OBSERVATION LIST

25 Brightest Globular Clusters

The 25 brightest globular clusters in the sky, ranging from magnitude 3.9 to 7.9. These ancient stellar cities — each containing hundreds of thousands to millions of stars — are among the most rewarding deep-sky objects for any telescope. From the naked-eye brilliance of Omega Centauri to the subtle glow of M107, this list covers the finest globulars visible from mid-northern latitudes, with a few spectacular southern showpieces included.

25	25
Objects	Easy

Oph · Sgr · Sco · Her · Cen · Tuc · Pav · Ser · CVn · Peg · Aqr · Cap

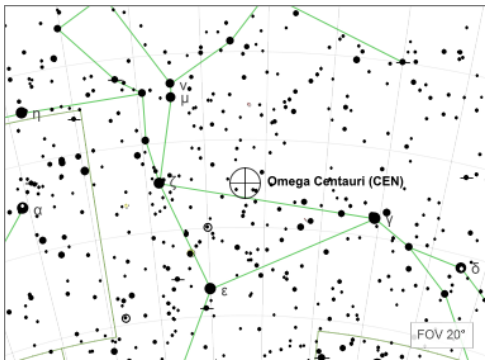
Visibility scored for: **150mm Reflector** · Bortle 4

1 Omega Centauri C80

Easy

• Globular Cluster · Cen · *NGC 5139*

Position	RA 13h 26m 47.3s Dec -47d 28' 48"
Magnitude	3.9 mag
Size	27.0'
Distance	17.3 kly
Visibility	9.5 / 10



Notes

The king of all globular clusters — visible to the naked eye as a fuzzy 4th-magnitude star. At 10 million stars and 150 light-years across, it dwarfs every other Milky Way globular. Resolves into a stunning carpet of stars even in small scopes. Suspected to be the remnant core of a dwarf galaxy absorbed by the Milky Way. Best from southern latitudes but visible low from 40°N in spring.

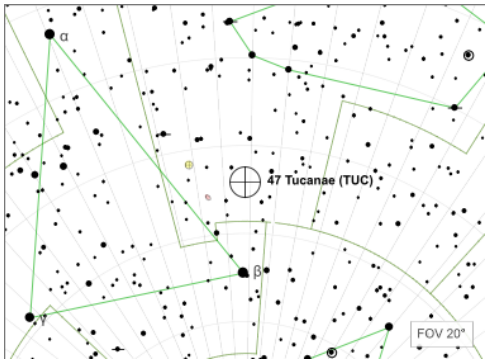
☐ Observed

2 47 Tucanae C106

Easy

• Globular Cluster · Tuc · *NGC 104*

Position	RA 00h 24m 5.8s Dec -72d 04' 52"
Magnitude	4.0 mag
Size	31.8'
Distance	13.4 kly
Visibility	9.5 / 10



Notes

The second-brightest globular cluster, rivaling Omega Centauri in visual splendor. Its dense, blazing core is surrounded by a vast halo of resolved stars. Located near the Small Magellanic Cloud, making for a spectacular wide-field view. Requires southern latitudes (Dec -72°). Contains at least 23 millisecond pulsars.

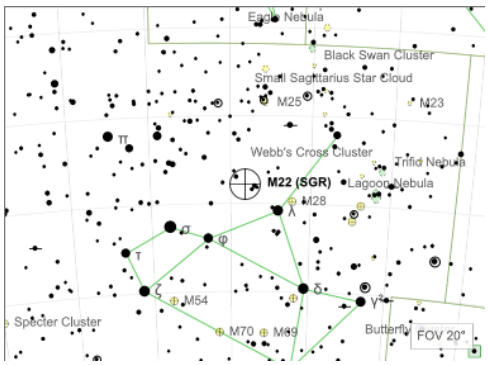
☐ Observed

3 M22

Easy

• Globular Cluster · Sgr · *NGC 6656*

Position	RA 18h 36m 23.9s Dec -23d 54' 17"
Magnitude	5.1 mag
Size	12.6'
Distance	10.4 kly
Visibility	9.5 / 10



Notes

The brightest Messier globular and one of the nearest at 10,600 light-years. Easily resolved into stars with a 4-inch telescope — the granular texture is visible even in binoculars. Located just above the Teapot lid in Sagittarius. One of only four globulars known to contain a planetary nebula (IRAS 18333-2357).

