



Starlight Certification Rural Hotels and Houses™

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1. Introduction

One of the objectives of the Starlight Foundation is to spread the initiative to protect the night sky, which we consider to be part of a valuable universal heritage. In this way, we seek to develop and promote local, national and international mechanisms and actions to guarantee enjoyment of the night sky and to ensure that it is valued as an important scientific, cultural, environmental and tourist resource.

In this regard, the Foundation promotes, among other actions, “Star Tourism” as an essential instrument to support scientific tourism, encourage interest in astronomy and, at the same time, improve the protection of clear skies, free of all pollution. This latter aim is fundamental not only for the landscape and for leisure, but also as a means of protection for species which need dark night skies for their survival.

For these reasons, the Foundation wishes to include Rural Hotels and Houses in this movement for astronomic tourism as an efficient way of encouraging their customers to engage in stargazing and learn more about the marvels and the mysteries of the Universe.

The Foundation also sees the network of Starlight Rural Hotels and Houses as an ideal ally to help guard against the appearance of new focuses of light pollution which, often as a result of ignorance regarding intelligent illumination, can arise as a consequence of new infrastructure or nearby towns.



2. What is Certification?

Starlight Certification for Rural Hotels and Houses is a qualification awarded by the Starlight Foundation to those establishments which, as well as offering accredited, quality accommodation, also become involved as active agents in the promotion of the values contained in the “Declaration in Defence of the Night Sky and the Right to Starlight” (“La Palma Declaration”) and which provide their customers with information about Starlight as well as means and instruments for astronomic observation.

3. Requirements for Certification

To be certified as a Starlight Rural Hotel or House, the establishment must complete the specific Application Pack (available on request to those wishing to apply for Certification) and send it to the Starlight Foundation in order to evaluate the following aspects:

- **Accommodation quality**

A Starlight Rural Hotel or House must have a minimum quality as a tourist establishment. The Foundation will take into account the official classification held.

- **Formal adhesion to the La Palma Starlight Declaration**

The Application Pack includes a formal adhesion to the values laid down in the La Palma Declaration of 2007¹, which is a prerequisite.

- **Other requirements**

- To ensure that the quality of the sky in the immediate surroundings is maintained and to report any harm caused by irresponsible lighting.
- To have at least one night telescope available for use by customers and thereby facilitate observation on clear nights.

¹ <http://propuesta100513.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/declaracion3b3n-lp-espac3b1ol.pdf>.



This service may be free or may be charged for, as the establishment wishes.

- To have sufficient binoculars available, in proportion to the number of beds.
- To provide informative material about the night sky (planispheres, sky maps...) to facilitate observation and the identification of objects.
- To provide useful information about local astronomic activities, such as star routes and programmed excursions to any nearby observatories.
- To provide an ongoing supply of information received from the Starlight Foundation or other institutions regarding observable astronomic events (eclipses, alignments, passage of comets...).
- To take the initiative in organising activities (astrophotography workshops, star nights, specific weekend activities...).
- To have in-house or external personnel who are trained as guides or who have sufficient knowledge to help customers in the interpretation of the sky and the use of the instruments available.



4. What is offered?

Certified Rural Hotels and Houses receive the following from the Starlight Foundation:

- Advice in the acquisition of basic astronomic observation equipment: small telescopes, binoculars, sky charts and other equipment and facilities.
- Aid in measuring the quality of the night sky and advice on where to place the observation instruments.
- Basic training for personnel related to the Rural Hotel or House, if required², in order to work as astronomic monitors.
- Inclusion on the Foundation website, in the section devoted to express publicity of these establishments and their activities.
- The possibility of promotion by other means at the instigation of the Foundation.
- Participation in programmes which involve special astronomic tourism offers.
- Advice on how to improve the external lighting of the establishment in order to facilitate night-time observation.

As well as the above, the Starlight Rural Hotel or House may use the logo to be sent by the Foundation in the format it wishes (plaques, flags, advertising, etc).

