



Sternenpark Rhön – a window to the beauty of the universe

Situated far from major cities and due to its special geographical position, the Rhön mountain range offers truly dark and natural night skies. In August 2014 the Rhön was awarded “International Dark Sky Reserve” (Sternenpark im Biosphärenreservat Rhön) by the International Dark Sky Association because of its efforts to preserve these natural nightscapes.

In the realms of the Rhön one can enjoy deep insights into space: plenty of stars, planets, shooting stars and a three dimensional moon are waiting to be appreciated. One can view the shimmering band of the Milky Way from horizon to horizon and realise, why humans have spun so many myths around this majestically moving band. If one takes a peek through binoculars, the shimmer will dissolve into millions of stars – just like Galileo Galilei experienced it 400 years ago. Easily visible is also our neighbouring galaxy Andromeda – some 2.5 million light years away from earth and the farthest object one can see with the naked eye. The sun, our guiding star during the day, is also worth being observed but only through special optical devices.

Aside from the visible wonders of starry nights, the night sky is a place of peace, tranquility and inspiration – very much required and searched for in our busy world. It is due to the untiring efforts of our ancestors that we have a calendar, are able to navigate and hold satellites in their positions high above us. To understand all these things is one of the greatest cultural achievements of mankind. Unfortunately, these days people are estranged from the value and the treasures that the natural beauty of true nights offer. This is, what we are going to change with our “Sternenpark Rhön”.

Aside the visible pleasures of the natural nightscapes, one should be aware that the rhythm of life is subject to the rotation of earth around itself and around the sun. Our bodily functions have adapted to these natural sequences. Too much artificial light disturbs this sensitive day-night-rhythm in humans, animals and even plants. A good night’s sleep needs the darkness in order to be able to produce the hormone Melatonin. But it is especially nature with all its wild inhabitants – diurnal and nocturnal - that suffers immensely under nights that get lit up more and more year by year.

In the “Sternenpark Rhön” we try to withstand this trend and keep our nightscapes natural. This is possible thanks to many communities across the Biosphere Reserve Rhön and the local energy providers that have willingly adopted specially developed lighting guidelines. If outdoor lighting is necessary at all, these guidelines mainly suggest the use of full cut-off luminaires, low wattage and a colour spectrum of light, that emits hardly any blue-rich light, as blue-rich light has been shown to have the greatest harmful effects on nature.

The management of the Sternenpark Rhön provides information about sustainable outdoor lighting and about all aspects related to artificial light at night. Also, in spring 2015 a non-profit association has been in order to fill the Sternenpark with life. Common aims are:

- * preserving the natural nightscapes of the Rhön by providing information and assistance on sustainable outdoor lighting issues
- * star guiding tours, telescope nights, night walks, other of astronomical events
- * talks on all aspects of the Sternenpark, environmental concerns, astronomy and nature science
- * promotion of art, education and science related to the Sternenpark

If you are interested in any further information please contact info@sternenpark-rhoen.de
www.sternenpark-rhoen.de (German) and follow us on <https://de-de.facebook.com/sternenpark.rhoen>



We love stars!