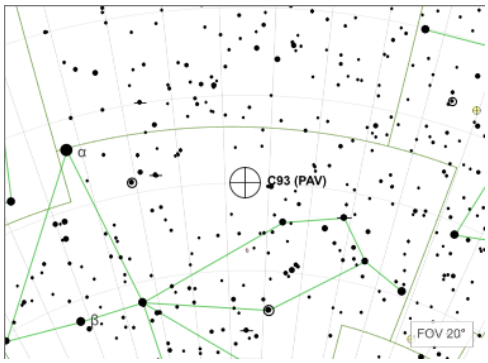
☐ Observed

4 C93

Easy

• Globular Cluster · Pav · *NGC 6752*

Position	RA 19h 10m 52.1s Dec -59d 59' 6"
Magnitude	5.4 mag
Size	13.2'
Distance	13.0 kly
Visibility	9.5 / 10



Notes

The third-brightest globular cluster overall, yet often overlooked due to its far-southern declination in Pavo. At 13,000 light-years it is one of the nearest globulars. Resolves beautifully with chains of stars radiating from a moderately concentrated core. Contains blue stragglers and millisecond pulsars.

☐ Observed

5 M4

Easy

• Globular Cluster · Sco · *NGC 6121*

Position	RA 16h 23m 35.2s Dec -26d 31' 33"
Magnitude	5.6 mag
Size	28.2'
Distance	7.2 kly
Visibility	9.5 / 10

Notes

The nearest bright globular cluster at just 7,200 light-years. A distinctive bar of stars runs through its center — visible in 6-inch scopes and the source of its loose, spider-like appearance. Located just 1.3° west of Antares, making it very easy to find. Concentration class IX (loose), so it resolves at low power.

☐ Observed

6 M5

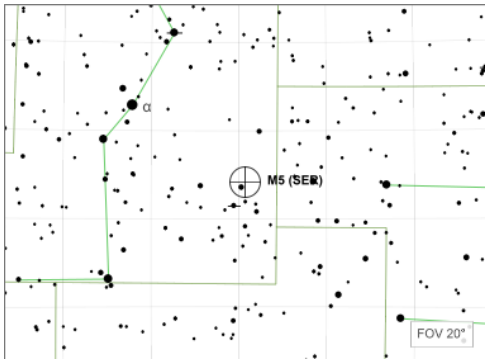
Easy

• Globular Cluster · Ser · *NGC 5904*

Position	RA 15h 18m 33.2s Dec +2d 04' 52"
Magnitude	5.6 mag
Size	15.0'
Distance	24.5 kly
Visibility	9.5 / 10

Notes

One of the finest and largest globular clusters, spanning 23 arc-minutes — nearly the apparent diameter of the full Moon. Contains over 100,000 stars with a bright, compact core surrounded by scattered outliers. Many observers rank it alongside M13 for visual impact. Contains over 100 known variable stars, more than any other globular.



☐ Observed

7 M13

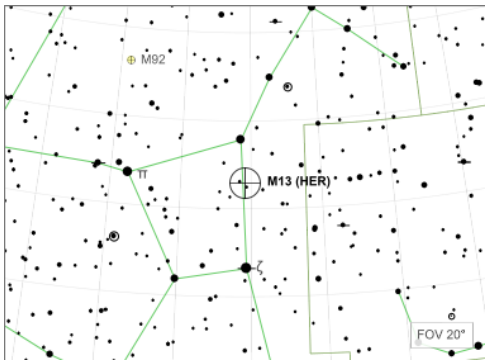
Easy

• Globular Cluster · Her · *NGC 6205*

Position	RA 16h 41m 41.2s Dec +36d 27' 35"
Magnitude	5.8 mag
Size	16.5'
Distance	22.2 kly
Visibility	9.5 / 10

Notes

The most famous globular cluster in the northern sky and a showpiece at every star party. At 145 light-years across with 300,000 stars, it fills the eyepiece with glittering starlight. Look for the dark 'propeller' shape of three dust lanes near the core at high magnification. The target of the 1974 Arecibo message beamed into space.



