



Spitzer image from NASA/JPL-Caltech/K. Gordon (University of Arizona) & S. Willner (Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics)

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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M81

This image of the spiral galaxy M81 combines data from the Spitzer Space Telescope's multiband imaging photometer (red) and infrared array camera (green and blue). M81 is "only" 12 million light years away, so is easily visible through binoculars or a small telescope.

Both the smaller visible-light image at the right and the shorter wavelength infrared part of the Spitzer image in blue show a smooth distribution of stars through the center part of the galaxy. The Spitzer image, however, is virtually unaffected by obscuring dust.

In the longer wavelengths (green, red, and yellow in the composite image), the spiral arms dominate. Dust absorbs visible and ultraviolet light energy from nearby stars and radiates the energy at longer infrared wavelengths. The dust particles also trace the gas distribution in the galaxy. The well-mixed gas and dust provide a reservoir of raw materials for future star formation. The bright clumpy knots within the spiral arms show where massive stars are being born. Studying these star forming regions will help scientists understand star formation. For more information on these and other images, see www.spitzer.caltech.edu.



Visible-light image from N.A. Sharp (NOAO/AURA/NSF)

