

ASTROTOURISM A HIDDEN TREASURY FOR RURAL RESIDENTS



NEEL ROBERTS
Sky's the Limit

City slickers are losing their night sky more each year with increased artificial lighting.

While most of the sky is technically still dark, much of the developed world's population is urban. Rural dwellers on the other hand still enjoy a natural dark sky like their ancestors did if they are far enough from a populous settlement.

Before the industrial revolution of the 1800s, people took the dark night sky for granted but that's all changed dramatically from the 1900s (check out the PBS 2011 documentary *The City Dark* at imdb.com/title/tt1863406).

There's an "opportunity in the sky" according to a recent USA Today article and Travel and Space tourism writer Valerie Stimac (valeriestimac.com).

Stimac is spearheading the

"space tourism" movement (spacetourismguide.com).

With Alaska as her home base, she has travelled the globe with the mission to get the rest of the world involved in natural dark skies. With regular updates, her monthly page (spacetourismguide.com/night-sky-june) is quite impressive with illustrations and reference materials for even newbies to use.

Are you in a rural area and want to cash in on this? I believe this new "Dark Sky Ambassador" opportunity is very much in the basement and the entrepreneurial spirit will make this work whether you have a bed and breakfast or are hosting a general gathering (depending on the public health measures in place). You should check your location on cleardarksky.com/maps/lp/large_light_pollution_map.html to see how you rate.

If you are lucky enough to live in a black area, that is marvelous, but outside of a few pockets, these are far away from civilization and may not attract many. I, like many, live in a blue zone under an hour from a major city and five minutes from a small town and that is usually

sufficient to get great views of the Milky Way.

With the current technology to hook telescopes up to live cams, you can even host them online to entice the curious who are not ready — or able due to gathering restrictions — to make the trip.

SKY WATCH

Visit whatsouttonight.com/Resources/2021JunSkyWOT.pdf to download this month's free chart.

On Monday, June 8 before dawn, look south as Jupiter rises into the morning.

On Tuesday, June 9 before dawn, look south as Saturn rises into the morning.

On Friday, June 19 look north-east-east at about 4:15 a.m. as Venus's occultation ends and rises with the moon into the dawn.

Saturday, June 20 is officially the summer solstice. We will have 16 hours and 19 minutes of actual daylight. The sun officially rises at 5:23 a.m. and sets at 9:42 p.m. with high noon at 1:33 p.m.

Neil Roberts is a local astronomer and welcomes your comments at Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com and 403-560-6574. Check out his work at www.ptccanada.com.