

WHAT IS A "STAR PARTY"?

A star party is an invitation to anyone wishing to enjoy and learn more about the wonders of the night sky.

At a star party, AAAP members setup their personal telescopes (a wide variety of models) and offer visitors the opportunity to view celestial objects.

Visitors can bring their own scopes to take advantage of viewing conditions at the site.

Other use the occasion to simply view the stars and planets with their own eyes.

Star parties begin just before sunset.

Unpredictable celestial events such as meteors or an Aurora Borealis often make our public star parties memorable events.

At AAAP star parties our members are happy to answer questions about astronomy, recommend the proper telescope to buy, or help you set up and align your own telescope.

GETTING READY FOR A STAR PARTY

Check the sky conditions before departing.

If the sky is overcast or the forecast suggests rain, consider postponing your visit until the next event.

If there are just a few scattered clouds in the sky (with the Moon and stars visible in between), the star party will be a "go".

The observatory in Mingo Creek Park is close to Shelter 10, which has a handicap environmental restroom.

A portable toilet may also be available on the observing hill. Food and beverages are not served at our star parties and alcoholic beverages are prohibited in Washington County Parks.

WHAT EQUIPMENT SHOULD YOU BRING?

You don't need to bring a telescope or other observer equipment to a star party. However, some items may make the night more comfortable and enjoyable.

It often gets cool on a clear night, even in summer, so bring a coat, light jacket or sweater.

Blankets, head cover and extra layers of clothing (including socks) are recommended for continued comfort during star parties in the spring and fall.

To avoid neck strain from constant sky gazing, it helps to bring some type of portable folding chair.

IS THERE A FEE?

All AAAP star parties are free to the public.

However, the AAAP appreciates any donations to help cover facility-operating costs.

WHERE ARE THE STAR PARTIES HELD?

Mingo Creek Park Observatory: The Observatory is located 10 miles east of Washington PA in Nottingham Township in Mingo Creek County Park. The park is in the northeast section of Washington County. The observing location is on the top of the hill past Shelter 10.

At 1149 ft elevation, it is one of the higher undeveloped points in Washington County. The hill affords an almost 100% view of the sky, and because of its location in a rural country park, still enjoys considerably dark night skies. The park is located off Route 88 or Route 136 in Washington County. See the back of this flyer for the map to the observatory site.

The Mingo Creek Park Observatory has two permanently mounted telescopes in separate rooms, a 10" refractor and a 24" robotic RC reflector telescope. The building also houses a classroom full of astronomical displays and a small planetarium where the night sky can be displayed indoors when there's bad weather, or for special educational events. **(phone# 724-348-6150)**

Tips for driving: If you are unfamiliar with either location we recommend that you drive during daylight to help spot landmarks. Always observe speed limits in the parks. Additional maps and directions are also available on the club's web site (see below).

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the history, observatories, activities, and membership of the AAAP, please write us at:
AAAP, P.O. Box 314, Glenshaw, PA 15116

Or access the AAAP webpage on the Internet:

<http://www.3ap.org>

Or send email to: aaap@3ap.org

The Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh



2008 Star Party Schedule

Mingo Creek Park Observatory

- April 11th & 12th
- May 9th & 10th
- June 6th & 7th
- June 28th (Amateur Radio Field Day)
- July 25th & 26th
- Aug 22nd & 23rd
- Sept 5th & 6th
- Sept 27th
- Oct 4th
- Oct 25th
- Nov 1st

Obs. Site Specs:
 Lat: 40° 12' 42"
 Long: 80° 1' 14"
 Elevation: 1180 ft.

