The world's top 10 star parties

Want to go away in the company of other astronomy enthusiasts? Anton Vamplew rounds up the world's top events.

Whether you're a complete astro-novice or a seasoned amateur, star parties are a great choice of holiday. After all, how often do you get the chance to tell tales, swap equipment and socialise with other astronomy enthusiasts – possibly even in the most far-off places, if you're really adventurous? If that's not enough of an enticement in itself, star parties are also good for cloud-free views of the world with clear skies, where light pollution isn’t a problem. Most people are keen to share their knowledge, skills and equipment, so you can get the chance to use your variety of telescopes to see some amazing sights.

Grand Canyon Star Party USA
- **DATE**: June 2007, September 2007 and April 2008
- **LOCATION**: North and South Rim, Grand Canyon, Arizona
- **COST**: Camping from £10 per night; rates from around £30 (US$60) per night
- **GETTING THERE**: Car from Flagstaff, Las Vegas or Phoenix

Want to escape the busy city and get up close to the stars? The Grand Canyon星 Party is one of the best opportunities to do just that. The river winds its way through the park, creating beautiful sights and sounds that can be heard as you look up at the sky to see countless stars and galaxies. The park is even better at night, with the dark skies providing the perfect setting for viewing the sky. With the range of activities available, there is something for everyone.

Texas Star Party USA
- **DATE**: May 2007
- **LOCATION**: Baldy Ranch, off highway 118, six miles north of Fort Davis, Texas
- **COST**: Registration is £20 (US$40) per adult; camping from £10 (US$20) per night; rates from £50 (US$100) per night
- **GETTING THERE**: Car from Fort Davis

This annual event is popular with amateur astronomers and is held in the spring. The location offers excellent views of the night sky, with the park's dark skies providing a great setting for stargazing. The park is also home to a number of species of wildlife, including various bird species and mammals. With access to the park's facilities and equipment, you can enjoy the beauty of the night sky with others.

Queensland Astrofest Australia
- **DATE**: September 2007 and April 2008
- **LOCATION**: Queensland Star Party
- **COST**: Camping from £14 per night
- **GETTING THERE**: Car from Brisbane airport

Queensland Astrofest is one of the largest annual star parties in Australia, with a range of activities available for all ages. The event is held on a private country property, offering excellent views of the night sky. The location offers a range of facilities and equipment, including telescopes and binoculars, and is surrounded by a variety of wildlife, including various bird species and mammals. With access to the park's facilities and equipment, you can enjoy the beauty of the night sky with others.

South Pacific Star Party Australia
- **DATE**: August 2007
- **LOCATION**: South Pacific Star Party
- **COST**: Camping from £14 per night
- **GETTING THERE**: Car from Sydney airport

The South Pacific Star Party is the largest annual star party in Australia, attracting almost 1,000 amateur astronomers from around the world. The event is held on a private country property, offering excellent views of the night sky. The location offers a range of facilities and equipment, including telescopes and binoculars, and is surrounded by a variety of wildlife, including various bird species and mammals. With access to the park's facilities and equipment, you can enjoy the beauty of the night sky with others.

British Astronomical Association
- **DATE**: May 2007
- **LOCATION**: British Astronomical Association
- **COST**: Camping from £10 per night
- **GETTING THERE**: Car from London

The British Astronomical Association is one of the oldest and most respected astronomical societies in the world. The event is held in the spring, offering excellent views of the night sky. The location offers a range of facilities and equipment, including telescopes and binoculars, and is surrounded by a variety of wildlife, including various bird species and mammals. With access to the park's facilities and equipment, you can enjoy the beauty of the night sky with others.

Southwest Scientific Trust
- **DATE**: March 2007
- **LOCATION**: Southwest Scientific Trust
- **COST**: Camping from £10 per night
- **GETTING THERE**: Car from Las Vegas

The Southwest Scientific Trust is an annual star party held in the spring, offering excellent views of the night sky. The location offers a range of facilities and equipment, including telescopes and binoculars, and is surrounded by a variety of wildlife, including various bird species and mammals. With access to the park's facilities and equipment, you can enjoy the beauty of the night sky with others.

Southern Cross Star Party Australia
- **DATE**: April 2007
- **LOCATION**: Southern Cross Star Party
- **COST**: Camping from £10 per night
- **GETTING THERE**: Car from Melbourne

The Southern Cross Star Party is an annual star party held in the spring, offering excellent views of the night sky. The location offers a range of facilities and equipment, including telescopes and binoculars, and is surrounded by a variety of wildlife, including various bird species and mammals. With access to the park's facilities and equipment, you can enjoy the beauty of the night sky with others.

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Astro events