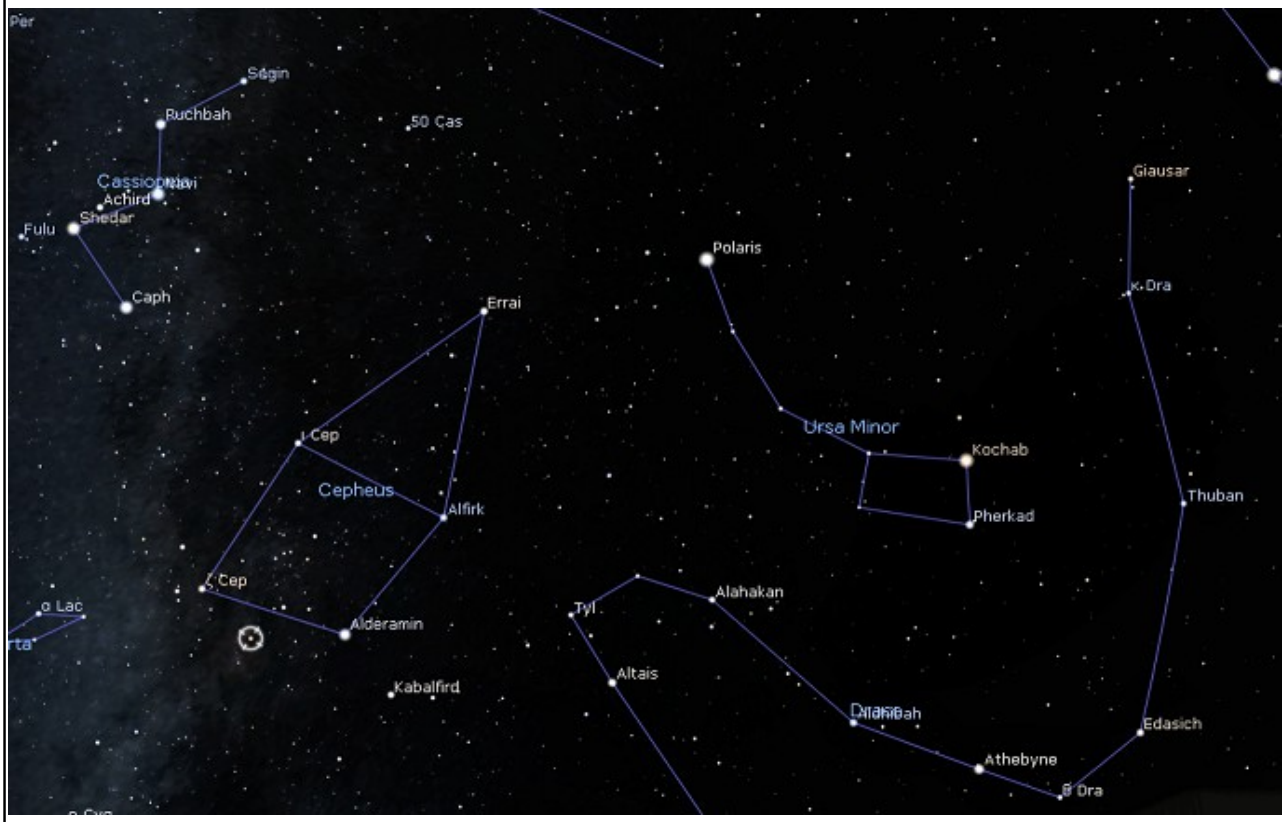
Herschel's Garnet Star



Quick Facts:

Distance: 2800 Light-years.

Constellation: Cepheus.

A red supergiant pulsating variable star whose diameter would easily enclose the orbit of Jupiter. It's fusing helium at its core and evolving towards a supernova. It varies in brightness by a factor of 3 over an 800-day period. With an energy output of 300,000 suns, it's one of the intrinsically brightest stars visible to the unaided eye. Its deep red-orange color is striking. Also known as Mu Cephei.

Find it: look at the baseline of the nosecone-shaped brighter asterism in Cepheus and find Mu approx. 2 degrees south of the center of this line. GOTO: Use the GOTO RA-DEC function in UTILITIES with the coordinates 21h43.5m, +58°47'.

Image from Stellarium. Quick reference card by Derek Wallentinsen.