

Read the guide about a Dark Sky Park in Northumberland in the UK and then answer the following question.

NORTHUMBERLAND DARK SKY PARK

About the Park

In Northumberland Dark Sky Park, in England, you can experience a night sky that is truly amazing. The skies are unpolluted by city lights, and this is the perfect place to come and spend time looking at the stars and planets. The park is the first of its kind in England, and the fourth largest in the world.



Managing the Park

All the lighting in the visitor centre and along the paths to the viewing platforms has to be monitored and controlled by staff so that the amount of light produced is kept as low as possible. This ensures that visitors have a perfect environment in which to view the stars. It is estimated that 85% of the UK population has never experienced the beauty of a clear night filled with billions of stars. It is not just stargazers who benefit from the limited lighting. The park is home to many nocturnal species, and the darker conditions create a suitable natural habitat for bats. There is also plenty for visitors to see during the day, including deer and a variety of birds.

Visitor Information

Although the park is open all year round, the best time for stargazing is during the autumn and winter months because daylight hours are the shortest. Many visitors prefer to bring binoculars, as although they don't provide such good views of the planets, they are easier to use and are also less expensive than a telescope. But if you do decide on a telescope, keep it simple and portable. You could easily spend over £2000 on the most up-to-date models, which are able to track objects in the sky automatically, without having to adjust the telescope manually. However, you don't need to spend this amount – a basic telescope will still give you good views of the night sky.

Visitors often spend many hours looking at the stars. At first, it can be difficult to see clearly in such a dark environment. For the majority of people, twenty minutes is enough time for their eyes to adjust to low light levels, although some find it can take up to forty minutes. You can bring a normal torch to help you find your way, but the white light that it produces does affect your ability to see in the dark. However, red light doesn't create this problem so, for best results, we recommend that you put a red cover over a normal torch. If you prefer, we sell suitable torches with a red light in the visitor centre, or alternatively, you can bring a red bike light if it's not too bright.

For more information go to www.visitskypark.com

(a) Why is this area of Northumberland an ideal place to see stars?

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(b) What do employees do to improve the experience of visitors?

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(c) Which creatures benefit from the lack of light in the park?

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(d) Why is it better to visit the park during certain times of the year?

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(e) What is one advantage of using binoculars rather than a telescope?

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(f) What special feature does an advanced telescope have?

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(g) How long does it take most people to get used to seeing in the dark?

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(h) What can you do instead of buying a special torch? Give two details.

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