



Sutherland is a town known not only for the cold but also for the clear, starry skies and for being home to the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT). We celebrate this unique place in the universe with a week long astronomy celebration (star party) from 26th to 31st December 2009 culminating in an unforgettable New Year's Eve bash under the stars. This event will also serve to end the International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA2009). The people of Sutherland, in partnership with the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) and the Karoo-Hoogland Municipality, welcome visitors from all over the world to join this celebration of the stars.

Note that the programme is subject to minor changes.
Watch www.astronomy2009.org.za for the latest developments.

Daily Programme: 26 - 30 December 2009

AT THE SAAO

08:00 to 16:00

Daily every-hour-on-the-hour "basic" tours of the SAAO Visitor Centre and SALT (if you're in Sutherland you WILL see SALT!). Tours to the 1.9m Radcliffe telescope may be conducted depending on the demand. No bookings required. A small entrance fee of **R20** will be charged per person (children under 12 go free) to help cover the costs of the event – this includes access to the visitor centre, telescopes and the astronomy workshop.

14:00 to 16:00

For the more interested visitor, there will be an "Essential Astronomy" presentation and Question & Answer session every afternoon. This 2-hour presentation is aimed at absolutely everyone, no matter what your knowledge or background, and is guaranteed to change your perspective of the universe. This will also be an opportunity to ask a technical person (e.g. astronomer, engineer, scientist) more detailed questions that you may have come up with during the basic tours.

20:30 to 22:00 and 22:30 to 00:00

TWO stargazing sessions will be held per night using the visitor telescopes with a maximum of 40 people per session. These stargazing sessions are **FREE** but it is essential to **sign up** at the SAAO Visitor Centre during the week. Registers will be available from 08:00 to 16:00 daily. **FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED!**

NOTE that at these SAAO stargazing sessions it is NOT possible to visit the research telescopes at night, especially not SALT!

IN THE TOWN OF SUTHERLAND

Lots of activities are planned in town for both the community and visitors, including:

- Cultural performances by Sutherland's Rieldans Group
- Live band with musicians from Sutherland
- Arts and Crafts Market
- Donkey car rides
- DVD sessions for youth
- Medley around Sutherland
- Road show / Parade
- Oujaarsdag Street Bash
- HIV awareness campaign
- Alcohol awareness campaign
- Kite flying
- Youth sports activities, hikes and "stay awake" session
- Amateur astronomers star party
- Sheep shearing (provided we can find enough "unshorn" sheep)
- Fundraising campaign donation boxes (money goes into feeding scheme)

Programme: 31 December 2009 (New Year's Eve)

AT THE SAAO

08:00 to 17:00

Hourly or half-hourly (depending on demand) "basic" tours of the SAAO Visitor Centre, SALT and 1.9m telescope.

12:00 to 14:00

The last "Essential Astronomy" presentation and Question & Answer session for 2009.

17:00 to 19:00

Get ready for the sunset/moonrise: public will be allowed to take their cars to the observing plateau and park in demarcated areas. **Please bring your own refreshments. Strictly no alcohol or fires allowed on the plateau!**

19:00 to 19:50

Enjoy the last sunset of the International Year of Astronomy 2009 (sun sets at 19:47) from the observing plateau of biggest observatory on the continent! Remember, public are not normally allowed on the plateau at sunset so don't miss this unique opportunity!

Bring your cameras - the telescope domes are very photogenic, especially at sunset!

19:50

Turn opposite to the sunset and watch the full moon rise (starts to rise at 19:43) over the vast karoo landscape. This is also the ONLY "blue moon" of 2009 – so make sure you grab this once-in-a-blue-moon opportunity!

20:30 to 21:00

Everyone leaves the observatory and heads back into Sutherland. SAAO staff and telescopes will be available on the open field along the main street of Sutherland (just opposite Kamamas Coffee Shop).

PRECAUTIONS AND WARNINGS

WEATHER: Sutherland can get cold and windy very quickly. Dress warmly for all night events.

SENSITIVE EQUIPMENT: Please be careful not to touch any sensitive equipment. When looking through a telescope place your eye close to the eyepiece without putting your hands on the telescope.

ALCOHOL: Strictly no alcohol allowed. SAAO reserves the right of admission and anyone found under the influence will be asked to leave.

PARKING: Please park within demarcated areas, as indicated by the marshalls.

LITTER: If you do not find a rubbish bin, please keep your rubbish until you do. There will be bins close to all the buildings.

ENVIRONMENT: In order to conserve this pristine natural environment, please stay within the demarcated areas.

DISCLAIMERS

CLOUDS: The SAAO cannot accept responsibility if it is a cloudy night. As much as we'd like it to be, the weather is definitely beyond our control.

INJURY: Visitors enter at own risk and SAAO will not be liable for any injuries incurred during the activities on SAAO grounds.

IN THE TOWN OF SUTHERLAND

18:00 till late

Bring and braai at the Kamamas coffee shop. Main street will be closed off for a massive street star party! SAAO will have a number of portable telescopes (6" Dobs) available. Amateur astronomers are welcome to bring their telescopes and join the party!

21:23

Observe the PARTIAL LUNAR ECLIPSE from the open field opposite Kamamas in Sutherland (Max eclipse at 21:23).

18:00 until Midnight

Sutherland Star Party! Music, bring-and-braai, telescopes!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

Accommodation available at guest houses, guest farms, hotel, school hostel or camping sites.

Contact Allistar or Francois at the Sutherland Tourism office:

Tel.: 023 571-1265

Email: hooglandtourism@telkomsa.net

Web: www.karoohoogland.co.za