

Private Stargazing Nights at Mount Stromlo

Mount Stromlo Observatory has been carrying out astronomical observations for over 100 years and, prior to the 2003 firestorm, grew from a small outpost of pioneering astronomers to one of the great observatories of the world. Now you can experience it through the unique opportunity of a private stargazing night or behind-the-scenes tour of the facility.

All of our private stargazing nights are led by professional or experienced amateur astronomers from the Canberra Astronomical Society and include after-hours access to the observatory, use of Mount Stromlo's outreach telescopes, and a guided experience in viewing some of the most interesting features of the Southern Hemisphere sky.

As an addition, guests can also have the opportunity to take a behind-the-scenes tour, which details the fascinating history of Mount Stromlo as the Commonwealth Solar Observatory, notable scientific achievements by its researchers, and its experience and rebirth following the 2003 bushfires, as well as providing access to areas not normally open to the public. Site tours include visiting Professor Brian Schmidt's Nobel Prize, our 200kg meteorite, and the Advanced Instrumentation and Technology Centre which hosts our space testing facilities.

Private nights are a wonderful highlight for your conference, or a special way to commemorate a birthday or major life event. With a limited number of bookings available, it is recommended that you plan ahead and book early to avoid disappointment!

Fees and Bookings

Group Size	Private Stargazing	Private Stargazing + Tour
2 People	\$250	\$400
3 - 5 People	\$470	\$630
6 - 10 People	\$700	N/A

All fees listed are the total price per group and include GST.

For groups of over 10 people, please contact us for more information. To book, please email outreach@mso.anu.edu.au.

If you are a school, educational, or charitable (i.e. non-profit) organisation, please contact outreach@mso.anu.edu.au to discuss costs and availability.

Terms and Conditions

Private stargazing sessions run for up to 2 hours (groups of 5 or less are only for 1 hour). Historic tours run for up to 1 hour. A stargazing session and tour can be requested together, with a run time of up to 3 hours.

Start times are variable, depending on sunset and object visibility, with nights in the summer starting later. Private stargazing and tour packages start at sunset so the tour can be done in twilight.

Due to the variability of weather and visibility conditions, we will contact you by noon on the day of your scheduled event with information on weather and options, and give you the opportunity to reschedule, cancel, or do a private tour as an alternative to stargazing if desired. If you choose to continue with the booking at this point, or if you do not contact us to request a reschedule or cancellation at least 6 hours before your scheduled booking, we will proceed with your selected activities and you will be invoiced for the full cost of the event as booked.

Our astronomers will always make an effort to provide an exciting and interactive experience, regardless of weather conditions and limited viewing.

Use of the smart phone adaptor is entirely at the smart phone owner's own risk and ANU is not liable for any loss or damage whatsoever arising in connection with the use of the smart phone adaptor.

COVID-19 terms and conditions

As noted above, you will be contacted on the day of your booking with an update on the weather and options. If you would like to go ahead with your booking you will be required to confirm that you are not experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. Each guest will only be allowed to attend if they are symptom free, they haven't been overseas or in an ACT Government-designated COVID-19 hotspot in the 14 days prior to the booking, and they haven't been in contact with someone diagnosed with or suspected of having coronavirus in the 14 days prior to the booking.

Each guest will have their temperature checked upon arrival using a forehead thermometer. If a fever is detected the guest will be unable to take part in the booking. The guest can either sit out or the booking can be forfeited (the group will be invoiced for the full cost of the event as booked).

Mandatory physical distancing

All guests must abide by the Australian Government physical distancing rules of 1.5 metres (1.5m) between each person, and no more than one person per 4 square metres (4m²) in domes, offices, meeting rooms, laboratories, and teaching spaces.

Due to occupancy restrictions, only 3 people (including your astronomer) are allowed inside the outreach dome at any one time. For bookings for groups of 3-5 or 6-10, a portable manual telescope will also be set up outside the dome and guests will be able to rotate between the two telescopes, adhering to occupancy and physical distancing restrictions.

Cleaning and hygiene

From 2 June 2020, all buildings at Mount Stromlo Observatory will have resumed cleaning services, with additional cleaning measures implemented for high touch areas such as door handles, light switches, and common areas. Nonetheless, if you have concerns regarding an area that requires cleaning please discuss with your astronomer.

Everyone is reminded of the importance of the strictest hygiene measures when using bathrooms, including washing hands for 20-30 seconds using soap and water.

Other important basic hygiene measures include the use of hand sanitiser; avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth; sneezing or coughing into a tissue or your elbow; and disposing of any tissues immediately in the bin.

All equipment and high touch surfaces will be cleaned before and after each booking, and eyepieces will be cleaned throughout your booking.

Due to the sharing of equipment, your astronomer will make use of hand sanitiser and will wear disposable gloves, disposable face mask, and protective goggles throughout your booking. Guests are required to use 70% alcohol hand sanitiser upon arrival and as required, and wear disposable gloves and a disposable face mask for the duration of the booking. Hand sanitiser, gloves (both nitrile and latex), and face masks will be provided, but you may also choose to use your own if you would prefer. Alcohol wipes will also be provided for cleaning mobile phones if you would like to take photos during your booking.

People at high risk

Members of our community are considered high risk or vulnerable if they are:

- over 70 years of age,
- over 60 years of age with chronic illness,
- have a compromised immune system, or,
- are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 50 with one or more chronic medical conditions.

Any persons in any of these high-risk categories are strongly encouraged to not attend the Mount Stromlo Observatory site.