

Astronomical Observing through the Mount Wilson 60-inch Telescope

Background: Mount Wilson Observatory's 60-inch telescope was completed in 1908 by Observatory founder George Ellery Hale with funding from Andrew Carnegie. It was the world's largest operational telescope until Hale went on to complete the Mt. Wilson 100-inch telescope in 1918. Among the many important discoveries from the 60-inch telescope was Harlow Shapley's revelation in 1918 that, contrary to the then-accepted view, the sun is very far away from the center of our Milky Way Galaxy. Now retired from active scientific service, this historic telescope is the largest in the world routinely made available to the public and offers an exceptional astronomical experience.

Requesting Viewing Through the 60-inch Telescope:

- The Mount Wilson Institute (MWI) provides a Session Director and Telescope Operator to assist with your visit.
- The number of persons is limited to 25 per group and with no children under age 12. No exceptions are made.
- Check date availability on the 60-inch "Calendar of Available Nights" and then contact Susan McAlister in Atlanta at 60inch@mtwilson.edu to make a reservation. Submit the completed "Observing Time Request and Agreement Form" by email to Susan McAlister, by fax (404-413-5481) or mail (Attn: 60-inch Program, Mount Wilson Institute, P.O. Box 1909, Atlanta, GA 30301).
- The required form and payment in full must be received four weeks prior to the event to avoid cancellation.
- Cancellation policy: see the separate document on this topic.

Viewing Fees for 2009:

- During the 2009 season, a fee of \$900 (half-night) / \$1,600 (full night) is levied for a group of 1 to 25 persons. No discounts are offered. Please be aware that there is an increased chance of cancellation due to inclement weather during the January through April time frame.
- Special tours prior to the observing session are available for an additional fee.
- Checks should be made payable to "Mount Wilson Institute."
- No observing session will be carried out without receipt of this fee four weeks before the observing session.

Time Considerations:

- Half-night sessions end at 1:00 a.m. during daylight savings time and midnight during standard time. Full night viewing sessions end at dawn. (For sunrise/set times go to www.usno.navy.mil, select "sunrise/set" in the "Links" section.)
- Observers will coordinate their arrival time with the Session Director 1 - 2 weeks before the session. Plan to arrive on the mountain at sunset in order to park and be greeted at the telescope. It takes about 45 minutes to reach the Observatory from the beginning of the Angeles Crest Highway in La Canada/Flintridge.

Arranging Your Visit:

- A Session Director will contact you by phone or email one or two weeks before your scheduled session. He or she will be your main contact up to and including the time of your observing session and will be available to answer any questions you may have regarding your visit.
- Should MWI need to cancel your session due to weather, earthquake, fire, equipment failure, etc., the Session Director will contact you and explain the available options.
- On the day of your visit, the Session Director will meet you at the Observatory gate and will be there to answer any questions you have throughout the evening.

Things to Know Before Leaving Home:

- Telescope Operators have *lists of interesting objects* to observe, and groups are welcome to bring their own lists. Groups may also consult beforehand with the Session Director, who can be very helpful with planning.
- **The 1900-era dome is not ADA compliant**, and the telescope is inaccessible to those who cannot climb the thirty stairs to the observing deck. The Observatory is at 5,700 feet elevation, so anyone with serious breathing or heart problems probably should not attempt the trip.
- **Carpooling is strongly encouraged**, since parking space near the dome is limited to ten vehicles. Additional cars must remain in the main Skyline Park lot and visitors shuttled from there to the dome.
- **Late vehicles** may have to wait at the gate to be escorted onto the Observatory grounds.
- Vehicles must be used to return to the main parking lot in the dark (i.e., no walking).

- Mount Wilson Observatory is located within the Angeles National Forest, and ***all visitors are subject to Forest Service regulations***. Each vehicle parked in the Skyline Park parking lot must display a National Forest Adventure Pass. These permits must be secured in advance and are not available from Observatory personnel. Go to www.fs.fed.us/r5/angeles for more information. ***Alcohol is prohibited and smoking is regulated*** according to current fire danger status.
- ***Mountain temperatures*** can be considerably lower than in the LA basin. Summer, nighttime temperatures can be as low as 50°F, and there may still be freezing temperatures in mid-May; in the winter, it is usually much colder. Warm coats, sweaters, footwear, gloves, and hats are strongly recommended, since no part of the dome building is heated. For a current weather forecast, go to www.mtwilson.edu and select Links and Contact Information.
- ***Seating*** is provided in the dome.
- ***Bring a regular flashlight*** to use when leaving the dome to go to your car. The grounds are unlighted and are very uneven and hilly.
- ***Refreshments are not provided*** but a hot water urn and a microwave oven are available. You may bring instant coffee, hot chocolate, cups, spoons, etc., and food and snacks such as cookies, fruit, sandwiches, etc. are welcome. ***Alcohol is prohibited***.
- ***Photography*** is encouraged, except that flashes must be disabled when the dome lights are out for viewing. Photography through the eyepiece is possible with some cameras, but is time-consuming and best tried after all others have seen the object visually or by arrangement within the observing group.
- Information for advanced amateur astronomers is provided on a separate document available from this website.

Your Notes:

Mount Wilson Observatory is operated on behalf of the Carnegie Institution of Washington by the Mount Wilson Institute, a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.