

Millions of Stars in Omega Centauri

Globular star cluster Omega Centauri, also known as NGC 5139, is 15,000 light-years away. The cluster is packed with about 10 million stars much older than the Sun within a volume about 150 light-years in diameter. It's the largest and brightest of 200 or so known globular clusters that roam the halo of our Milky Way galaxy. Though most star clusters consist of stars with the same age and composition, the enigmatic Omega Cen exhibits the presence of different stellar populations with a spread of ages and chemical abundances. In fact, Omega Cen may be the remnant core of a small galaxy merging with the Milky Way. With a yellowish hue, Omega Centauri's red giant stars are easy to pick out in this sharp, color telescopic view.