

Rothney Observatory hosting viewings of Perseid meteor shower

Anyone wanting to see the most popular meteor shower of the year is invited to Calgary's Rothney Observatory, located just outside of Priddis, for the Perseid meteor shower's peak evening from 10 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 11 to 2 a.m. on Sunday, Aug. 12.

The Rothney Observatory will be open from Thursday, Aug. 9 to Aug. 12, from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. to view the meteor shower. Admission is free, but a donation is always appreciated and well worth it.

This year during the peak of the meteor shower, you should see about 60-70 meteors per hour whereas in outburst years (such as in 2016) the rate can be between 150-200 meteors an hour. The moon is in a favourable position as it will be near new and below the horizon all four nights before the show starts.

The Perseid meteor shower event is the result of comet 109P/Swift-Tuttle trailing debris, which was last observed in 1992 but unfortunately not scheduled to return until 2126.

Look in the north-northeast about one-quarter of the way up in the constellation of Perseus and follow it upward to the northeast to catch the best fireballs. If that isn't enough reason to come out, there are also four planets



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The Sky's the Limit

- Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn - plus dwarf-planet Pluto out at dusk. So whether you're a first-timer or frequent flyer, what's stopping you this time from making the trip to the Rothney Observatory?

Sky watch

This is an excellent month to view the Milky Way without freezing. The best time to view our home galaxy is after 11 p.m. until dawn.

On Monday, Aug. 6, watch for the moon to hid orange giant star Aldebaran from 6:45 a.m. on, for the rest of the day.

On Friday, Aug. 17 before sunset, look southwest-west as Venus reaches its longest elongation - it's almost blinding in a telescope.

The annual Perseid meteor shower

runs until Aug. 24, with the peak from Friday, Aug. 11 to Sunday, Aug. 13 with estimated rate of 60-100 meteors per hour dampened by the waning gibbous moon. The best time to view the meteor shower is starting at 11 p.m until dawn. Check out this viewing guide at www.space.com/32868-perseid-meteor-shower-guide.html for details.

Public events

Mark down Thursday, Aug. 9 to Saturday, Aug. 12, from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m., for the annual Milky Way weekend. There will be an array of scopes operated by University of Calgary astronomers and members of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. Late night public observing is a unique opportunity to see deep sky objects such as planetary nebula and globular clusters. You will have the opportunity to look through the telescopes, and astronomers will be on hand to answer questions. For further information, contact Jennifer Howse at jhowse@phas.ualgary.ca or (403) 931-2366. The website www.ualgary.ca/rao is updated regularly.

Neel Roberts is a member of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. He welcomes your questions and comments at 403-560-6574.