

OBSERVING SESSION TIPS

PLAN AHEAD - To maximize the pleasure of the experience, plan your trip ahead. See the driving directions and get familiarized with the route. If you are going to the dark site for the first time, ask regular attendees for tips. Look for the speed cameras, speed breakers and potholes.

ENTERING INTO THE UNPAVED ROAD – Dim your headlights or use parking light and turn off your headlights. Do not direct your headlight towards observation area. Drive slowly!!!

PARK your car so that when you leave, the headlights point away from the viewing site. Turn off all the lights inside the car, so that lights do not turn on when you open car's doors.

FOLLOW VOLUNTEER'S DIRECTIONS

GREEN LASERS - People use green lasers for pointing out celestial objects. They also use it to show direction for parking and if someone is flashing green laser into your car, it means turn off the headlight and use parking light instead, or use low beam.

WHITE LIGHT - Eliminate any unnecessary sources of white light. Spend 20 minutes getting your eyes adjusted to the dark – don't look at mobile phone or tablet screens. As your eyes become adjusted to the darkness, you'll find that you're able to spot fainter objects. If you have to use your mobile phones, turn on 'Eye Comfort Shield' or 'Night Shift' mode under display settings. DO NOT use mobile flashlights. On a full moon night, you will be able to see everything without requirement of any kind of light.

BRING CLOTHING suitable for the weather. It gets much colder at night, especially during winters and when the weather is windy. If you are planning to observe in the winter, wear thick jacket and something to cover your head to protect against dew. Often the dark sites do not have basic amenities. Carry whatever you need for the trip.

BRING A THERMOS with a favorite drink and snacks to enjoy while observing.

BE CAREFUL OF TRIPODS, other telescopes, wires and other apparatus that one may trip and fall over at night.

NEWBIES - If you're a visitor or a new member, ask to anyone if you have any question. Don't hesitate. Try not to set up too close to another observer.

SMOKING, ALCOHOL - Everyone has an opinion about these touchy subjects so the best advice is to respect those around you in regards to smoke. Be considerate of anyone in the vicinity of you. Additionally, drinking alcohol at public place is not legal, so avoid it.

NOISE - Avoid loud or boisterous behavior. You'll hear a variety of night sounds that you can't hear in a busy city. These sounds are part of the experience of being in a natural setting at night.

FACILITIES - There will be portable toilets available onsite. There will be no electrical power sources though.

FIRE - Please do not build a fire and avoid Barbeque.

TRASH - Each person is responsible for his/her trash. There are no trash containers at the sites and our use of the sites is contingent upon our good treatment of the sites. "Pack it out."

FAMILIES - Observing sessions are wonderful family activities. We encourage parents to bring their children. Children should be supervised and should exercise care in moving about the site and looking through the telescopes.

HOW TO OBSERVE METEOR SHOWER

- ✓ A mat, blanket and pillow will be nice for meteor shower observations. Sleeping bags and reclining chairs are also great for lying down to look for meteors or to study the sky. Bring something to cover your head and protect against dew.
- ✓ Try to let your gaze 'defocus' rather than staring intently at one spot, so you are aware of what's happening across as much of the sky as possible. Then stay put – don't be tempted to change position, even if you don't see much at first. The probability of seeing meteors is the same all over the sky.
- ✓ Meteor spotting requires patience – many people spend hours outside trying to catch a glimpse of a shooting star (and it's worth it when you see one). Seeing your first meteor can be very exciting.
- ✓ Look in a direction as much away from the Moon as possible, while still observing as much clear sky as comfortably practical. **DO NOT LOOK AT THE MOON**, it is one of the main light pollution source.
- ✓ Don't use binoculars or a telescope – the only tools you need are your eyes. Meteors streak very quickly across the sky and can appear in lots of different directions so looking through binoculars or a telescope will only restrict how much of the sky you can see. Blink and you might miss it!
- ✓ It might be a while before you see another though, because although TV shows and films always show the sky full of meteors during a shower, dozens of them zipping away like tracer fire on a battlefield, in real life they're nothing like that. Most meteor showers are stop-start affairs, with brief bursts of activity and then long lulls when nothing seems to happen. You just have to be patient, and keep looking up.
- ✓ What do meteors actually look like? Some will be so bright they will make you gasp as they drop towards the far horizon, flaring along the way, but most will just scratch across the sky for a fraction of a second before vanishing. Some of the meteors you see will have beautiful colours – electric greens, icy blues or sometimes a hot orange – but most will just be a streak of silvery-white.

- ✓ If you are really lucky you will see a fireball. This is a shooting star that is so shockingly bright it casts shadows as it lights up the countryside around you. Fireballs fall slowly, almost like distress flares, and often have a very vivid colour. Trust me – if you see one you will never forget it.

STAYING AWAKE & ALERT

When meteors are not very plentiful, staying awake and focused on meteor watching can be a problem. So, to combat those drooping eyelids:

- Try to get some rest during the previous day if you can.
- Do not eat a large meal or drink alcohol before observing.
- Ensure you will be warm enough.
- If you are a “snacker”, equip yourself with appropriate food and drink.
- Do not stay in the same position for too long. On a lengthy watch, take a break, get up and walk around, shift your chair to help you follow the best field of view, observe a satellite or two, or some constellations before returning to meteors.
- Keep your mind alert by visually checking on other things in the sky.

CLOUD COVER

Clouds can seriously affect your observed meteor rates, but you don't have to wait until the sky is 100% clear before you contemplate a meteor watch. Clouds usually come and go in nearly 30min. Wait and look at the part of sky where there are no clouds.

And finally... enjoy the night sky and the wonderful people who chase the stars and meteors! Happy Stargazing and Meteor hunting!!!