The Sleepopolis team created a beautiful graphic which depicts 88 International Astronomy Union recognized constellations, what they represent, where and when you can see them, and identifies each constellation’s brightest star.

Click here to see the project

Ancient Interpretations of the Stars

In modern astronomy, the International Astronomical Union officially recognizes 88 constellations. 42 represent animals, 29 represent inanimate objects, and 17 represent humans or mythological characters.

The ancient Sumerians, Babylonians, and later, the Greeks established most of the northern constellations that we still recognize today. These civilizations interpreted many of the constellations through the lens of mythology and legend.

For example, the Aries constellation is associated with the golden ram of Greek mythology. Ursa Major has been seen as a bear, usually female, in many distinct civilizations. In Roman mythology, Ursa Major is a bear that was once a beautiful nymph, transformed by the jealous queen of the gods, Juno. The Iroquois saw it as a great bear being pursued by three hunters.

While bears are mighty, it is actually a dog constellation that contains the brightest star in the sky. Sirius is colloquially called the “Dog Star” because it is contained within the constellation Canis Major. The heliacal rising of Sirius-marked the impending flood of the Nile to ancient Egyptians. To ancient Greeks, its return to the northern night sky was a precursor to sweltering summer days, hence the term “the dog days of summer.”

This infographic provides information and visualization of the 88 officially recognized constellations. It includes the meaning, the brightest star, the date of origin, how much of the sky it encompasses, when the best time to see each constellation is, and the celestial hemisphere in which they appear.

How many of these constellations have you spotted?
Visit sleepopolis.com to see all 88 constellations.