



dark sky ecotourism

Module 4 – Experience from Ireland A dark sky ecotourism boat trip



A photograph of a sailboat at night. The sky is a deep, dark blue with some lighter, wispy clouds. A bright light, possibly a searchlight or a spotlight, is mounted on the mast of the sailboat, casting a strong glow. The sailboat's rigging and masts are silhouetted against the sky. The overall scene is dark and atmospheric, suggesting a nighttime boating experience.

What is the Activity?

Nighttime boating offers a different perspective on the wonders of the night sky.

By offering an enriching experience of astronomy and dark sky ecotourism, you can provide participants with a memorable and educational adventure

Planning a night-time boat trip focused on the experience of astronomy and dark sky ecotourism can be an incredible adventure. Here's a plan for such a trip:

You need:

Destination: A remote lake or coastal area with minimal light pollution, ideally located far from urban areas and cities.

Duration: 1-2 hours

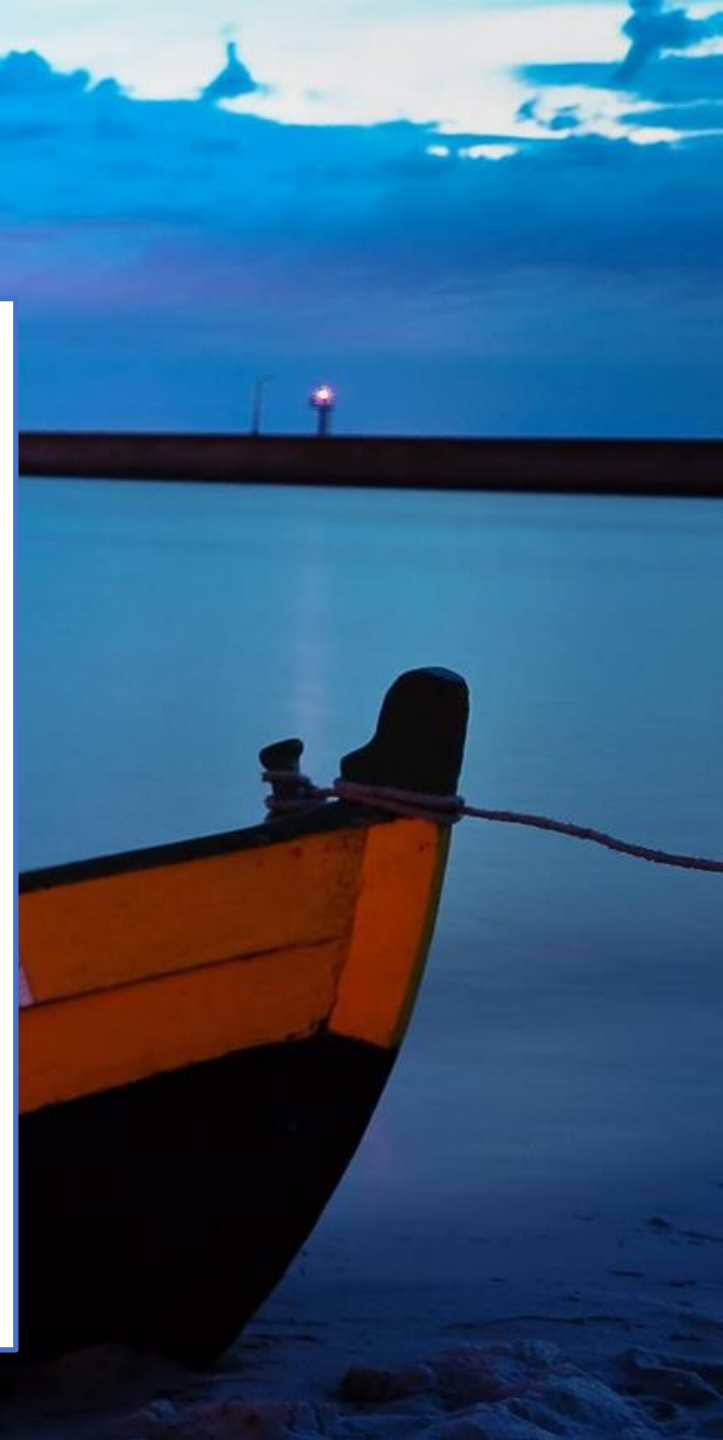
Best Time: Plan the trip during a new moon phase for the darkest skies.

Each season offers different experiences and risks so consider what seasons fit your business best.



Step by step: What to do...