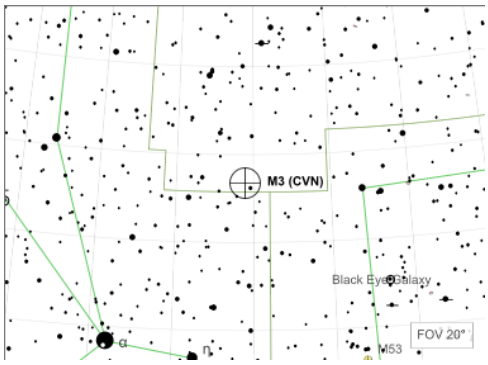
☐ Observed

8 M3

• Globular Cluster · CVn · *NGC 5272*

Easy

Position	RA 13h 42m 11.6s Dec +28d 22' 38"
Magnitude	6.2 mag
Size	16.2'
Distance	33.9 kly
Visibility	9.5 / 10



Notes

A magnificent spring globular and one of the largest in the Milky Way with half a million stars. Its symmetrical, well-resolved halo of stars surrounds a blazing core — best at 100-150x. Located halfway between Arcturus and Cor Caroli, in an otherwise sparse field. Contains an extraordinary 274 known variable stars.

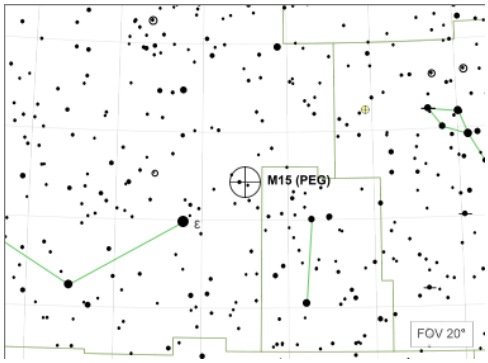
☐ Observed

9 M15

• Globular Cluster · Peg · *NGC 7078*

Easy

Position	RA 21h 29m 58.3s Dec +12d 10' 1"
Magnitude	6.2 mag
Size	11.1'
Distance	33.6 kly
Visibility	9.5 / 10



Notes

One of the densest globular clusters known — its core may have undergone gravitational collapse. The intensely bright, unresolved core is surrounded by a halo that breaks into individual stars in 6-inch scopes. Contains the planetary nebula Pease 1 (mag 15.5) and two bright variable stars. A fine autumn target 4° NW of Enif.

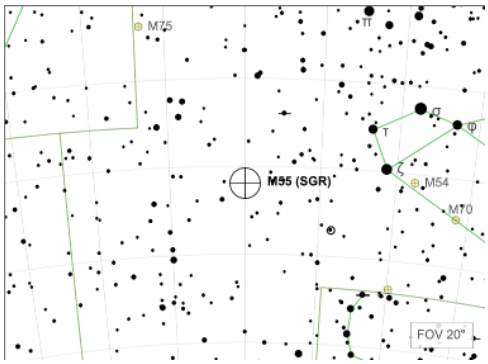
☐ Observed

10 M55

• Globular Cluster · Sgr · *NGC 6809*

Easy

Position	RA 19h 39m 59.7s Dec -30d 57' 53"
Magnitude	6.3 mag
Size	12.0'
Distance	17.6 kly
Visibility	9.4 / 10



Notes

A large, loosely concentrated globular that resolves easily even in small scopes. Its low concentration (class XI) gives it a ghostly, diffuse appearance — hence the name. Spanning 19 arc-minutes, it needs low power to appreciate. Located in southern Sagittarius, it requires a clear southern horizon from mid-northern latitudes.

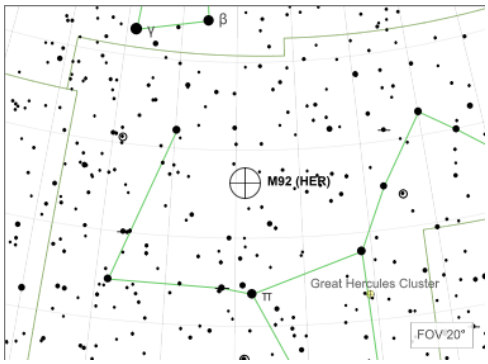
☐ Observed

11 M92

• Globular Cluster · Her · *NGC 6341*

Easy

Position	RA 17h 17m 7.4s Dec +43d 08' 9"
Magnitude	6.4 mag
Size	14.4'
Distance	26.7 kly
Visibility	9.4 / 10



Notes

Perpetually overshadowed by its neighbor M13, yet this is a superb globular in its own right — in any other constellation it would be the star attraction. Smaller and more concentrated than M13 with a brilliant stellar core. One of the oldest known globulars at 14.2 billion years. Located 6° north of M13, making a wonderful pair.

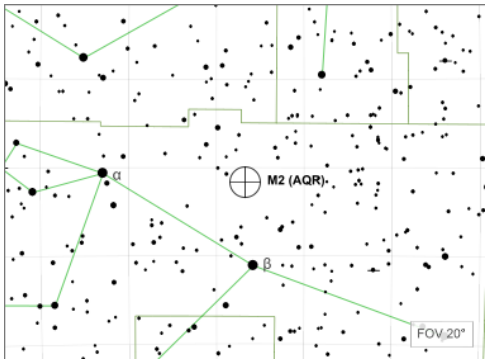
☐ Observed

12 M2

• Globular Cluster · Aqr · *NGC 7089*

Easy

Position	RA 21h 33m 27.0s Dec -0d 49' 24"
Magnitude	6.5 mag
Size	8.4'
Distance	37.5 kly
Visibility	9.4 / 10



Notes

A rich, compact globular containing 150,000 stars in a sphere 175 light-years across. Its tight core requires 8 inches or more to begin resolving. One of the larger and more distant Messier globulars at 37,500 light-years. Located 5° north of Beta Aquarii — a fine autumn deep-sky target often underrated.

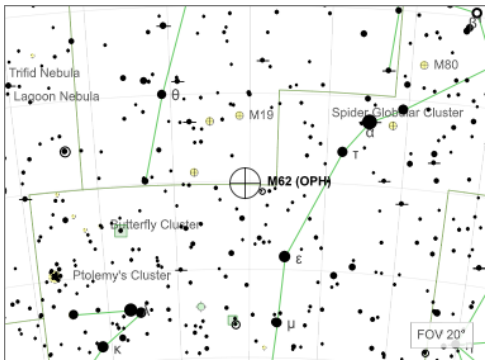
☐ Observed

13 M62

• Globular Cluster · Oph · *NGC 6266*

Easy

Position	RA 17h 01m 12.6s Dec -30d 06' 44"
Magnitude	6.5 mag
Size	7.8'
Distance	22.2 kly
Visibility	9.4 / 10



Notes

Notable for its asymmetric shape — the core is offset from center due to tidal interactions with the Milky Way's bulge. At only 6,500 light-years from the galactic center, it is one of the closest globulars to the core of our galaxy. Contains 89 known variable stars. Located low in Ophiuchus near the Scorpius border.

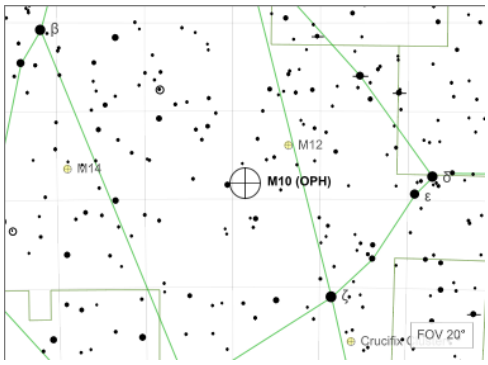
☐ Observed

14 M10

• Globular Cluster · Oph · *NGC 6254*

Easy

Position	RA 16h 57m 8.9s Dec -4d 05' 58"
Magnitude	6.6 mag
Size	9.3'
Distance	14.3 kly
Visibility	9.4 / 10



Notes

Forms a striking pair with M12, located just 3.4° to its northwest. More concentrated and slightly brighter than its companion, M10 shows a dense core surrounded by a well-resolved halo at 100x. At 14,300 light-years distant, it spans 83 light-years. The inner core is notably devoid of red giant stars.

