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Astrotourism is hidden treasury for rural residents

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Jun 1, 2021



City slickers are losing their night skies more each year with increased artificial lighting. While most of the sky is technically still dark, much of the developed world's population is urban. Rural dwellers on the other hand still enjoy a natural dark sky like their ancestors did if they are far enough from a populous settlement.

Before the industrial revolution of the 1800's, people took the dark night sky for granted but that's all changed dramatically from the 1900's (check PBS 2011 documentary "The City Dark" www.imdb.com/title/tt1863406/). With tyrannical COVID lockdowns, sky high real estate and

out of control crime, urbanites are making an unprecedented exit for the country at record rates. So, is opportunity in the air?

It is more like “opportunity in the sky” according to a recent USA Today article www.usatoday.com/story/travel/destinations/2021/03/25/astronomy-trips-stargazing-resorts-showcase-night-sky/4235976001/ and Travel & Space Tourism Writer Valerie Stimac (valeriestimac.com) is spearheading the “Space Tourism” movement (spacetourismguide.com). With Alaska as her home base, she has travelled the globe with the mission to get the rest of the world involved in natural dark skies. Stimac admits to being “hooked” the day she started as a hobby and the rest is history. With regular updates, her monthly page (spacetourismguide.com/night-sky-june) is quite impressive with illustrations and reference materials for even newbies to use. You can purchase her DVD “Dark Skies” at <https://valeriestimac.com/shop/> or check out her presentation at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-reOCdLkLY>.

Are you in a rural area and want to cash in on this? I believe this new “Dark Sky Ambassador” opportunity is very much in the basement and the entrepreneurial spirit will make this work whether you have a bed and breakfast or general gathering. You should check your location on https://www.cleardarksky.com/maps/lp/large_light_pollution_map.html to see how you rate. If you are lucky enough to live in a black area, that is marvelous but outside of a few pockets, these are far away from civilization and may not attract many. I, like many, live in a blue zone under an hour from a major city and 5 minutes from a small town and that is usually sufficient to get great views of the milky way which can spot some deep sky objects like the 2,000,000 light year Andromeda Galaxy under a scope. With the current technology to hook scopes up to live cams, you can even host them online to entice the curious who are not ready to make the trip. One of the best ways is to become a Star B Q host. Most clubs have been hosting them for years and what better way than to start them in the summer for Father’s Day?

Sky watch for the next month: Download this month’s sky free chart at <http://whatsouttonight.com/Resources/2021JunSkyWOT.pdf>

1. **Jupiter North of overnight-** Monday, June 8th before dawn look south as they rise into the morning.

2. **Saturn North of overnight-** Tuesday, June 9th before dawn look south as they rise into the morning.
3. **Venus comes out of hiding from Moon -** Friday, June 19th look NEE at about 4:15 am as Venus occultation ends and rises with the Moon into the dawn.
4. **Longest Day of the Year-** Saturday, June 20th is officially the summer solstice at 15:43. MDT and we will have 16 hours and 19 minutes of actual daylight. Sun officially rises at 05:23 am and sets at 21:42 with high noon at 13:33.

Happy Father's Day and Welcome to Summer!

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