1. Plan and risk assess the activity in accordance with local regulations and insurance requirements
2. Gather Participants: Confirm the number of participants.
3. Equipment Check: Ensure all necessary equipment is packed, including telescopes, binoculars, star charts, red LED flashlights, and camping gear.
4. Safety Briefing: Conduct a safety briefing for all participants, including life jacket usage and emergency procedures.
5. Load the Boat: Load all equipment and supplies onto the boat



How to Begin the Experience

Astronomy Workshop: Before departure, conduct an introductory astronomy workshop to prepare participants for the night ahead. Explain the basics of stargazing, constellations, and the equipment you'll use. This workshop can be quite short and just take place in the harbour or aboard the boat before departure.

Guided Ecotourism: As you cruise towards the destination, engage participants in a guided ecotourism experience, highlighting the local flora, fauna, and geography.



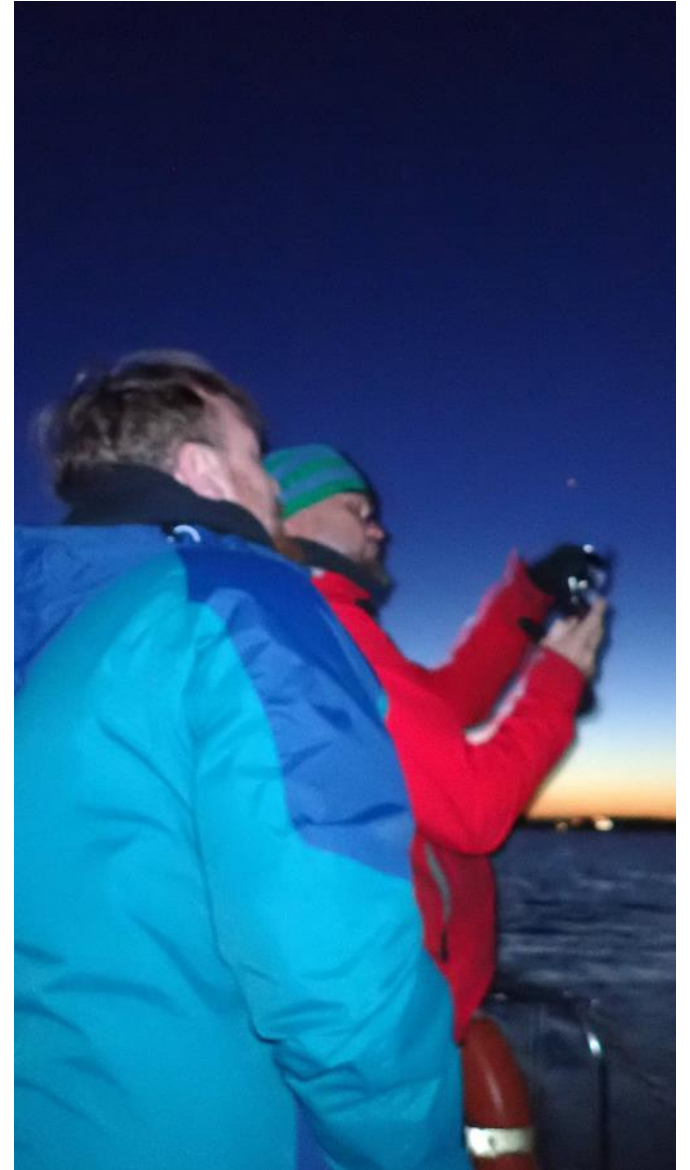
Ensuring a Great Experience

Stargazing Preparation: Set up telescopes and binoculars in an open area with minimal light pollution. Calibrate equipment and align telescopes with celestial objects.

Stargazing Session: Begin a guided stargazing session, highlighting celestial objects like planets, stars, and constellations. Use laser pointers and point out interesting features.

Astronomy Discussion: Engage in discussions about the cosmos, space exploration, and the significance of dark sky preservation.

Campfire: If possible and regulation allow you can land on an island or the coast and enjoy a campfire and share stories and folklore related to the night sky.



Debriefing – After the Tour

- Hold a debriefing session with your team to discuss what went well and what could be improved for future trips.
- Remember to prioritise safety, environmental conservation, and responsible tourism throughout the journey.
- Check local regulations and permits to ensure compliance with environmental and safety standards.



Additional Resources you may wish to Consult

- Video links on the Dark Sky Ecotourism app (for android phones)
- Equipment list on the Dark Sky Ecotourism app
- Local safety regulations relevant to your region
- Other technology you could purchase (e.g. safety devices and lighting for night boating)
- Social media links