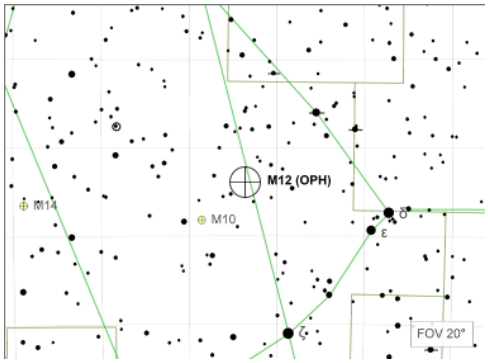
☐ Observed

15 M12

• Globular Cluster · Oph · *NGC 6218*

Easy

Position	RA 16h 47m 14.2s Dec -1d 56' 55"
Magnitude	6.7 mag
Size	11.1'
Distance	15.7 kly
Visibility	9.4 / 10



Notes

The looser companion to M10 — sometimes called the 'Gumball Globular' for its even sprinkling of resolved stars. Its low concentration (class IX) makes individual stars visible in a 4-inch scope. Has lost an estimated one million low-mass stars to tidal stripping by the Milky Way over billions of years.

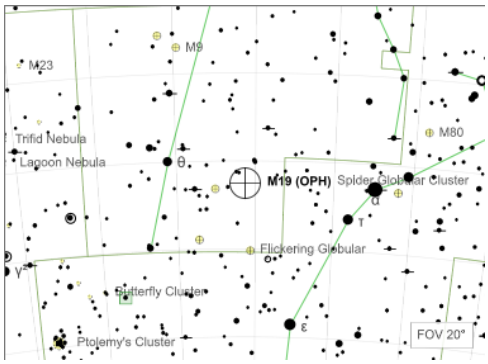
☐ Observed

16 M19

• Globular Cluster · Oph · *NGC 6273*

Easy

Position	RA 17h 02m 37.7s Dec -26d 16' 5"
Magnitude	6.8 mag
Size	7.5'
Distance	28.7 kly
Visibility	9.4 / 10



Notes

The most oblate (elongated) of all Messier globular clusters, with an ellipticity of 0.27. Its oval shape is evident in photographs but subtle visually. Located just 8° east of Antares and only 5,200 light-years from the galactic center. Needs 8 inches to begin resolving the outer stars at 150x.

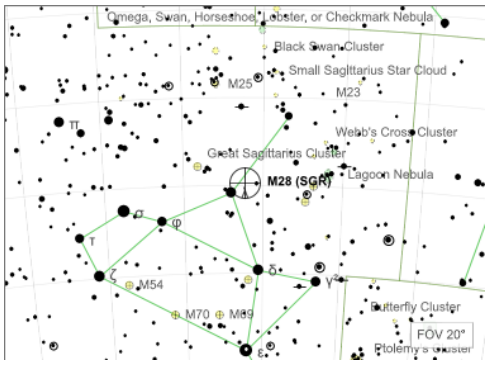
☐ Observed

17 M28

Easy

• Globular Cluster · Sgr · *NGC 6626*

Position	RA 18h 24m 32.9s Dec -24d 52' 11"
Magnitude	6.8 mag
Size	5.1'
Distance	17.9 kly
Visibility	9.4 / 10



Notes

A compact, concentrated globular located less than 1° northwest of Lambda Sagittarii (the top of the Teapot lid), making it very easy to find. The first globular cluster in which a millisecond pulsar was discovered (1987). Moderately difficult to resolve — needs 6-8 inches and high magnification for individual stars.

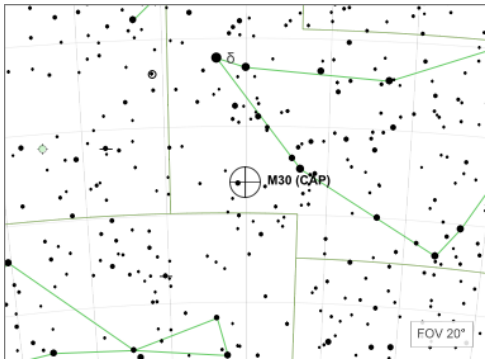
☐ Observed

18 M30

Easy

• Globular Cluster · Cap · *NGC 7099*

Position	RA 21h 40m 22.1s Dec -23d 10' 47"
Magnitude	7.2 mag
Size	9.0'
Distance	27.1 kly
Visibility	9.4 / 10



Notes

A compact globular with a core-collapsed center and distinctive tendrils of stars extending outward — giving it its jellyfish moniker. One of only about 20 Milky Way globulars that have undergone core collapse. Located in southern Capricornus, it is often the last Messier object visible in autumn evenings. Best at 150x+ in 6-inch or larger scopes.

