



DARK SKIES PROJECT

Toolkit

Destination
GIPPSLAND



INTRODUCTION

The Gippsland Dark Skies Project is an exciting new astro-tourism experience. The project connects 13 East Gippsland and Wellington destinations that provide exceptional observational sites for the night sky, due to their low light pollution. Underpinning this environmentally sustainable experience is the Aboriginal interpretation and storytelling of land and skies.

There is an increased demand for nighttime and outdoor experiences by today's travellers, who are looking to experience destinations in new and immersive ways, including through star gazing.

Leveraging night sky opportunities has been readily adopted in a range of destinations across the world and Australia to drive visitation to a region, providing an economic opportunity for the surrounding communities with increased visitor expenditure, job creation and business development opportunities.

The project scope includes:

- Physical infrastructure: physical development at the selected sites including wayfinding signage; and stargazing equipment at Marlo, Mallacoota and Loch Sport.
- A dedicated website www.stargazinggippsland.com.au promoting stargazing experiences, Aboriginal interpretation and storytelling, and visitor experience information.
- A marketing campaign to promote stargazing experiences in Gippsland
- Industry development and training: implementation for tourism businesses in nearby towns to capitalise on this opportunity with training such as packaging; development of related experiences such as tours and night-time offerings; and information on how to leverage the campaign to market and promote their experiences.

*Destination***GIPPSLAND**



DESIGNATED STARGAZING LOCATIONS IN GIPPSLAND





THE ARTWORK AND THE ARTIST

The artwork used for the Stargazing Gippsland campaign is by Alfred Hudson, a GunaiKurnai artist and dancer.

Alfred's story and the meanings behind the artwork can be found on Destination Gippsland's campaign website.

- <https://stargazinggippsland.au/storytelling/alfie-hudson/>
- <https://stargazinggippsland.au/mothers-night-sky/>





*Image: Visit Victoria
Image by mcbeaner from Pixabay*

HOW TO BENEFIT FROM THE DARK SKIES PROJECT

Those who stand to benefit from this project most directly are the approximate 200 tourism businesses located in the towns surrounding the designated Dark Skies sites.

There are a number of opportunities to align with the Dark Skies project, both independently and as part of the broader community or destination. The ways in which you can connect to the theme and campaign will depend on your current business offering; your capacity for innovation; nearby events; and industry partnerships.

This project has been developed with aim to increase visitation and spend in the off-peak season. Not only are stars more visible earlier in the night, but businesses are generally seeking ways in which to attract current and new markets in the quieter months.

This document offers ideas and suggestions to help with developing ideas around the Dark Skies theme.

Destination Gippsland is supporting the project with packaging and marketing workshops.

Relevant experiences and packages will be hosted on the campaigns consumer-facing website:

www.stargazinggippsland.com.au



OPPORTUNITY – CREATE A PACKAGE OR EXPERIENCE

You have a hospitality business in a township where a stargazing site is a feature. You may want to consider some of the following:

- A sign on your window to pique interest and generate enquiries, saying:

Welcome to xxx

A dark skies township

Offer themed experiences:

- A *Dark Skies* take away menu - items named within theme e.g. The Astro Burger, The Starry Schnitzel Burger.
- *Dark Skies hampers* – designed for customers/stargazers to have all they need for a night sky supper including a thermos with soup of the day or a hot chocolate. (Returning the thermos the following day can lead to repeat business).
- Your own *Dark Skies* merchandise – stubby holders, T-shirts, postcards etc.
- Upsell a star gazing package with your accommodation, including folding chairs, a portable telescope, picnic blankets and snacks for night-time viewing.



CREATE YOUR OWN DARK SKIES EVENT

Stargazing events are staged all over the globe and provide an umbrella campaign to draw people to your destination.

Consider working with your business and tourism association to hold a collaborative event which features offers from a range of businesses, including accommodation, activities, hospitality and retail. Having many activities and offers available makes an event very appealing to consumers and can increase the length of stay.

Events which generate good visitation and increased economic outcomes are great for every region. People who have a genuine interest in stargazing could generate a new visitor demographic who “stay and play”, and can make your town and your DARK SKIES experience an annual calendar inclusion.

It’s a good idea to visit stargazing and astrophotography places in the daylight before returning at sunset or night-time.

OPPORTUNITY - ASTRO-PHOTOGRAPHY EVENTS

Astro-photography is becoming more popular, especially with the increase in solar activity leading to the high-than-usual incidences of auroras. Many people are interested in how to take the best photos at night, either on their specialised equipment or on their smartphone.

