

# AURA/NOIRLab Visits Summit Safety Form

In traveling to one of our summit facilities, you will be visiting a working AURA/NOIRLab research observatory; an important national scientific facility, located in a high and remote location. We ask that you follow these rules so that you are able to visit without disrupting research activities, while keeping you and your group safe. Being prepared and informed is crucial to a safe and enjoyable visit.

The safety of NOIRLab staff, visitors and equipment is a top priority. Please take a moment to thoroughly read and understand the potentially hazardous conditions you may encounter. These possibly dangerous situations may arise from regular operations of the observatories, construction activities, and/or environmental factors. NOIRLab's observatories are in use 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.

While at any of the NOIRLab sites, all visitors will be under the authority of the NOIRLab Director. They must comply with all rules applicable to the site, in particular regarding Safety and the use of NOIRLab Information Technologies, facilities, and/or services, and follow the instructions of the Director or his/her delegate (i.e. your AURA/NOIRLab host).

## Recommendations

Please note:

1. Ascent to the altitude of AURA's Sites may expose visitors to a reduction in atmospheric pressure, which can result in a variety of medical conditions, and in certain cases, severe illness or even death can result. Symptoms you may experience include:
  - a. headaches,
  - b. dizziness or lightheadedness,
  - c. tiredness,
  - d. irritability,
  - e. insomnia,
  - f. reduced intellectual capacity,
  - g. impaired exercise/exertion tolerance,
  - h. nausea or vomiting.

Mild symptoms are to be expected, but if they go from being an annoyance to incapacitating (ie from slight nausea to feeling like you are about to throw up) inform your tour guide immediately.

2. It is also possible, although rare below 3000 meters (9,840 feet), to develop one or more of the more severe mountain sicknesses: pulmonary or cerebral edema, both of which can be fatal (usually in conjunction with a pre-existing condition).
3. Please consider personal health issues that could arise from being at altitude or walking at this elevation, such as: decreased lung capacity, cardiac issues, or other altitude related issues. Time spent at altitude may also aggravate pre-existing illness, particularly cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. If you have health concerns, please consult your doctor before visiting us.

If you have a pre-existing condition which could be affected by altitude (and your doctor has given you clearance to be at altitude), please bring this to the attention of your

AURA/NOIRLab host so that s/he is better able to assist you in case you experience a medical emergency.

4. Be sure to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water or juice. Bring enough to supply your group for the duration of your travels. This will help compensate for the low humidity and avoid dehydration at the summit (which can mimic high altitude symptoms).
5. Eat a bit of food or snacks to help avoid the effects of the altitude, there aren't opportunities to make purchases at the summit facilities, and you will process calories more quickly while in the summit area.
6. Take your time, walk slowly, and be cautious when getting up from sitting while you are at the summit.
7. The sunlight can be very intense, especially in the summer. Avoid unprotected eye exposure to glare and bright sunlight at the summit and on the drive up by wearing sunglasses, preferably with UV-coated lenses.
8. Use sunblock and lip balm. We recommend the use of sunscreen with a factor over 30. In addition, we suggest the use of long-sleeved shirts, long pants, hats and covered shoes (required inside summit facilities), to avoid exposure to UV radiation.
9. Temperatures will be much cooler at the summit, especially in the winter months. Please bring winter clothes (layers recommended).
10. You should stay rested and ideally avoid heavy meals, excess caffeine, and alcohol or other drugs (excluding medically necessary medications) within 24 hours of your trip to the mountain.
11. The observatory reserves the right to deny future access to the sites to people with bad behavior during visits.

## Rules

1. Close toed shoes are required inside of summit facilities.
2. Before the tour, please inform your tour Guide if you have any concerns or questions about the tour, or if someone needs assistance during the visit.
3. NOIRLab does not offer transportation to the observatories. Visitors are required to have their own transportation.
4. There are no gas stations, restaurants, or hotels at the observatories. Be sure to have a full tank of gas before starting your trip.
5. Ensure that the transportation vehicle is adequate for such a journey. Check tires and air pressure, including a spare, and ensure the vehicle is in good mechanical condition (brakes, clutch, gearbox, water level and cooling system, as well as tools).
6. If you are driving a 4 Wheel Drive (4WD - required at some locations) vehicle, be sure you understand how to operate your vehicle's 4WD function before departing for your trip.
7. Please follow posted speed limits
8. While traveling to and from the summit, only stop in clearly marked areas (some roads do not allow for picture taking); it is dangerous to stop on the road where other vehicles may not see you.
9. All occupied seats must have a seat belt. Seatbelts must be worn at all times while traveling to and from summit locations.
10. Do not enter areas that are not clearly marked as a trail as these are highly sensitive environmental areas.
11. Avoid rolling car windows down, especially on dirt roads.
12. While at the summit facility, stay with your tour Guide, there are areas of restricted access. This is for your safety as well as the safety of our staff and equipment..
13. You must not depart the facility without informing your tour guide.

