

Get up Close to the Red Planet with Airbnb and the World's Largest Optical and Infrared Telescope

Airbnb sees strong growth in travel to stargazing destinations as part of emerging astro-tourism trend

- Exclusive Canary Islands experience launches on Airbnb to witness this summer's spectacular astronomical events: The Mars Close Approach and the longest lunar eclipse of the 21st century
- Last year, more than [50,000 Airbnb guests from 26 countries](#) traveled to the US for the solar eclipse. There are 3,000 [homes listed on the platform offering telescopes](#)
- United States, France and Italy are the three countries with the highest number of stargazing-ready listings on Airbnb.

11 July 2018: As interest in astro-tourism grows, Airbnb today announces a unique experience to get up close to the Red Planet and visit the world's current largest optical and infrared telescope, the [Gran Telescopio Canarias \(GTC\)](#), in La Palma, Spain on July 27th.

The Experience will provide unique access to witness two extraordinary astronomical events this summer: Mars at the closest it's been to Earth in 15 years and the longest lunar eclipse of the 21st century, creating a 'blood moon'.

Hosts on Airbnb in the Canary Islands will be offering this [one-of-a-kind Social Impact Experience](#) for stargazers to visit the largest single-aperture optical and infrared telescope in the world. Due to the sheer power of the giant telescope, guests will use smaller telescopes to clearly see Mars in its full red glory in one of the best stargazing spots on the planet.

The Experience, hosted by Antonio González, a local astronomy guide and night photography expert, and Antonio Luis Cabrera, chief of scientific operations of GTC, will transport guests to outer space within the dome of the telescope and show them the importance of dark sky preservation. After midnight, guests will head outdoors with special equipment to observe the moon tainted red by the lunar eclipse and the polar ice caps and dust storms of the red planet.

This eight hour Social Impact Experience on Airbnb will only be available once, for up to six guests on July 27. The seats will be bookable on a first come, first served basis at 40€ and all proceeds will be donated to the nature conservation NGO WWF Spain.

Romano Corradi, director of GTC said "We are very excited to share this experience with guests on Airbnb around the world, as this year's Mars close approach will be the most spectacular since August 2003. On July 27, Mars and Earth will be at opposition, which means the planet will shine brightest, and this phenomenon will be accompanied by a unique lunar eclipse - the perfect opportunity to stargaze and educate the general public about science. Mars will be closest to earth on July 31 when it will be only 57,6 million Km away.

To highlight the importance of astro-tourism, Airbnb is partnering with Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias, Gran Telescopio Canarias and Fundación Starlight. The aim is to promote astro-tourism as a more sustainable form of travel which brings the economic benefits of tourism to more remote and rural regions, away from built up tourist areas.

Joe Zadeh, Head of Airbnb Experiences, said “This experience at GTC is an extraordinary opportunity for travelers worldwide to marvel at the beauty of the night sky, and to educate the general public on why it’s important to preserve it. Astro-tourism is an environmentally-friendly, authentic, sustainable way to travel that can economically empower lesser-known, rural communities, and we are proud to be boosting this phenomenon thanks to hosts who share their home or passion for astronomy on the platform.”

Trending astro-tourism destinations¹ include Antofagasta (327% year on year growth), a Chilean city located next to Atacama desert - home to some of the best telescopes around the world and one of the prime locations to watch the stars. Other trending stargazing destinations include La Palma, Spain (90%), home of GTC, Kiruna, Sweden (134%) and Yarmouth, Canada (221%).

And with almost 3,000 [homes listed on the platform offering telescopes](#), and hosts around the world listing stargazing experiences, guests will be spoilt for choice:

- [Stargazing Evening](#) (Cabo San Lucas, Mexico)
- [A Sky Full of Stars](#) (Milan, Italy)
- [Night Sky Photography Adventure](#) (Muriwai, New Zealand)
- [Astronomical Experience](#) (Artignosc-sur-Verdon, France)
- [Learn Astronomy in the Desert](#) (Joshua Tree, California, USA)
- [An Evening of Stargazing and Science](#) (Coogee, Australia)
- [Watching the Stars](#) (Seogwipo, South Korea)
- [Astronomical Observation from Teide](#) (Tenerife, Spain)
- [Shoot the Moon](#) (Santa Monica, California, USA)
- [Mauna Kea Stars & Volcano Photo Trip](#) (Kailua Kona, Hawaii, USA)

¹These trending destinations have been identified by analysing YoY% growth as of January 2018 in guest arrivals to locations close to stargazing areas certified by Fundación Starlight, or regions with dark skies identified by this same entity.