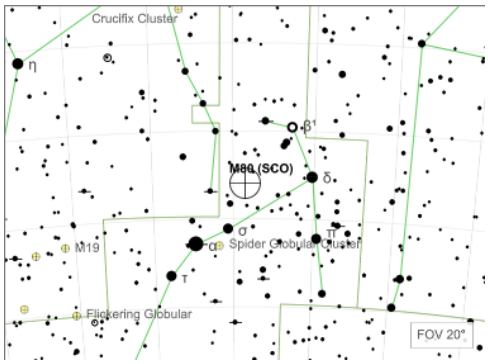
☐ Observed

19 M80

Easy

• Globular Cluster · Sco · *NGC 6093*

Position	RA 16h 17m 2.4s Dec -22d 58' 34"
Magnitude	7.3 mag
Size	5.7'
Distance	32.6 kly
Visibility	9.4 / 10



Notes

One of the most densely packed globular clusters — its intensely bright, unresolved core blazes like a tiny comet in small scopes. Located midway between Antares and Graffias (Beta Scorpii). In 1860, nova T Scorpii erupted within it, briefly outshining the entire cluster. Difficult to resolve; needs 10 inches and 200x+.

☐ Observed

20 M14

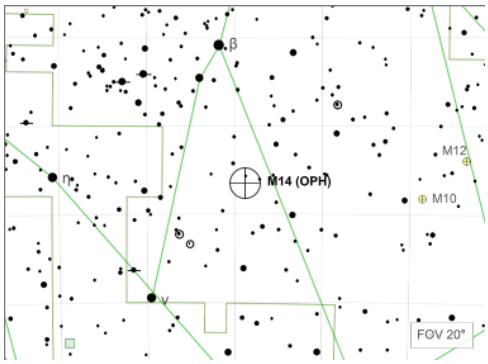
• Globular Cluster · Oph · *NGC 6402*

Easy

Position	RA 17h 37m 36.1s Dec -3d 14' 45"
Magnitude	7.6 mag
Distance	30.3 kly
Visibility	9.3 / 10

Notes

A rich but distant globular at 30,000 light-years, containing several hundred thousand stars. Appears as a hazy, slightly granular glow in 6-inch scopes — full resolution requires 10 inches or more. Notable for hosting a nova in 1938 that was only discovered on archival photographic plates in 1964. Contains an unusual number of variable stars.



☐ Observed

21 M53

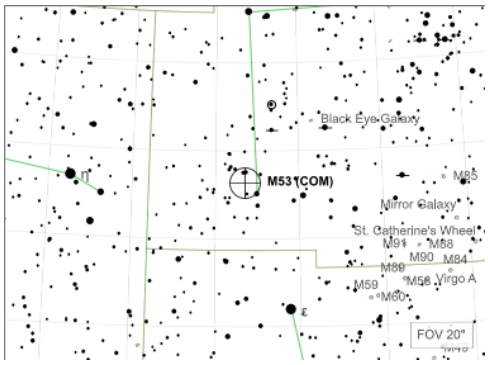
• Globular Cluster · Com · *NGC 5024*

Easy

Position	RA 13h 12m 55.2s Dec +18d 10' 5"
Magnitude	7.6 mag
Size	9.0'
Distance	58.0 kly
Visibility	9.3 / 10

Notes

A fine spring globular located just 1° NE of the star Alpha Comae Berenices (Diadem). At 58,000 light-years, it is one of the more distant Messier globulars. Best viewed at 150x in 8-inch scopes where the outer halo begins to granulate. Just 1° SE lies the remarkably sparse globular NGC 5053 (mag 9.5) — a wonderful contrast pair.



☐ Observed

22 M54

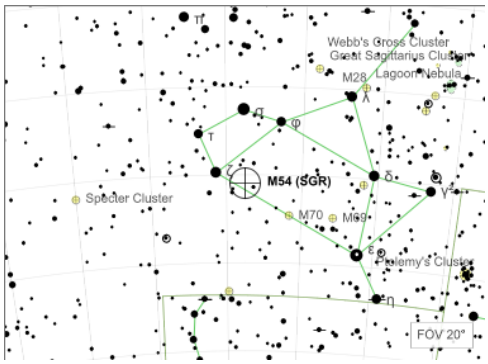
• Globular Cluster · Sgr · *NGC 6715*

Easy

Position	RA 18h 55m 3.3s Dec -30d 28' 47"
Magnitude	7.6 mag
Size	5.1'
Distance	87.4 kly
Visibility	9.3 / 10

Notes

This is not actually a Milky Way globular — it belongs to the Sagittarius Dwarf Elliptical Galaxy at 87,000 light-years, making it one of the most distant Messier objects. Appears as a compact, bright but unresolved glow. Located near the bottom of the Teapot (Zeta Sagittarii). An extragalactic object hiding in plain sight in the Messier catalog.



