



Have you seen the classical Achernar and the modern Achernar?

Achernar

*Europe's Age of Exploration yields
an unknown star of zero magnitude.
Unknown to the Europeans, that is.*



The constellation **Eridanus the River** has been recognized for well over 2000 years. Its final star, a third magnitude luminary lying far in the south as viewed from ancient Greece, was called "**Achernar, the "End of the River."**" When European explorers ventured nearer to the equator in the sixteenth century, they reported sighting a much brighter star south of Achernar, one always below the horizon as viewed from southern Europe.

In keeping with the spirit of Eridani's river of stars flowing south, late sixteenth-early seventeenth century celestial cartographer Johann Bayer moved the name Achernar to the much brighter and previously unknown star shining farther south. The star that for centuries was called Achernar he designated as "**Acamar.**" Both names mean "End of the River."

Finally, corresponding with his new star naming scheme, Bayer assigned Theta Eridani for Acamar and Alpha Eridani for the new Achernar.

Today for observers in the southern half of the contiguous United States, Theta Eridani (or Acamar), a double star, can be found twinkling very low in the south at 8 pm from late December through late January. It doesn't rise at all above the horizon for locations above 50°.

0.4 magnitude Achernar (or Alpha Eridani) can be briefly seen from southern Texas and southern Florida where it rises no more than 8° above the southern horizon in late December.

Achernar, Alpha Eri
140 light-years
0.41 magnitude

Acamar, Theta Eri:
160 light-years
Theta 1: 3.1 magnitude
Theta 2: 4.4 magnitude
Separation: 8 sec; PA: 90°

