

Access Statement for Kielder Observatory

Introduction

Kielder Observatory is a centre for outreach in astronomy located in Kielder Forest, Northumberland nestled in under the largest expanse of protected skies in Europe. The observatory aims to encourage interest and understanding in the sciences of astronomy and cosmology with the intention of bringing the wonders of the universe to our guests, enabling people from all walks of life and levels of interest to access the visual splendour of our dark skies.

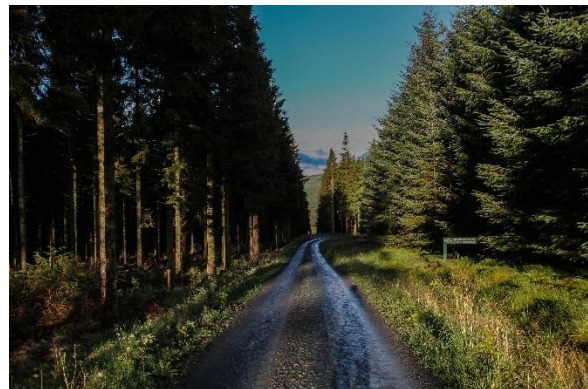
Our visitors have the opportunity to use a superb array of telescopes and receive expert tuition in astronomy, see and touch meteorites, or simply sit in comfort on our deck and marvel at the vista overhead from the Milky Way to starfield clusters and shooting stars.

Pre-Arrival

Kielder Observatory is situated in the magnificent county of Northumberland close to the Scottish border within the Kielder Water and Forest Park. It is situated 2 miles from Kielder Village and Reservoir and 55 miles North West of Newcastle upon Tyne, our nearest city. Hadrian's Wall and Alnwick Castle & Gardens are also close by, as well as our glorious coastline with the Farne Islands, Holy Island and Bamburgh Castle all within easy reach.

For full details and map of how to reach us please see the directions section of our website <http://www.kielderobservatory.org/visit/>

Access to the observatory is via a 1.75 mile forest track through part of the Kielder Forest which is unlit, the only lights around the observatory are low level night vision friendly red lights and is the reason why we encourage our visitors to bring red torches with them. Visitors should also bring with them warm clothing including hats and gloves as temperatures can be very low when outside observing the dark skies, however the observatory does have a wood burning stove for warmth and comfort in our warm classroom area.

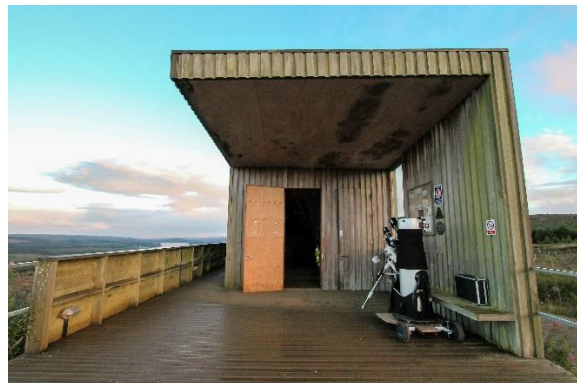


We encourage the use of red light torches as these are ideal for preserving night vision, however if you do not have one then a white light torch is fine. We just ask you to bear the other guests in mind and keep torches pointed to the ground.

The observatory is open seven days a week providing a wide range of events catering for all ages and experience. Our website provides a calendar of events and advance booking is essential via the website www.kielderobservatory.org

Accessibility

The free accessible car park and access track surface is compacted stone. The car park is approx. 100m from the observatory however there is a drop off space directly outside the entrance, please just let us know if you need any assistance when you book.



Trained assistance dogs are welcome, however we do ask that you let us know prior to the event.

The composting unisex toilet is fully wheelchair accessible with horizontal & vertical handrails.



All rooms and areas of the observatory are fully wheelchair accessible with the exception of one of the two telescope turrets which has 6 steps leading to it.