² This training may incur a cost.



5. Procedure and cost

The first step to begin the procedure is to read this document and send a written application to the Starlight Foundation at: fundacionstarlight@fundacionstarlight.org

On receiving the application, the Foundation will send specific information about the certification process and the pre-registration form (Application Pack).

When the Application Pack has been completed, it is sent to the Foundation, together with all of the information required about the establishment to be certified (facilities, characteristics, classification and services), as well as any data available at that time regarding the quality of the sky in the area and whether there are already any tourism activities in general or astronomic tourism activities in particular³. A signed document confirming adhesion to the “Declaration in Defence of the Night Sky and the Right to Starlight”⁴ must be included.

The applicant must also pay the pre-registration fee at this time⁵.

The Starlight Foundation will then examine the application to ensure that it meets the objective conditions in order to proceed with the certification.

In the evaluation stage, if deemed necessary, further information may be requested in order to complete the certification. In certain cases, the Foundation may arrange the visit of an expert to the establishment in order to check the data given and to make a final evaluation.

In the case of successful applications, the applicant must agree to pay an annual fee to the Starlight Foundation equivalent to the price of a three-night stay in a double room in the high season.

³ For example, the activities of amateur astronomers in the area, etc.

⁴ The Declaration may be downloaded from: <http://propuesta100513.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/declaracion3b3n-lp-espac3b1ol.pdf>

⁵ Consulting prices with Foundation.



The annual fee must be paid in advance in January each year.

In the case of unsuccessful applications, the candidate will be sent a report giving the reasons for the decision.

Under certain circumstances, the certification may be conditional upon the remedy by the applicant of any defects detected.

The duration of certification as a Starlight Rural Hotel or House is indefinite, unless the circumstances of the establishment change.

6. How to obtain astronomical data

The essential astronomical parameter required for certification as a Starlight Rural Hotel or House is the darkness of the sky.

If the Rural Hotel or House is located in an area which is already certified, it will not be necessary to provide any measurements other than the coordinates. Otherwise, there are several ways of obtaining the required data. (All of these parameters should be sent to the Foundation in the completed Application Pack).

- **DARKNESS:**

The darkness of the sky can be measured in 3 ways:

- Using equipment known as SQM or SQM-L. Further information about these is available at:

<http://www.unihedron.com/projects/darksky/>.

This equipment has a price between €100 and €150.

- With an iPhone or iPad application called *Dark Sky Meter* (<http://www.darkskymeter.com/>). This application costs €4.49 and uses the camera of the device to measure the brightness of the night sky accurately. It is very simple to use, following the instructions given in the application.

As well as the DSM, Apple also has other applications to measure this parameter (*Stars Guide*, *Sky Map*, *Sky Guide*, *View Stars Night or Day...*).

- With an Android application called *Loss of the Night*. More



information is available at:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cosalux.welovestars>

- Through the web <http://www.globeatnight.org/es/webapp/>. In this case, you should give us the value of the selected image (MAG1, MAG2...).

- **OTHER DATA:**

It is not necessary to provide any further data about the quality of the sky for the certification. However, if the applicant wishes, values may be provided for all of the other parameters of sky quality (cloudiness, transparency, seeing, etc.) to complete the information on the surrounding area and to support the candidature.

7. Minimum recommended instrumentation

The Starlight Foundation recommends that the following instruments be made available to customers:

- **Night telescope**: A 150 mm reflecting telescope or a 100 mm refracting telescope, with at least simple motorisation. If you don't have the required equipment, you can hire the services from a professional company.
- **Low-magnification Binoculars**: 10x50 is sufficient. One pair of binoculars is recommended for every four rooms.

To clarify any doubts or for more detailed information about makes, etc., contact the Foundation at:

fundacionstarlight@fundacionstarlight.org

FINAL NOTE: The Foundation reserves the right to visit the establishment, if it considers it necessary, in order to verify the circumstances on which certification is based. If the circumstances are not found to be accurate, the certification may be lost.



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