



Reach for the Stars

You no longer need to worry about finding a suitable spot for stargazing in Hong Kong's concrete jungle. The new Astropark is just a one-minute walk from the entrance of Chong Hing Water Sports Centre in Sai Kung and here there is not a high-rise building in sight to obstruct your view of the night sky.

The 1,200 square metre theme park, which opened in January this year, is divided into three zones - Telescopic Observation Area, Naked-eye Observation Area and

Educational Zone. The Telescopic Observation Area is next to the entrance. Your attention will be drawn by four pairs of binoculars available for stargazing.

Apart from the binoculars, there are also telescopic piers and star trackers for amateur astronomers. The telescopic piers act as a tripod for those who bring their own telescopes for stargazing whilst the star trackers allow users to attach their cameras to photograph the stars.

Walking further down the park, you will see three circular wooden

benches. This is the Naked-eye Observation Area, where you can lay down on the benches to look at the sky. Susie Law Wai-shan, a first-time visitor to Astropark, loves the design of the benches the most. She adds that they are comfortable too.

At the end of the park, you will come to the Educational Zone. It is filled with Chinese and Western astronomical instruments from different time periods. One interesting instrument is the Human Sundial. It allows visitors to tell the time by looking at their shadows projected on the ground.



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Visitors are free to use the binoculars and telescopic piers aligned along the Telescopic Observation Area.



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Visitors can tell the time by standing on the Human Sundial and looking at their shadows projected on the ground.

A member of Sky Observers' Association (Hong Kong), Chan Wai-tung, believes this zone offers a good chance for the public to better understand the development of astronomy in China.

"Even though the light pollution in the west hides the dim stars and other astronomical objects, on a clear night, we (members of the association) can still observe astronomical objects with a visual magnitude of three," he says. "Still it is a good place for stargazing."

Visual magnitude is a measurement of the brightness of stars. There are six magnitudes, with a magnitude of one being the brightest; stars with a magnitude of six can still be seen with the naked eyes.

But, the other visitor Law feels a little bit disappointed in the park. "It is smaller than I expected. It would be better if there were more hands-on instruments that visitors could try using," she says.

Most of the astronomical instruments are only for display purposes and include a brief description of how it is used.

Astropark is open 24 hours daily and admission is free. Visitors can take buses KMB94, 96R or Citybus 698R to Pak Tam Chung, Sai Kung before taking a taxi as no other private vehicles are allowed within the area.

If you are interested, visit <http://astropark.hk.space.museum/> for more information. *Samantha Chung*