Look ahead to the astronomical calendar, pick a great location and come up with different photography ideas. You may want to work with photography clubs and instructors to develop a fun and informative session.

The Astronomical Society of Victoria is extremely supportive and have an active outreach program. They can assist with planning and delivering star gazing experiences.

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

INVERLOCH EQUINOX FESTIVAL

- 3 day event in March
- A wide range of aligned events, including a wellbeing expo, kids' activities and nature-based experiences
- Night events included star gazing, ghost tours, wildlife spotting, fire shows, live music and more
- Run by the Inverloch Tourism Association with the help of volunteers
- Supported by the Astronomical Society of Victoria and the Mornington Peninsula Astronomical Society
- Included recommendations of places to stay for the event
- <https://www.inverlochequinoxfestival.com.au/>



LAKE TYRRELL ASTRO FEST 2024

- Annual event held at Lake Tyrrell
- Run by the Astronomical Society of Victoria
- Includes guest speakers from the ASV, kids' activities, Q&A dinner, pub quiz, First Nations storytelling and astrophotography sessions
- Paid and free events





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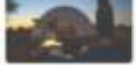
Earth Sanctuary Central Australia



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Book online

May • 2025 •

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
27 Apr	28	29	30	1 May	2
 5:30pm Alice Springs Astronomy Dinner & Star Tour 2.5 hrs -- Dinner & Stars		 5:30pm Alice Springs Astronomy Star Tour 1.5 hrs		 5:30pm Alice Springs Astronomy Dinner & Star Tour 2.5 hrs -- Dinner & Stars	 5:30pm Alice Springs Astronomy Dinner & Star Tour 2.5 hrs -- Dinner & Stars
 5:30pm Alice Springs Astronomy Overnight Star Tour - 15 hrs -- Sunset 2 Sunrise		 5:30pm Alice Springs Astronomy Dinner & Star Tour 2.5 hrs -- Dinner & Stars		 5:30pm Alice Springs Astronomy Overnight Star Tour - 15 hrs -- Sunset 2 Sunrise	 5:30pm Alice Springs Astronomy Overnight Star Tour - 15 hrs -- Sunset 2 Sunrise
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EARTH SANCTUARY

- Established in 1999, Earth Sanctuary is an award-winning spectacular outback venue just 15 minutes from Alice Springs.
- Offers an extensive range of CO₂ neutral tours, programs and services
- Includes astronomy tours, exciting educational learning adventures, events and Outback dining experiences for group tours and inbound operators.
- Prices range from \$60 to \$800+ pp
- <https://www.earth-sanctuary.com.au/astronomy-tours782fcbfe>
- Also offer online courses

Destination **GIPPSLAND**



Exmoor Dark Skies Festival

Every Autumn we celebrate our dark skies – why not join us from 17 October to 2nd November 2025?



This Business is Dark Sky Friendly

Dark Sky Friendly Businesses

We work with local businesses who help to provide an amazing range of dark skies experiences.

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK

Home > Exmoor for everyone > Stargazing and Dark Skies > Dark Sky Friendly Businesses

Dark Sky Friendly Businesses

The following accommodation and experience/activity providers have all received dark skies training and have been accredited as Dark Sky Friendly businesses. They understand the importance of Exmoor's dark skies, why they need protecting and can help you make the most of your visit with advice and stargazing equipment/resources available for your use.

(If you are a business owner and would like to know more about this Dark Skies accreditation scheme please email ruralenterprise@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

Detailed listing below map.

EXMOOR STARGAZING

- <https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/exmoor-for-everyone/stargazing-and-dark-skies>
- International Dark Sky Reserve
- Includes a discovery trail, a free guide and stargazing advice, dark sky discovery hubs and links to Dark Sky Friendly businesses

Exmoor Dark Skies Festival

- 17 October – 2 November 2025
- Over 50 events, suitable for all ages, will take place all over Exmoor National Park.
- Includes astronomer talks and workshops, astronomy suppers and talks, family events, dark skies yoga, wildlife walks and planetarium experiences.
- Previous festivals have included poetry competition inspired by Exmoor's dark skies.
- Events are run by the Exmoor National Park Authority and involved businesses

<https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/exmoor-for-everyone/stargazing-and-dark-skies/exmoor-dark-skies-festival>

'Dark Sky friendly businesses help you make the most of our dark skies during your stay on Exmoor'



RESOURCES

1. INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY ORGANISATION

<https://www.darksky.org/>

The International Dark Sky Places Program offers five types of designations:

