) came from the Father of Southern Astronomy Nicolas Louis de Lacaille in the 1750's.

To find these constellations look south in the late summer evening sky, and find Achernar and Canopus. (The Southern Cross points towards Achernar). Look for the cloudy patch like a detached part of the Milky Way between them and slightly lower. This cloudy patch is the Large Magellanic Cloud. The Smaller Cloud is below Achernar. Then use the map.

Chart showing the constellations, high to the south at about 11 pm on January 1, 9 pm February 1



Details of some of the objects shown in the chart.

α Mensae is a yellow magnitude 5.1 star similar to the Sun, 28 light years away.

β Men is a magnitude 5.3 yellow star 140 light years away.

γ Men is a magnitude 5.2 orange giant star 420 light years away.

α Volantis is a magnitude 4.0 yellow star, 78 light years away.

β Vol is a magnitude 3.8 orange giant star, 190 light years away.

γ Vol is a pair of white and yellow stars of magnitudes 3.8 and 5.7, 130 light years away. This pair in a field of scattered stars is an attractive object for small telescopes.

δ Vol is a magnitude 4.0 yellow supergiant star 2400 light years away.

ϵ Vol is a magnitude 4.4 blue star with a magnitude 8 companion visible in small telescopes. It appears as a bright white gem in a field sprinkled with stars. The primary brighter star also has a very close companion star, with a period of 14.17 days, though it is impossible to see this very close companion in a telescope.

α Hydri is a magnitude 2.9 white star, 36 light years away.

β Hyi is a magnitude 2.8 yellow star, 21 light years away.

γ Hyi is a magnitude 3.2 red giant star, 160 light years away

π Hyi is a binocular pair of magnitude 5.5 red and orange unrelated stars. $\pi 1$ ($\pi 1$) lies 400 light years away, while $\pi 2$ ($\pi 2$) is 520 light years away. similar to the Sun.

Visibility

These constellations are all circumpolar for New Zealand and so are visible towards the south at all times of night throughout the year. They are highest during the evening in the Summer months and low above the southern horizon in the Winter.