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HIP 61281

# HIP 61281

A light for our story



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A story among the stars

Celestial Library edition



*Every light holds a story. These pages  
follow its journey, from the heart of the  
star to the sky we share.*

The sky, page by page

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CONTENTS

# A story beneath the stars

|                                            |    |
|--------------------------------------------|----|
| One light among many                       | 4  |
| The colour of its fire                     | 5  |
| The journey ending here                    | 6  |
| A landscape for imagination                | 7  |
| A hidden companion reshapes a star’s story | 8  |
| A life opening out                         | 9  |
| Measuring with two glances                 | 10 |
| Nothing stands still                       | 11 |
| The night of finding it                    | 12 |
| Somewhere to return                        | 13 |

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# One light among many

Some nights begin when we stop hurrying. The day withdraws, our eyes learn the darkness and, little by little, the stars appear. Among them is HIP 61281. Until now it may have been another distant light; pausing to look is the beginning of giving it a place in our own story.

A dedication begins with that simple gesture: choosing something beautiful and wanting to share it. The star will continue on its way, beyond our calendars, while here below its light can accompany a date, a name or words we wish to keep. Immensity takes on an intimate measure: the measure of what matters to us.

# The colour of its fire

The light of HIP 61281 has a character of its own. The B family carries the blue tint of hot surfaces in its light. Imagine a clear radiance, like the first brightness over snow. Its beauty comes from the same matter that, under other conditions, can kindle an amber-coloured star.

To the unaided eye, a stellar colour can be little more than a whisper. The atmosphere makes it tremble and our eyes receive it in their own way. Beyond that point we can imagine a living surface of hot matter: the visible beauty of processes working on a scale far greater than ours.

SEVEN FAMILIES OF LIGHT



*Light keeps the colours of its origin.*

# The journey ending here

The light of HIP 61281 crosses approximately 497.9 light-years to reach us. The brightness we receive has therefore spent about 497.9 years on its way. Distance becomes time: looking at this star means meeting light that began travelling before this moment. When it set out, the Sun and its planets already shared a history billions of years old. On their scale, this journey is barely a breath.

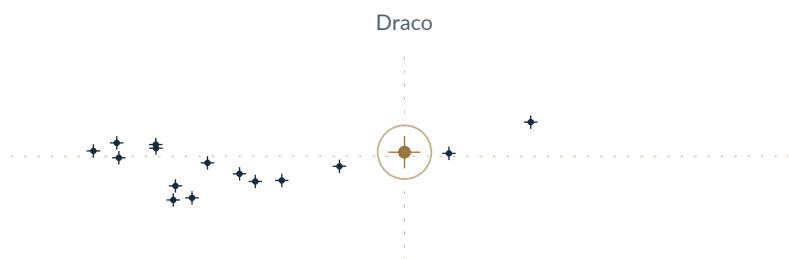
Its light has crossed the time of several generations. We can imagine hands writing letters, lit windows and voices that now live only in other voices. Through all that passing on, the brightness kept travelling; tonight it reaches us.



# A landscape for imagination

HIP 61281 lies in the region of the Dragon. The Dragon gives darkness a shape we can follow. In our imagination, its body guards the silence of the sky like someone protecting a story that has not yet ended.

Figures in the sky are a human way of approaching immensity. In our gaze they join lights that may lie at very different distances. Imagination stretches the thread; the stars provide the brightness. A single landscape can therefore keep old images while receiving a story that begins tonight.



*Its light, among other lights of the constellation.*

# A hidden companion reshapes a star's story

In 2022, researchers combined CHARA interferometry, optical spectra, and Hipparcos and Gaia parallaxes to study  $\kappa$  Draconis (HIP 61281), a 61.5-day Be-star binary. CHARA detected the faint companion in near-infrared light, and far-ultraviolet spectral analysis identified it as a stripped subdwarf B star. The team derived masses of about 3.65 and 0.43 solar masses for the two stars. This was the first directly characterized subdwarf companion to a mid- or late-type Be star, offering evidence about how binary interaction can shape Be stars.

We may picture the discovery as a second candle becoming visible beside a brighter flame. The image gives depth to a light we thought we knew. It also leaves room for an intimate thought: sometimes companionship is understood slowly, through small signs gathered with care. The sky offers the scene; we bring the memories that make its two presences matter to us.