1. International Dark Sky Communities - legally organized cities and towns that adopt quality outdoor lighting ordinances and undertake efforts to educate residents about the importance of dark skies. <https://darksky.org/places/carrickalinga/>
2. International Dark Sky Parks - publicly- or privately-owned spaces protected for natural conservation that implement good outdoor lighting and provide dark sky programs for visitors. <https://darksky.org/places/warrumbungle-dark-sky-park/>
3. International Dark Sky Reserves - a dark “core” zone surrounded by a populated periphery where policy controls are enacted to protect the darkness of the core. <https://darksky.org/places/river-murray-dark-sky-reserve/>
4. International Dark Sky Sanctuaries - the most remote (and often darkest) places in the world whose conservation state is most fragile. <https://darksky.org/places/arkaroola-wilderness-sanctuary-dark-sky-sanctuary/>, <https://darksky.org/places/the-jump-up-dark-sky-sanctuary/>
5. Urban Night Sky Places - sites near or surrounded by large urban environs whose planning and design actively promote an authentic nighttime experience in the midst of significant artificial light at night, and that otherwise do not qualify for designation within any other International Dark Sky Places category. <https://darksky.org/places/palm-beach-headland/>

The Sun



The Moon



Eclipses



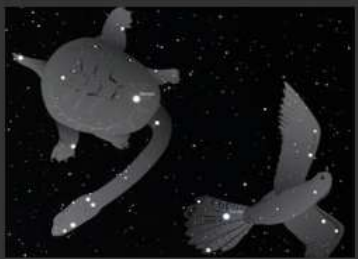
The Planets



The Stars



Constellations



2. ABORIGINAL ASTRONOMY RESOURCES

Australian Indigenous Astronomy

- <http://www.aboriginalastronomy.com.au/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/AboriginalAstronomy>
- Gippsland Indigenous connections - Bruce Pascoe - Bunurong Elder
- Wayne Thorpe - Gunnai Custodian

Indigenous Astronomy curriculum information

- <https://www.indigenous.gov.au/teaching-guides/curricula-project/astronomy>

A guide to Aboriginal Astronomy

- <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/science-environment/2017/07/a-guide-to-aboriginal-astronomy/>

Star maps

- <http://www.aboriginalastronomy.com.au/content/topics/starmaps/>

First peoples of Australia Astronomy fact sheet

- <https://museumsvictoria.com.au/scienceworks/plan-your-visit/melbourne-planetarium/fact-sheets/first-peoples-of-australia-astronomy>



3. VICTORIAN INFORMATION

Dark Sky Victoria

- <https://www.darkskyvic.org/>

The Astronomical Society of Victoria

- Hugely supportive organisation
- Has chapters for astrophotography, juniors, radio astronomy and much more.
- Have an active outreach and community engagement program
- Run events around the state
- www.asv.org.au

Visit Victoria

- <https://www.visitvictoria.com/see-and-do/outdoor-and-adventure/stargazing>

Parks Victoria

- <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/things-to-do/stargazing>

Honey Suckle Astronomy Tours – 90 Mile Beach Wellington

- <https://www.honeysucklesastronomytours.com.au/>

Leon Mow Dark Sky Site Heathcote

- <https://www.visitvictoria.com/Things-to-do/Outdoor-activities/Stargazing>



Australasian Dark Sky Alliance

Shedding light on light pollution

Australia

4. AUSTRALIAN INFORMATION

Australasian Dark Sky Alliance

- <https://www.australasiandarkskyalliance.org/>

Star Gazing – New South Wales

- <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/conservation-and-heritage/our-parks/dark-sky-parks>

Star Gazing – South Australia

- <https://southaustralia.com/guides/stargazing-in-south-australia>
- <https://www.rivermurraydarkskyreserve.org/>
- <https://www.arkaroola.com.au/international-dark-sky-sanctuary>
- <https://darksky.org/places/carrickalinga/>

Star Gazing - Western Australia

- <https://astrotourismwa.com.au/>

Star Gazing – Queensland

- <https://www.queensland.com/au/en/places-to-see/experiences/nature-and-wildlife/best-stargazing-queensland>
- <https://www.australianageofdinosaurs.com/page/101/australian-age-of-dinosaurs-the-dark-sky>

Star Gazing – Tasmania

- <https://www.darkskytasmania.org/>
- <https://www.spiritoftasmania.com.au/blog/a-stargazer-s-guide-to-exploring-tasmania-s-southern-skies>

Star Gazing – Northern Territory

- <https://northernterritory.com/articles/stargazing>



5. PLANNING RESOURCES

Information on what's visible in the night sky

- <https://astronomy.org.au/general/sky-guides/>

Skippy Sky

A computer model of light pollution and cloud cover.

