

# Economics of Dark Skies, Colorado Plateau Dark Sky Cooperative

## WHAT IS DARK SKY DEVELOPMENT?

Dark Sky Development is the enrichment and optimization of natural night skies.

Key components include:

1. Responsible use of outdoor lighting.
2. Implementation of effective lighting policy and management plans.
3. Proactive and holistic planning.
4. Outreach, education and inclusion.
5. Acknowledgment of necessary trade-offs.

From an economic standpoint, Dark Sky Development is a strategy for restoring nocturnal environments and decreasing wasted light resulting in economic and environmental benefits. The use of responsible outdoor lighting can create opportunities for enhanced **property values**, economic growth and diversification through **astronomy-based recreation and tourism**, and benefit a municipality's bottom line by **reducing energy waste**.

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Enhanced  
property  
values

2

Economic growth and  
diversification through  
astrotourism

3

Reduced  
energy  
waste

- Overnight stays to see the stars
- Visits spread to non-peak tourist seasons
- Astrotourism is increasingly common
- Certified Dark Sky Places are particularly searched out
- 99% of US residents can't see the Milky Way at home

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[https://cpdarkskies.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/economicsofdarkskiesbrief\\_9-23-21.pdf](https://cpdarkskies.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/economicsofdarkskiesbrief_9-23-21.pdf)

Mitchell, D. and Gallaway, T. (2019), "Dark sky tourism: economic impacts on the Colorado Plateau Economy, USA", *Tourism Review*, Vol. 74 No. 4, pp. 930-942. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-10-2018-0146>

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## ASTRONOMY-BASED RECREATION & TOURISM

Visitation of areas for the observation of night skies, or astrotourism, is a trend increasing in popularity. Astrotourism is a low-impact, sustainable form of tourism, which can be a great value-added product to any typical service that a tourism, leisure, or hospitality business can offer.

- A 2019 Missouri State University study examined the economic impact of dark sky tourism on the Colorado Plateau economy. According to the study, over the next decade astrotourism could lead to **\$5.8 billion in visitor spending** and support the creation of over **11,000 new jobs annually**.<sup>6</sup>
- Dark sky destinations have a demonstrated tourism draw. In 2016, over **5.5 million people** visited an International Dark Sky National Park just in the state of Utah.<sup>7</sup>
- Since dark sky observation mostly occurs at night, astrotourists are far more likely to make overnight stays. On average, **overnight visitors spend 3x more than day-only visitors**. This translates to a \$90 day trip becoming a **\$270 overnight stay** (for NPS lodging) up to a **\$380 overnight stay** (for non-NPS lodging).<sup>7</sup>



Dollars spent by  
day-only visitors



Dollars spent by  
overnight visitors