

Stargazer Beginner's Guide

Our beginner's guide for Stargazer's looking to discover Northumberland's dark skies.



Harbottle Castle

What to wear, what to take, and essential advice

This is the essential Beginners Guide to enjoying your stargazing in the Northumberland National Park!

All you need to begin stargazing is your eyes, but you should still plan ahead. The most important thing you can do is get to the darkest place you can find where large swathes of sky are visible. Our Dark Skies Discovery Sites in the National Park are perfect – there is one in Alwinton opposite the Rose & Thistle pub (National Park car park with toilet block). The photo above was taken at Harbottle Castle, just a short walk from Drakestone Cottage.

It takes your eyes up to 40 minutes to completely adjust to the darkness, so avoid looking at bright lights.

Tips to enjoy stargazing

Keep warm

Wear really warm clothes, hats and gloves and thick-soled shoes or boots. It gets very cold standing around at night, even in summer.

Be comfortable

Take a chair or a camping mattress to sit on or lie down on. There are folding chairs in the shed at Drakestone Cottage. Be patient as it can take 20 minutes for your eyes to get used to the darkness.

Eat and drink

To keep warm, take a thermos flask of soup or a warm drink. Some nibbles are always welcome too. There is a flask in the dresser at Drakestone Cottage.

Equipment

You don't need always need a telescope. With a good pair of 10 x 50 binoculars you can see the moons of Jupiter and the Andromeda Galaxy! So you don't reduce your night vision, use a red light torch. Torches and binoculars are available for you to use in Drakestone Cottage.

Be courteous at all times

Remember to keep noise levels down as most people will be asleep. In remote rural areas loud revving of engines or moving cars around will disrupt the tranquillity.