14. In case of an emergency such as earthquakes or fire, follow your guide's instructions.
15. At the observatory sites you can find native flora and fauna. Wildlife and natural landscape are protected. Do not disturb or feed animals, and take care not to run them over.
16. Please do not litter. Take out what you bring in. This includes vegetation.
17. The locations of the observatories depend on dark skies. Any light will spoil the quality of observations. Unless specifically authorized you must leave the summit no later than directly after sunset as there are no lights on the road, and headlights are harmful to optical astronomy. If you must travel after twilight is complete, use your low beams or parking lights until at a distance from the summit.
18. Drones are not allowed.
19. The use of wireless communications such as cellular telephones and other electronic devices which transmit a radio signal are prohibited on the summits including radio remote controlled devices (put cell phones in airplane mode)
20. Camping or overnight stays are not allowed
21. Do not drive if you are exhausted, drowsy or under the influence of a medication that prevents it, or under the influence of alcohol.
22. For media visits there is a 14-hour rule for work at the summit. No one may be at the summit for longer than 14 hours at a stretch.
23. Each site has specific rules and recommendations which must be read, acknowledged and followed (see below)
24. Smoking for visitors is prohibited while visiting our observatories, both indoors and outdoors. Please report any indications of smoke or fire to any personnel you see so they can take appropriate action.
25. Pets are not allowed.

**“Leave only footprints, take only photographs”**

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Date

Name

Signature

# Kitt Peak National Observatory Visitor Safety

The safety of Observatory staff, visitors, and equipment is our top priority. Kitt Peak National Observatory is a working research observatory in a remote location; we ask that you review these safety considerations prior to your visit, and observe all rules and recommendations. If you have special physical challenges or limitations, please contact us as far in advance of your visit as possible. A little preparation will help ensure that you have a great visit!

## Mountain Rules

Please observe the following rules, designed to keep our visitors and staff safe!

- There are no amenities, including gas stations, restaurants, or hotels at the observatory. Be sure to have a full tank of gas before starting your trip.
- Upon arrival, park in the Visitor Center parking lot. Bathroom facilities are located adjacent to the parking lot, opposite the Visitor Center.
- In case of an emergency, follow the instructions of Visitor Center staff and Kitt Peak safety personnel.
- Daytime visitors must leave the summit before dark. Only ticket holders of night-time programs may remain after 4 pm local time.
- Close toed shoes are required inside of summit facilities.
- Do not enter areas that are not clearly marked as a trail as these are environmentally sensitive areas.
- Wildlife and native flora and fauna are protected. Do not disturb or feed animals, and do not damage or remove plants. Please report wildlife sightings to Visitor Center staff.
- Please do not litter. Take out what you bring in. This includes vegetation.
- Drones are not allowed.
- The use of wireless communications such as cellular telephones and other electronic devices which transmit a radio signal are prohibited (put cell phones in airplane mode). No wi-fi is available.
- The research at the observatory requires a dark-sky environment. All lighting restrictions must be observed after dark.

## Health Considerations

Visitors will be required to follow any and all safety protocols in place to mitigate the spread of infectious diseases including COVID-19.

If you have health concerns, please consult your doctor before visiting us. If you have a pre-existing condition which could be affected by altitude (and your doctor has given you clearance to be at altitude), please bring this to the attention of a guide or docent so that s/he is better able to assist you in case you experience a medical emergency. Before visiting, please consider the following:

## Elevation

- Kitt Peak is 2,133 meters (around 7,000 feet) above sea level at the summit. Ascent to this elevation can result in altitude sickness, and in certain cases, severe illness or even death. Symptoms you may experience include: headaches, dizziness or lightheadedness, fatigue, irritability, insomnia, reduced intellectual capacity, impaired exercise/exertion tolerance, nausea or vomiting. Mild symptoms are to be expected, but if they go from being an annoyance to incapacitating (e.g. from slight nausea to feeling like you are about to throw up) inform a staff member immediately.
- Stay hydrated. Bring sufficient water and snacks for your party.
- The sunlight can be very intense, so don't forget sunglasses, sunblock, and lip balm. Long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats are recommended.
- Temperatures will be much cooler at the summit, especially in the winter months. Please bring winter clothes (layers recommended).

## Fire

- Fire is an enormous danger to life and property on this mountain. Follow all directions issued to you by Kitt Peak Staff in the event of a fire. Please report any indications of smoke or fire to any personnel you see so they can take appropriate action.
- All smoking is prohibited while on Kitt Peak, both indoors and outdoors.

### **Road Hazards**

- Please be on the alert for roaming wildlife and livestock while driving and during your visit.
- Cattle and horses range freely around the lower portions of Route 386 and Route 86 and may cross the road in front of you.
- Rocks sometimes fall from cliff faces and can be big enough to damage your car. Please be alert at all times.
- The road up Kitt Peak is paved to the top with occasional pull offs and does not require any 4WD vehicles. However, drivers should exercise caution, as there are steep slopes and often cyclists sharing the road.
- While traveling to and from the summit, only stop in clearly marked areas; it is dangerous to stop on the road where other vehicles may not see you.
- Be aware that high winds can make opening car doors dangerous

### **Photography**

- Visitors are welcome to photograph objects of interest while on the mountain. Out of respect to the local Tohono O'odham people, who regard the surrounding terrains to be of significant cultural importance, we request that visitors refrain from photographing those areas without Observatory facilities in the frame. When in doubt, please ask for assistance.
- Professional photographers must first secure permission from the NOIRLab Visits Coordinator before photographing on Kitt Peak.

### **If you are not a US Citizen**

Although the Visitor Center is open to all, the US Government requires passports or green cards for visitors from other countries when driving eastbound through the Border Control checkpoint on Arizona State Route 86. Please be sure you bring your passport with you in order to avoid difficulties.

*We regret that the Visitor Center's ability to provide special accommodations is severely limited.*

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Date

Name

Signature