

STARGAZE UNDER A DARK NIGHT SKY

In the middle of the desert in eastern Nevada, a very special place called Great Basin National Park has some of the deepest darkest nights in the whole country. Here, you can still see what the night might have looked like before humans invented electricity. Turn off your flashlight and look up—the inky sky blazes with a gazillion stars. With your naked eye, discover a vast cosmos filled with stars, planets and the satiny ribbon of the Milky Way, our very own galaxy. Satellites sail and meteors hurtle across the sky. It's easy to feel blissfully small looking up at our beautiful universe!

Gnarly, twisted bristlecone pine trees are the oldest single living organisms on earth. They can live for more than 5,000 years.

Rangers sometimes host astronomy programs on Nevada Northern Railway's Star Train. It leaves Ely, Nevada at sunset and chugs into the dark desert west of the park.

Darkness is good for the health of all animals, including human beings. Light pollution can hamper animals' ability to sleep, travel, hunt, hide, and reproduce.

Eastern Nevada has such a dark night sky because it's far from light pollution and has little air pollution. Mostly cloudless nights make for prime stargazing.

Because the air is very dry in the desert, the temperature drops quickly. Even in summer, you'll want to bring some toasty layers for your stargazing adventures.

Nevada

Whooshi! There goes one of Great Basin's flying friends. Bats live in caves and come out in the evening to gobble up insects, including mosquitoes.

Want to help get rid of light pollution? Make sure your home has dim outdoor lights that point downward, not up into space. Close blinds in the evening. You could even ask your school if they have dark-sky-friendly lighting.

Don't forget your red flashlight! White lights can mess up your night vision, but the low-light receptors in human eyes are less sensitive to red light.

On a night hike, shine your flashlight on the ground to see tiny glittering eyes like dewdrops. It's a furry little jumping spider, which leaps to catch its prey.

In the evening, the park's "dark" rangers reveal the mysteries of outer space through telescopes. See Saturn's rings, star clusters and even a nebula, a huge cloud of dust and gas.