If you have any specific questions about our accessibility please feel free to give us a call so that we can help you plan your visit. Our friendly team of staff and volunteers are always happy to help, please just ask!

Car Parking and Arrival

There is free parking for cars approx. 100m from the observatory, cars are also allowed to drop visitors next to the entrance of the observatory. It is also possible to walk to the observatory through the forest from the car park at the bottom of the track, 1.75 miles from the observatory.

The car parks and access track surface is compacted stone. The maximum speed on the track is 15mph. In the event of snow or ice visitors are asked to leave their cars in the lower car park (unless they have 4 wheel drive) and they will be transported to the observatory in our Land Rovers.

Main Entrance & Pre-Event

The observatory is accessed from the upper car park via a stone track which is lit with low level red lights. When dark, visitors can also use their torches to illuminate their path to the observatory. Visitors are allowed to drive on this access track to drop visitors close to the observatory before returning their car to the car park.

The observatory is not opened until 10mins before an event. Visitors should stay in their cars or they are welcome to assemble in the front porch or on viewing deck of the observatory. If it is not raining moon chairs are available on the deck for visitors.

On opening, visitors are checked into the observatory seating area using our electronic management system, please bring your tickets either printed off at home or downloaded on your phone.



During the Event

The observatory consists of three interior rooms - a warm room with seating where presentations are given and where drinks are served and 2 turrets which house large telescopes. All the rooms are easily accessible with the exception of one of the turrets which has 6 steps leading into it.

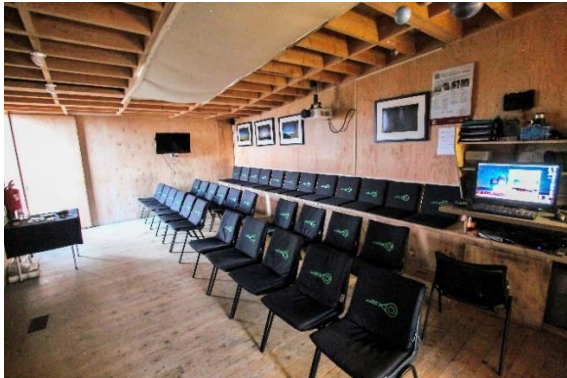
Externally the observatory has a deck where visitors can "chill out" and look at the dark skies sitting on comfortable moon chairs - blankets are also provided for warmth. In addition,

mobile telescopes are positioned on our custom made observing platform to allow visitors increased observing opportunities.

The observatory also has a range of meteorite and moon samples which visitors can see and touch.

The observatory has a range of impressive telescopes including some that can image the sun safely - not to be missed.

In the summer months and school holidays, rocket building and launching events are great fun for all the family



Public Toilets

The observatory has an integral unisex accessible toilet which is only open during events.

There is a horizontal and vertical handrail on one side of the toilet.

The observatory does not have any running water - antibacterial hand wash is provided.

Catering

The observatory does not have a restaurant or cafe but does serve a hot drink (tea, coffee, hot chocolate) in the warm room during our main evening event which is included in the ticket price. We have a small shop that sells astronomically themed confectionary (mars bars, milky ways, galaxy bars, star bursts etc.), juice drinks and bottled water.

Visitors are free to consume their drinks anywhere in the observatory.

Future Plans

We have plans to build a planetarium and staff accommodation on-site. Long term plans are to build an “astronomy village” which will further contribute to the local economy and infrastructure.

Contact Information

We look forward to welcoming you. If you have any queries or require any assistance please phone 0191 2655510 or email admin@kielderobservatory.org

Observatory address: Kielder Observatory, Black Fell, Near Kielder Village, Northumberland.
The Observatory does not have a post code. However the nearest post code is NE48 1ER which will take you to Kielder Village.

Telephone: 0191 2655510

Head office: Unit C Bewick, Prestwick Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE20 9SJ

Email: admin@kielderobservatory.org

Website: www.kielderobservatory.org

Office Opening Hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm excluding Bank Holidays