

# Spectacular U.K. stargazing sites free from light pollution

September 5 2016, by Jake Gilmore

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New spectacular stargazing sites perfect for astronomy and free from the worst effects of urban light pollution have been identified across the UK and are announced today.

During the extra hours of darkness this autumn, thousands of people in the UK will be able to experience skies ideal for astronomy thanks to seventeen new Dark Sky Discovery sites.

These locations are perfect for observing the sky on a clear night, offering good public access and great sightlines in all directions, and bring the total number of Dark Sky Discovery Sites in the British Isles to over 150.

UK population centres suffer from [light pollution](#), but these areas in the South Downs National Park, North York Moors National Park, the Highlands of Scotland, the Forest of Bowland, Suffolk and Wales have all been awarded the designation of a Dark Sky Discovery Site by the partnership, led by the UK's leading funder of astronomy research the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) and which includes the Royal Astronomical Society and the Institute of Physics amongst its members.

Hetty Byrne, who leads the Dark Sky Discovery campaign for the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty sites said "Becoming approved as a Dark Sky Discovery site enables us to remind as many people as possible why sites such as those in the Forest of Bowland are

such an ideal place to come and explore the grandeur of the night sky. Despite urban centres in Lancashire suffering from light pollution there are still many areas in the county, including in the Forest of Bowland, where people have a fantastic opportunity to view the night sky with clarity that you would just not normally have living in a city."

Leader of the Dark Sky Discovery initiative at STFC's UK Astronomy Technology Centre in Edinburgh, Dan Hillier, said "Because of light pollution in our cities most people don't realise that when they look up into the night sky they are not seeing the heavens in all their glory. As the nights get longer, you should look out for the M or W shape of the five stars of Cassiopeia and if you can get to a Dark Sky Discovery Site try looking for the Milky Way which sweeps across the sky behind Cassiopeia. In addition if you have really good sightlines to the south west, there is the potential this autumn to get views of Mars and Saturn very low in the sky"

Each Dark Sky Discovery Site has been nominated by a local group or organisation and approved by the Dark Sky Discovery programme as accessible, with good sightlines and relatively low light pollution, giving people the best possible conditions to just turn up and see the stars on a clear night.

Vicky Hilton, The Crown Estate's Countryside Manager for the Glenlivet Estate in Scotland, said: "We're extremely proud to be approved as a Dark Sky Discovery Site. We're already surrounded by an abundance of natural beauty on the Glenlivet Estate, but our new Dark Sky site will also encourage visitors to explore the wondrous night sky in all its magnificence. We are hoping to go one step further and work towards achieving a Dark Sky Park status. Although light pollution is not a problem across much of the Glenlivet Estate, this would help us reduce it even further creating even better opportunities for viewing the night sky."

Dark Sky Discovery is a network of astronomy and open space organisations that aims to encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to get out and stargaze. Many of these organisations run events where the public has the opportunity to meet astronomers and find out about the latest astronomical discoveries. The Dark Sky Discovery map highlights Dark Sky Discovery Sites and other venues that will be running events through the winter.

Michel Regelous, Conservation Policy Officer at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority said: "Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority and the National Trust worked together to nominate a selection of potential Dark Sky Discovery sites around the National Park. These are accessible and dramatic places that offer opportunities for everyone to enjoy the magnificence of the night sky. There are now eight designated Dark Sky Discovery sites located in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. By increasing people's awareness and appreciation of dark skies we will be better able to safeguard them for future generations to enjoy."

Dan Oakley, who leads the Dark Sky Discovery campaign for the South Downs National Park Authority said "Becoming approved as a Dark Sky Discovery site enables the National Park to remind as many people as possible why sites such as Devils Dyke or Birling Gap are such ideal places to come and explore the grandeur of the night sky. Although Light pollution is still a problem across parts of the National Park, on cloudless nights people have an opportunity to view the [night sky](#) with a clarity that you would just not normally have living in a city with some of the best sky quality conditions in SE England.

**More information:** More general information can be found at [www.darkskydiscovery.org.uk](http://www.darkskydiscovery.org.uk)

Provided by Science and Technology Facilities Council

Citation: Spectacular U.K. stargazing sites free from light pollution (2016, September 5)  
retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2016-09-spectacular-uk-stargazing-sites-free.html>

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