

SOFIA points telescope toward Pluto occultation

June 29 2015



Image is an artist's conception of the Pluto occultation seen close-up, not a photo. Credit: NASA Graphic

The Stratosphere Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA) is a modified Boeing 747SP aircraft that makes celestial observations with its German-built 100-inch telescope. The telescope is enhanced to collect infrared radiation, and is able to detect energy at a wider range of wavelengths than any other ground-based or space telescope.

SOFIA can fly anywhere in the world, and operates at altitudes up to 45,000 feet, putting the observatory above more than 99 percent of Earth's [atmospheric water vapor](#) that blocks [infrared radiation](#) from [celestial objects](#).

SOFIA is flying out of Christchurch, New Zealand, where its telescope can study celestial objects more easily observed from the Southern Hemisphere. Starting June 28 through the 29th, instruments on the plane will observe Pluto as it passes in front of a background star.

Data returned from the observations will be provided to the New Horizon team who is preparing for Pluto's occultation, July 13 through the 15th.

Provided by NASA

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