☐ Observed

23 M9

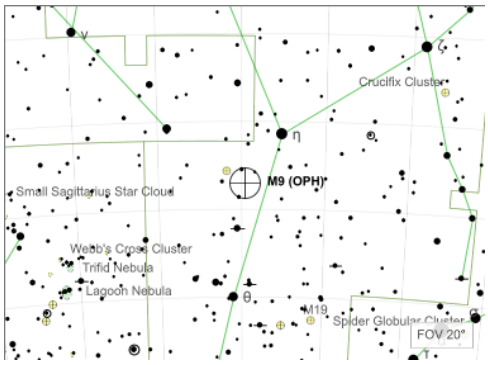
Easy

• Globular Cluster · Oph · *NGC 6333*

Position	RA 17h 19m 11.8s Dec -18d 30' 58"
Magnitude	7.7 mag
Size	6.9'
Distance	25.8 kly
Visibility	9.3 / 10

Notes

One of the nearest globular clusters to the galactic center at just 5,500 light-years from it. Its appearance is dimmed by interstellar dust — without extinction it would shine a full magnitude brighter. Two prominent dark nebulae (Barnard 64 and Barnard 259) flank it, creating a dramatic field in wide-field photographs. Resolves in 8-inch scopes.



☐ Observed

24 M79

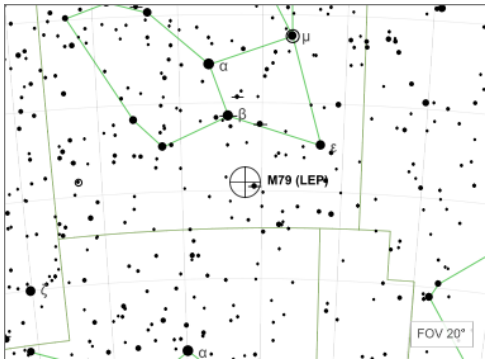
Easy

• Globular Cluster · Lep · *NGC 1904*

Position	RA 05h 24m 10.6s Dec -24d 31' 27"
Magnitude	7.7 mag
Size	7.2'
Distance	41.0 kly
Visibility	9.3 / 10

Notes

The only bright winter globular cluster — a welcome sight in the cold-weather sky when most globulars are hidden below the horizon. Located in Lepus, south of Orion. Its position opposite the galactic center is unusual and suggests it may have been captured from the Canis Major Dwarf Galaxy. Compact and partially resolvable in 6-inch scopes.



☐ Observed

25 M107

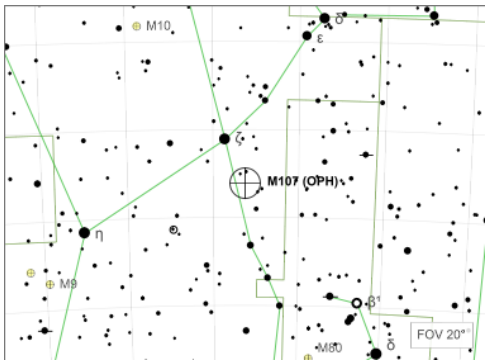
Easy

• Globular Cluster · Oph · *NGC 6171*

Position	RA 16h 32m 31.9s Dec -13d 03' 14"
Magnitude	7.9 mag
Size	7.8'
Distance	20.9 kly
Visibility	9.3 / 10

Notes

The last globular cluster added to the Messier catalog (by Helen Sawyer Hogg in 1947, from Méchain's notes). One of the most open and least concentrated Messier globulars (class X), with dark voids and lanes threading through its structure. Located 3° south of Zeta Ophiuchi. Resolves into stars at its edges in 6-inch scopes at 100x.



☐ Observed

Observing Notes