

Destination positioning report of USA

1.- Analysis of the destination and visitor profile

The connectivity in the USA is so easy. There are planes, trains and freeways. There are mainly Parks, Natural Parks and Natural Protected Areas.

2.- Analysis of the tourism supply

Four major activities and initiatives mostly supplied in USA about Astro Tourism phenomenon.

To the naked eye ("stargazing"). Some national parks, especially those in the deserts of the southwest (California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico) are excellent to see the Milky Way with the naked eye. Of course, it is important to have a dark sky, a sky that is untouched by light pollution.

A concrete example, a sort of "good practice" is provided by Utah. Here some information.

Utah's Dark Skies Are Ideal For Astro-Tourism.

An unintended consequence of America's prosperity is a phenomenon now called "light pollution." City lights, and even lights in small towns, keep the night sky from being truly dark in most areas around the country. As a result, astronomers say fewer than 500 stars are visible in many urban areas. Some people have never seen the "milky" part of the our Milky Way Galaxy.

Happily, lights are few and far between in remote areas in southern Utah, where you will find hundreds of square miles with no towns and few to no light bulbs. On a moonless night it is possible to see 7,500 or more stars from many remote viewpoints.

In recent years the International Dark-Sky Association has been working to identify and protect areas with little light pollution. In 2007, the association named **Natural Bridges National Monument** as the first certified "International Dark Sky Park." - <http://utah.com/natural-bridges-national-monument>

Much of the area across southern Utah offers similar conditions. Southern Utah is also a great spot for solar observations and other studies in astronomy. Now Utah is becoming a popular destination for astro-tourism.

The U.S. National Park Service values dark skies and is working to protect parks from light pollution. In particular, **Bryce Canyon** (<http://utah.com/bryce-canyon-national-park>), **Capitol Reef** (<http://utah.com/capitol-reef-national-park>), **Canyonlands** (<http://utah.com/canyonlands-national-park>) and **Cedar Breaks** (<http://utah.com/cedar-breaks-national-monument>) join Natural Bridges as important dark sky areas managed by the National Park Service. **Monument Valley Navajo** (<http://utah.com/monument-valley>) Tribal Park also has extremely dark skies and is working to preserve that heritage.

"Star parties" and other astronomical activities have become popular at many of our parks. Some parks provide telescopes and other equipment to help people view the night sky. Rangers provide information and lead many activities. Major events are often scheduled for nights when the moon is not visible and the sky is clear. People are also encouraged to bring their own telescopes or binoculars and explore the sky on their own.

Cedar Breaks National Monument provided this description of its star parties. Other parks provide similar activities. "Each star party is conducted by park staff and astronomy volunteers at Point Supreme. As the evening light fades, the party kicks off with a laser light tour of star constellations, followed by star viewing through several telescopes. Observe swirling nebulae, twinkling star clusters, neighborly planets, and distant galaxies. Learn about everything from constellation mythology to the structure of the universe, all in one night!

Star parties are free of charge and are two hours in duration. Telescopes will be provided for viewing, although visitors who own their own telescopes are invited to bring them along. Please dress warmly for the cool night air at this high elevation!"

Below we outline some dark sky activities at Utah Parks.

Natural Bridges

Ranges present astronomy programs in the area in front of the park visitor center. Programs begin in early May and run through September on Wednesday and Thursday evenings starting at dusk. Other special events may be scheduled as conditions permit. Contact the park for more information.

Bryce Canyon

Bryce Canyon hosts an annual Astronomy Festival in mid-May. With help from the Salt Lake Astronomical Society and the University of Utah, the festival offers some 50 powerful telescopes available for use by the general public. Bryce Canyon has a special force of "Dark Rangers" that host star parties and participate in other activities to educate visitors about the night sky. Star parties are offered year-round. Some of the best star gazing takes place during winter, when the air is crisp and clear. The park also offers ranger-guided full moon hikes. See the park website for dates and times.

Capitol Reef

Capitol Reef offers occasional ranger-led astronomy programs. Check at the visitor center to see if anything is scheduled during your visit.

The park's backcountry offers extensive areas where the night sky is dark and the stars are radiant. It is a great destination for people who want to star gaze on their own.

Canyonlands

Canyonlands does not offer scheduled astronomical activities at this time, but it is a major area for people who want to experience a dark sky on their own. The park includes some of the most remote areas in the continental United States. Many spots in the park are far from towns and highways, and no human-produced lights are visible.

Cedar Breaks

At Cedar Breaks, star parties are held every Saturday evening beginning in July and extending through Labor Day weekend. Additional special activities may be scheduled for full moons, no moons and known meteor showers. See the park website for dates and times.

All the information about astrotourism is available on internet, mainly web sites, travel agencies and specialized tour operators. The communication channel for the offered services are web sites and tickets booking on line.

The main tourism resources of special interest for astrotourism are the observatory, the planetarium in New York City and Los Angeles. They are mainly devoted to Education activities for students and teachers.

The events are related to the main Astrophysical events. The travel agencies and tour operators organize events according to the events in the sky usually many months before the foreseen event.

There is no starlight certification or similar ones available in the region.

3.- ANALYSIS OF THE TOURIST DEMAND

There are no statistics available of average visitors per year, profile of the tourist or evolution of visits to astrotourism – related activities.