

A glance at Astrotourism through Astrocamping

European AstroTourism Route

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Astrocamping on Thassos is a volunteer effort, which aims to promote astronomy and love for nature not only to amateur astronomers, but also to sky lovers, regardless of knowledge, skills and age. It was held for the first time in 2009 with 80 campers and then annually it hosts over 200 sky enthusiasts and so many other visitors. It takes place every year in July on top of Thassos and the duration is 5 days. In addition to lectures and seminars by distinguished scientists, professors and amateurs on the subject of astronomy, Astrocamping also hosts other events that frame the dissemination of science.

In this way, Astrocamping is a form of Astrotourism. Furthermore the experience in it gave as food for thought for other activities that could be performed either with the same organizational form or as a business plan. (eg. Astronomical Villages, Astrocamps etc)

If we would like to give a quick definition for astrotourism, we would say, it is a form of alternative tourism like others (sea tourism, ecotourism etc). However, it is very different from what you have encountered, because it is associated with astronomy! It is not simply a way to creatively fill your vacation or lower its cost. You may acquire knowledge through it, but definitely the contact with astronomy itself will show you a new way of thinking and will pass what we amateurs call "the bug".

Although new as a term, especially in Greece, for years now there are businesses, travel agencies and even clubs dealing with astrotourism either professionally or voluntarily.

Astrotourism is a tool for knowledge dissemination either directly or indirectly. But, due to the nature of the object, is given the opportunity to create strong emotions in participants, sometimes contributing to the formation of the character and sometimes even as a therapeutic agent.

It does not involve just volunteer efforts or organizations activities. Also business efforts are taking place or should be done. From this point of view, the advantage of offering astrotourism as a prototype implementation can ensure the sustainability of a business. Unimportant land and undervalued occupation can be exploited and acquire value. The opportunity for cooperation with other sectors, reduce the cost of creating facilities and makes the implementation of these kinds of projects feasible.

Astrotourism can offer a lot in spreading the science, in the implementation of business initiatives and in strengthening the local economy. This presentation is an effort to describe the Astrocamping, to talk about prospects of creating relative projects and the benefits that astrotourism can offer us from every point of view.