- <https://www.skippysky.com.au/Australia/>

Dark Site Finder

Indicates light pollution levels.

- <https://darksitefinder.com/>

Time and Date

Look up times for sunrise, sunset, moon rise, moon set.

- <https://www.timeanddate.com/>

Sky Tonight

Answers questions such as what can currently be seen; astronomical events happening that night; and how to find specific celestial bodies

- <https://theskylive.com/>

Calendars of celestial events

- <http://www.seasky.org/astronomy/astronomy-calendar-current.html>
- <https://www.opticscentral.com.au/celestial-events-calendar.html>

Best star gazing apps

- <https://www.space.com/best-stargazing-apps>

Stellarium

A planetarium software that replicates exactly what you see when you look up at the stars. This is a great resource if you are planning a Dark Skies event and want to see what will be happening in the night sky at that point in time.

- <https://stellarium.org/>

Tips for planning a stargazing trip

Most people can access the Dark Skies with simple materials such as binoculars and tripod cameras

- <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/66316/13-tips-stargazing-astronomers>
- <https://tripscholars.com/how-to-plan-stargazing-trips/>

MEDIA

articles

Time Out

- <https://www.timeout.com/australia/things-to-do/best-stargazing-spots-in-australia>

Tourism Review

- <https://www.tourism-review.com/night-tourism-sector-offers-unique-experiences-news14901>

The Times UK

- <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/society/article/gen-z-look-to-the-stars-as-popularity-of-astronomy-goes-into-orbit-rksm5qm98>

Booking.com trends in travel including star gazing

- Of the 27,000 travellers surveyed, nearly two thirds (62%) were considering visiting darker sky destinations with starbathing experiences (72%), star guides (59%), once in a lifetime cosmic events (59%), and constellation tracking (57%) top of the stellar adventure list.
- <https://news.booking.com/defying-convention-to-deepen-connections-bookingcoms-nine-predictions-for-travel-in-2025/>

Guardian Australia

- <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2022/sep/12/seeing-stars-the-astronomical-rise-of-australian-dark-sky-tourism>

Austrade

- Article on the growing popularity of astrotourism, and the benefits for regions and the environment as star gazers are generally responsible travellers.
- <https://www.austrade.gov.au/en/news-and-analysis/news/dark-sky-tourism-displays-astronomical-potential>

The growing popularity of night tourism

- <https://www.tourism-review.com/night-tourism-sector-offers-unique-experiences-news14901>

MEDIA RELEASE EXAMPLE

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Date: [Insert Date]

[Business Name] Launches New Stargazing Experience in Gippsland's Big Sky Country

[Your Town/Region], VIC – As part of the Destination Gippsland Stargazing Gippsland campaign, [Business Name] is proud to launch a new celestial-inspired experience: [Name of Experience] — designed to showcase the region's breathtaking night skies and reconnect visitors with the wonders above.

Launching on [Insert Date], the [Name of Experience] invites guests to [brief description: e.g., "enjoy guided stargazing paired with local produce," "learn to capture the stars with an astrophotography workshop," or "relax around a campfire under a blanket of stars"].

"There's nothing quite like the skies over Gippsland," says [Your Name], [Job Title] at [Business Name]. "We've created an experience that helps visitors slow down, look up, and connect with the land and the universe in a really special way." [Add unique highlights: e.g., Indigenous storytelling, telescope viewings, warm drinks and blankets, glamping options, or links to nature.]

For bookings and more info, go to www.webaddress

[Name of Experience] is available [e.g. Friday and Saturday nights from April to October], with prices starting at [\$xx]. Bookings are now open via [website or contact details].

High-res images can be found at www.visitvictoriacontenthub.com.au

This new offering is part of a growing collective of local operators celebrating Gippsland's dark skies — encouraging visitors to extend their stay and explore after dark. More information about the Stargazing Gippsland campaign is available on request.

ENDS

Media Contact:

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]

[Website]

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This Toolkit has been created to as part of Destination Gippsland's industry development program to support the Dark Skies campaign.

The program also includes a workshop on how to develop new experiences and packages to attract Dark Skies visitors, and a workshop on how to market packages and experiences. Thos workshops can be found at the following link:

[Dark Skies industry training resources](#)

Additional Destination Gippsland marketing resources can be found at:

[Marketing Opportunities and Resources](#)

For more information on this project please contact:

Janine Hayes



Destination Gippsland Ltd

E: jhayes@destinationgippsland.com.au

Postal: PO Box 203, Mirboo North VIC 3871

Office: 30 Ridgway Street (Old Shire Hall, Strzelecki Hwy) Mirboo North

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