# A life opening out

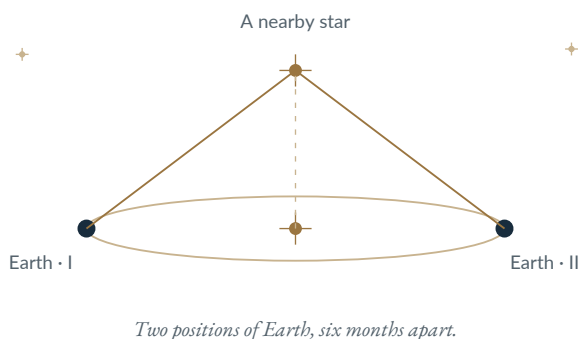
The word giant speaks of a star that has moved beyond the appearance of its first long stage. Its envelope has expanded and the interior has changed the way it supports itself. We can imagine a life opening its rooms, a light taking up more space while writing a different chapter of its story.

To approach HIP 61281, we can let that scale widen our imagination. A stellar age is unlike a birthday: it speaks of changing matter, of energy finding a way out, of a balance sustained and transformed. Tonight's light is one page of that time, and we happen to be here to receive it.

# Measuring with two glances

To begin measuring a stellar distance, Earth offers us a movement. We observe from one side of its orbit and look again about six months later from the other. A nearby star seems to shift slightly against more distant ones. That small change of perspective is called parallax.

We can feel the principle by looking at a finger with one eye and then the other. What fits between two glances at home requires our planet's journey in the sky. There is something beautiful in that patience: to learn how far a light is from us, we first learned to look from somewhere else.



# Nothing stands still

Although it seems still, HIP 61281 belongs to a moving sky. Stars travel through the galaxy and our own home moves with the Sun. The distances are so great that many of these changes need years of observation to become visible. The serenity we see is really keeping a journey.

We can imagine every night as a meeting between travellers. We arrive with one more day of memories; the star arrives with its light and its path. The meeting seems to repeat, yet it is never quite the same. Perhaps that is why looking again can be such a simple way to celebrate shared time.

# The night of finding it

We can begin with something simple: looking into a starry sky and letting our eyes grow used to darkness. The dedication page lets us choose a place and time to find where to look. Recognising the constellation first turns a distant map into a familiar landscape.

If a telescope joins the evening, a wide field is a gentle beginning. As a reference, a 114 mm Newtonian with a 500 mm focal length gives 20× with a 25 mm eyepiece. The star remains a point of light; the instrument gathers more of its brightness. The best memory may be the moment we leave the eyepiece and say: there it is.

# Somewhere to return

We can close this booklet and let HIP 61281 become a small light in an enormous night again. Something, though, will have changed. We now know part of its journey, a shade of its colour and a way to find it. What seemed far away has a place in our memory.

There will be clear nights and others when clouds keep the sky. Not every night will allow observing, but each can bring back the memory of this gesture. Sometimes a name is enough to return to a date, a voice, a few shared words. And when the light appears again, we will have one more reason to pause and look.

# The traces of this story

ESA Hipparcos / VizieR

[https://vizier.cds.unistra.fr/viz-bin/VizieR-5?-source=I/239/hip\\_main&HIP=61281](https://vizier.cds.unistra.fr/viz-bin/VizieR-5?-source=I/239/hip_main&HIP=61281)

NASA · Our Sun

<https://science.nasa.gov/sun/facts/>

IAU · Constellations and their names

<https://iauarchive.eso.org/public/themes/constellations/>

Celestron · Choosing eyepieces

<https://www.celestron.com/blogs/knowledgebase/how-to-determine-which-eyepieces-to-use-with-your-telescope>

Original ISDORA prose and illustrations. Images are artistic evocations or diagrams, not to scale. Distances are approximate. Constellation figures include contemporary literary readings.

# To keep discovering

NASA · The lives of stars

<https://science.nasa.gov/universe/stars/>

NASA · What is a light-year?

<https://science.nasa.gov/exoplanets/what-is-a-light-year/>

ESA · Measuring stellar distances by parallax

[https://www.esa.int/ESA\\_Multimedia/Images/2013/06/Measuring\\_stellar\\_distances\\_by\\_parallax](https://www.esa.int/ESA_Multimedia/Images/2013/06/Measuring_stellar_distances_by_parallax)

Dynamical masses of the primary Be star and the secondary sdB star in the single-lined binary  $\kappa$  Dra (B6 IIIe)

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2210.03090>



May there always be a night  
to look again.



*HIP 61281*

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A STORY OF LIGHT