

Southern Living

9 Southern Retreats With The Dreamiest Skies For Stargazing

You don't have to travel far to find clear night skies.



Western states like Montana or Utah might get most of the glory when it comes to stargazing, but there are plenty of places a little closer to home that boast their own dark skies and incredible views of the Milky Way. In fact, there are Dark Sky Parks—destinations recognized by DarkSky International as “publicly or privately owned conservation areas that implement good outdoor lighting and provide dark sky programs”—all across the South.

Virginia has four; there are a handful in Texas, and you'll find several in North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Kentucky. Our region also has a number of other destinations that might not necessarily have the Dark Sky designation, but their clear skies, lack of light pollution, or access to astronomical instruments allow visitors to see star clusters, planets, and other amazing features of the night sky.

Below, we rounded up some of the best places in the South for stargazing—from a Dark Sky Park on the coast of North Carolina to a mountaintop observatory in the [Blue Ridge Mountains](#).

Cape Lookout National Seashore, North Carolina

The beaches and barrier islands of North Carolina, with their dunes, grasslands, and salt marshes, are widely known for their beauty. If you venture out to Cape Lookout National Seashore, you'll find that natural splendor also extends into the sky. Three barrier islands make up the [Dark Sky Park](#), which can only be reached by ferry or by private boat. Cape Lookout hosts the occasional [astronomy night](#) and various outreach activities—you'll need to call the [Harkers Island Visitor Center](#) for the latest information—but you can also camp out overnight to witness the night sky yourself. Rent one of the [cabins on South Core Banks](#), and get ready for some of the best views of the Milky Way you'll ever experience (even without a telescope).