

Leonid meteor shower peaks Tuesday, Nov. 17 (w/ Video)

November 12 2009



Meteors appear to fall from the constellation Leo.

(PhysOrg.com) -- The Leonid meteor shower best viewing this year will be in the hours before dawn on Nov. 17.

There is uncertainty on the intensity of this year's shower. Viewers will definitely see a dozen or more meteors per hour. Some [astronomers](#) predict, however, that the rate could be greater than 100. The Moon will not wash out any meteors: It rises after daybreak, and in its almost-new phase will be nearly invisible.

Leonid meteors appear to fall from the constellation Leo, the lion, but they are not associated with it. They are leftover debris from comet Tempel-Tuttle. As the comet orbits the Sun, it leaves a trail of debris. The Leonids meteors recur each year when Earth passes through the comet's debris trail.

Each time comet Tempel-Tuttle gets closest to the Sun in its orbit, called "perihelion," it sheds a significant amount of material. This creates clumps along its orbit. If the Earth passes through one of these clumps on Nov. 17, viewers could see hundreds of meteors per hour. If Earth simply passes through the "normal" part of the comet's debris trail, the number of [meteors](#) visible will be much lower.

For the best view, get away from city lights. Look for state or city parks or other safe, dark sites. Lie on a blanket or reclining chair to get a full-sky view. If you can see all of the stars in the Little Dipper, you have good dark-adapted vision.

Provided by University of Texas at Austin ([news](#) : [web](#))

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