

# Channel island named first 'dark sky' community

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The Milky Way over South Africa in 2010. The Channel Island of Sark has been designated the first dark sky community in the world in recognition of the lack of light pollution that allows clear views of the stars at night, officials said Monday.

The Channel Island of Sark has been designated the first dark sky community in the world in recognition of the lack of light pollution that allows clear views of the stars at night, officials said Monday.

The tiny island, located west of France's Cotentin Peninsula and about 80 miles (130 kilometres) off the south coast of England, hopes the designation from the US-based International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) will help boost tourism from star gazers.

"Sark becoming the world's first dark sky island is a tremendous feather in our environmental cap, which can only enhance our appeal," said Paul

Williams, chairman of the Sark government's agricultural committee.

The island, which is three miles long and 1.5 miles wide, has no cars and no public street lighting, but local residents and businesses have also made an effort to reduce the amount of light spilled upwards.

As a result, the Milky Way is clearly visible stretching from horizon to horizon and streaking meteors can be picked out among bright stars.

After an audit last year, Sark now joins a select group of global dark sky sites, although it is particularly special, according to Martin Morgan-Taylor, chairman of the IDA's international committee.

He notes that all the other sites are uninhabited natural parks, with the exception of Flagstaff, Arizona, which has a major observatory -- making Sark the first "dark sky community".

"Here we have a living, thriving community that has made a conscious effort that they themselves will help to protect and help to restore the view of the [night sky](#)," Morgan-Taylor told AFP.

Hungary's Hortobagy National Park has also been newly designated by the IDA, Morgan-Taylor said. The other two dark sky sites in Europe are Galloway Forest in Scotland and Zselic Park in Hungary.

"This is a great achievement for Sark," said Professor Roger Davies, president of the [Royal Astronomical Society](#).

"People around the world are become increasingly fascinated by astronomy as we discover more about our universe, and the creation of the world's first dark sky island in the British Isles can only help to increase that appetite."

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