



The Ultimate Guide to Stargazing

Looking for a new hobby? Look up.

For best results, wait for nighttime and a cloudless sky.

Stargazing is a highly accessible hobby that you can access from just about anywhere in the country and any day of the year. Beginners can quickly learn the basics and enjoy the skies with nothing more than a free app and your naked eye, whereas aficionados can get geared up with high-level telescopes and all the gadgets for exploring the universe.

These are the major astronomical events to look out for, what you'll need to go stargazing (ideally), and the best places for it across New Zealand.



What you need to go stargazing:

Stargazing is one of those fantastic hobbies that you can enjoy by doing nothing more than looking up on a clear, dark night. That said, you can include these items on your packing list to get even more out of your stargazing adventures:

- A telescope:** Lets you see the craters on the Moon and the rings of Saturn
- A finderscope:** Helps you find the things you want
- Binoculars:** A more affordable (albeit less powerful) option for stargazing
- An astronomical app to spot the stars:** Tells you what you're looking at
- Books or guides:** Great resources for additional context and tips
- Lens cleaning gear:** Like wiping down your phone camera before taking a shot
- A headlamp:** Helps you set up in the dark
- A blanket:** Lie back and enjoy the stars
- A thermos:** Fill it up with your favourite hot drink to keep warm
- Bug spray:** To avoid becoming a mosquitoes feast while you're stargazing

Major astronomical events to watch for:

The planets and stars on their own are mesmerising. You could stare at them for hours, days or weeks on end and never get bored. But then there are astronomical events to watch for as well, and those are, quite simply, out of this world:

- **Meteor showers:** Super-hot falling space rocks
- **A lunar eclipse:** When Earth moves between the Sun and the Moon
- **A solar eclipse:** When the Moon moves between the Sun and the Earth
- **Planetary alignment:** An optical illusion of the planets lining up like ducks
- **Super moon:** When the full Moon is at or near its closest point to Earth
- **Conjunction:** When two planets look like they're right next to each other
- **Comets:** Only 40-ish years until Halley's Comet returns (but there are others)

Best places in New Zealand for stargazing:

While some may believe our isolation from the rest of the world can be a disadvantage, it can come with some great advantages like being able to enjoy some of the darkest, clearest skies on the planet. And that makes for some spectacular stargazing practically anywhere in the country.

Here are some of the best stargazing spots:

