

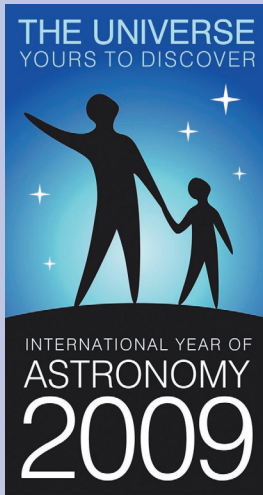


SUTHERLAND STAR PARTY

Boxing Day to New Year's Eve 2008



Seeing in the International Year of Astronomy 2009 under the stars



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). This year we celebrate this unique place in the universe with a week long astronomy celebration (star party) from 26th to 31st December 2008 culminating in an unforgettable New Year's Eve bash under the stars. This event will also serve to see in, in style, 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. For the first time in the 36 year history of the SAAO in Sutherland, the research telescopes will be accessible to the public for the entire night on 31st December 2008 in celebration of IYA2009, with an unforgettable public star party on the otherwise restricted plateau that will end with the first sunrise of 2009!

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

Daily Programme: 26 - 30 December 2008

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!). No bookings required.

14:00 to 16:00

For the more interested visitor, there will be an "Essential Astronomy" presentation and Q&A session every afternoon with astronomers. 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 during the day.

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 during that week** at the SAAO Visitor Centre. 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 – this will only happen on New Year's Eve and for that you WILL need to book in advance!

IN THE TOWN OF SUTHERLAND

Lots of activities are planned, including:

- Cultural performances by Sutherland's Rieldans Group
- Arts and Crafts Market
- Donkey car rides from the Tourism Office through town
- DVD sessions for youth at Sneeu Vlokkie Community Hall
- Fundraising campaign donation boxes (money goes into feeding scheme)
- Fun Run/Walk (1km for kids, 6.5km for adults)
- Road show / Parade for IYA 2009

ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

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

Contact Allistair at the Sutherland Tourism office:

Tel.: 023 571-1265

Email: hooglandtourism@telkomsa.net

Web: www.karoohoogland.co.za

Programme: 31 December 2008 (New Year's Eve)

AT THE SAAO

08:00 to 14:00

The usual every-hour-on-the-hour "basic" tours of the SAAO Visitor Centre and SALT.

12:00 to 14:00

"Essential Astronomy" presentation and Q&A session.

16:00 to 18:00

Star Party! Bookings are required. Report to the SAAO Visitor Centre for an orientation briefing. Cars are allowed onto the plateau for the unloading & setting up of telescopes/camera equipment only. All cars to be parked in at the Visitor Centre (only official vehicles are allowed on the plateau after dark). People will walk to the telescope plateau (~20 minute walk). Shuttles will be available for aged/disabled. **Please bring your own refreshments. Strictly no alcohol or fires allowed on the plateau!**

19:55

The last sunset of 2008!

20:00 to 00:00

Gates are closed and no more people are allowed onto the site. No bright lights are permitted on the plateau for this dark skies period. Only low power hand-held torches will be allowed during this period and all movement is restricted to the demarcated roads. Telescopes are available for stargazing.

00:00 **Happy New Year!**

Welcome to the International Year of Astronomy 2009!

00:00 till 08:00

Visitors are free to leave. However those who leave will not be allowed back. The brave few who remain on the hilltop will see the first sunrise of 2009 from one of the most spectacular spots on the planet!

IN THE TOWN OF SUTHERLAND

20:00 till late

All welcome to a bring-and-braai star party. No bookings needed. Telescopes will be set up.

PRECAUTIONS AND WARNINGS

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

DARKNESS: There will be a lot of movement in the dark. Please carry your own torch but use it responsibly, i.e. always point it downwards and never into someone's eyes. Preferably, torches should have a red light instead of white to help keep your eyes dark adapted.

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, and no refunds will be given. However, there will be an alternative programme offered in the Visitor Centre until the sky clears.

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

BOOKING INFORMATION

Booking is essential due to the limited space and must be done by **5 December 2008**. Bookings can be made during office hours through SAAO office in Cape Town between 9:00 - 16:00. Media personnel (and not accompanying family) are allowed free entry but still need to register for the event.

COST

The star party costs **R150.00 per person** (no discounts for children).

BOOKING PROCEDURE

- Contact Natalie Jones at the SAAO
Tel.: 021 460-9345
Email: bookings@astronomy2009.org.za
- You will be assigned a reference number.
- The money should be deposited within 3 days of making the booking, quoting your reference number. For multiple payments, use the first person's reference number. Note that if the deposit is not made using the reference number, there will be no way of verifying your deposit. After 3 days your reference number will become invalid and the space will be re-allocated.
- Send proof of payment to Natalie Jones.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Direct Bank Deposit (contact us for international deposits):

South African Astronomical Observatory
ABSA Heerengracht Branch
Branch Number: 506009
Account Number: 0550144514
Account Type: Cheque Account

Visit the Accounts Department at the SAAO, Observatory Road, Observatory.

Post a cheque made out to the South African Astronomical Observatory, and post to PO Box 9, Observatory 7935. Include a note with your reference number.