



Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/P. Barmby (Harvard-Smithsonian CfA).

March 2008



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3	4	5	6	●	8
9	10	11	12	13	◐	15
16	17	18	19	20	○	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	◑
30	31					

Andromeda Galaxy

The spiral galaxy Andromeda is the closest major galaxy to our own Milky Way. At “only” 2.5 million light-years from Earth and more than twice the size of our own galaxy, Andromeda is an ideal subject for studying the nature of galaxies. This false-color portrait from the infrared array camera on NASA’s Spitzer Space Telescope provides astronomers with the best look yet at the dust-drenched spiral arms that swirl out of the galaxy’s center, a region hidden by bright starlight in visible-light images (right).

Dust and gas are the building materials of stars. They are clumped together throughout the spiral arms, where new stars are forming. The Spitzer image highlights the contrast between the galaxy’s smooth sea of older stars (blue) and choppy waves of warm dust (red) which are made up of molecules called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. These organic (carbon-containing) molecules are warmed by sunlight and glow at infrared wavelengths. The Spitzer view also shows Andromeda’s dust lanes twisting all the way into the center of the galaxy, a region that is crammed full of stars.

The images in this calendar are mosaics of thousands of different exposures of parts of the sky that are of scientific interest. Therefore, the resulting image may have an irregular shape, as does this one.



Credit: National Optical Astronomy Observatory.

