



How to Stand Out from the Crowd



Back in 1999, this galaxy was floating peacefully through space without a care in the world. Then all of a sudden, this calm was shattered by a spectacular explosion. It was the fiery death of a massive star, one of the most violent events in nature. We call these explosions 'supernovae', and this one was bright enough to outshine the rest of its galaxy combined!

This stunning view of the nearby galaxy was captured by astronomers studying the after-effects of the explosion. They saw the supernova's brightness gently fading through the years. It has dimmed so much that the once-vivid supernova can barely be seen in this picture. Despite the supernova being so faint, astronomers have still managed to reveal some details about the star that exploded. And it was enormous before its death – more than eight times bigger than our Sun!

This space picture might not show the bright light of the supernova, but it does reveal some interesting features. This galaxy is known as a 'spiral galaxy', like the Milky Way. Named so because of the loosely wound spiral-shape arms that can be seen wrapping around the bright galaxy centre. The spiral arms in this picture are highlighted by a bright pattern of blue young stars, glowing gas clouds and dark dust lanes.

COOL FACT



One supernova can create more energy than the Sun will throughout its entire lifetime. And our Sun will live to be about 10 billion years old!



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