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SUMMER 2022

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GETAWAYS

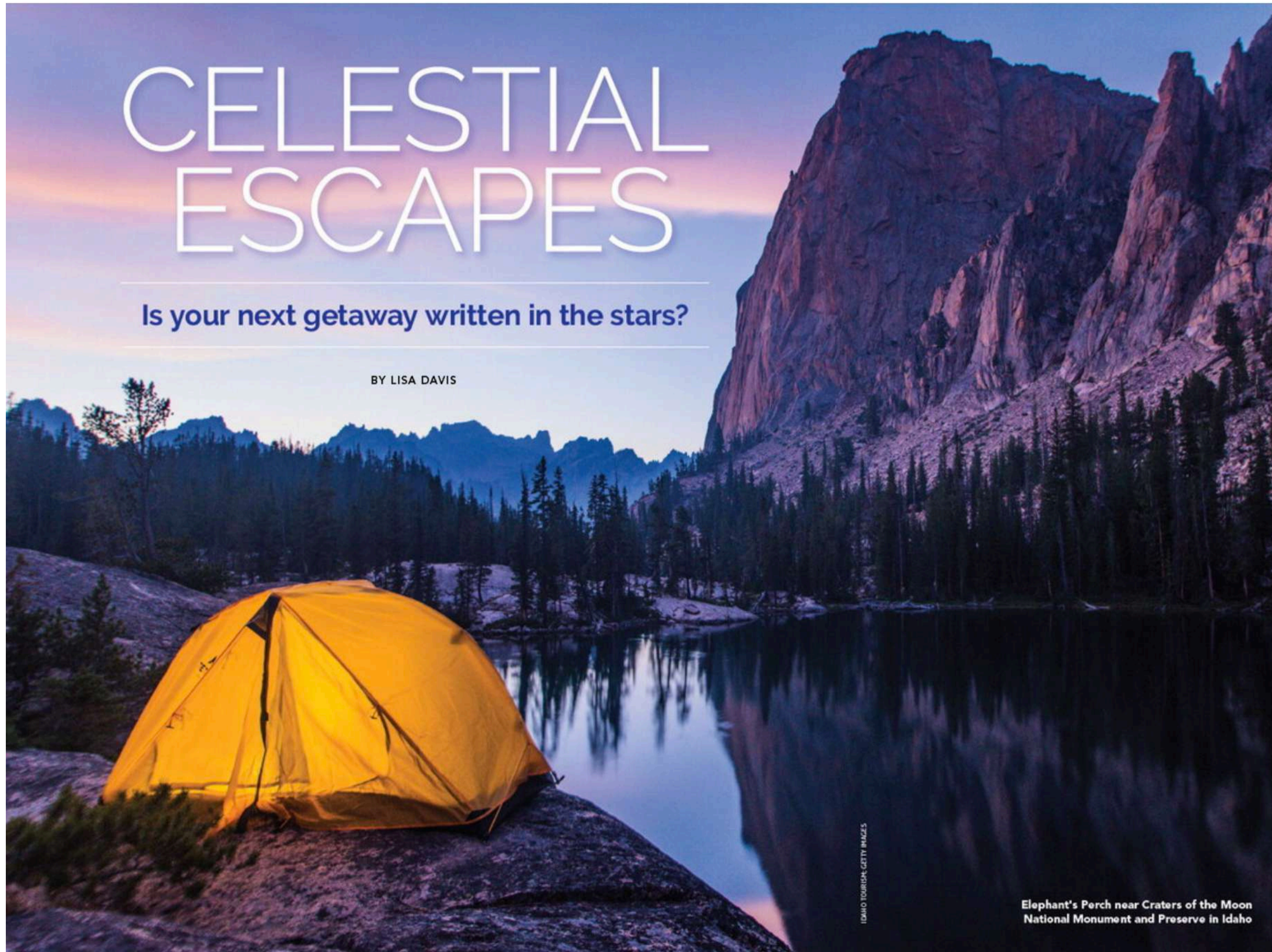
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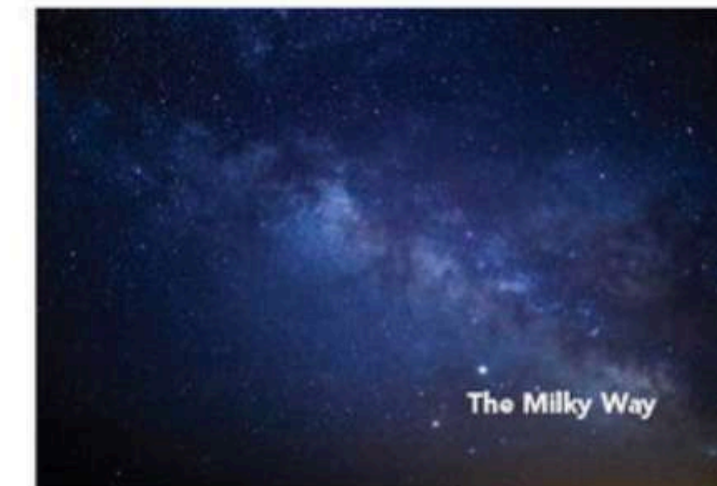
Is your next getaway written in the stars?

BY LISA DAVIS



IDAHO TOURISM, GETTY IMAGES

Elephant's Perch near Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve in Idaho



The Milky Way

For stargazers, the darkest skies provide the best entertainment. Planets, innumerable twinkling stars and bright meteors are good reasons to look up. But witnessing cosmic wonders has become sacred due to so many U.S. skies adversely affected by light pollution, making dark, clear evenings a challenge. So greater numbers of galaxy geeks are gravitating toward destinations where constellations are the brightest.

"Like seeing endangered animals, people want to see the rare night sky," says Alan Dyer, an astronomy writer and photographer and producer of planetarium programs for the TELUS Spark Science Centre in Calgary, Alberta, in Canada. "Astrotourism is a growing part of the travel industry because people want to check amazing sights off their bucket list, like seeing the Northern Lights, a solar eclipse or the Milky Way. They're on par with the scenic wonders on Earth."

A good place to start when planning a stargazing trip is to consult the International Dark-Sky Association's website for a listing of certified dark areas, including national parks. The International Dark Sky Places (IDSP) program is dedicated to preserving and protecting dark sites across the world. As of 2022, there are 195 certified IDSPs globally, with 60 in the U.S., including at least 17 national parks. Of course, visiting one of these areas on a clear night is important; so is the moon's phase. A full moon creates its own version of light pollution, so try to time your trip a couple of days before, during and after a new moon to enhance your viewing odds.

While stars are guaranteed to be more visible in these certified dark sky places, even without a designation there are locations in the U.S. that put on brilliant night sky shows. Some of them are within driving distance of major U.S. destinations making them more accessible.

If astrotourism is on your agenda for 2022, this roundup of some of the best stary escapes in the U.S., including locations with connections to the historic 1969 moon landing, will come in handy: >

Throughout the U.S.

ARIZONA

In 2001, **Flagstaff, Ariz.**, was recognized as the world's first IDSP, and since then continues to impress visitors with its galaxy views. "Getting lost in the universe from Flagstaff's clear dark window is a joy that doesn't fade," says Bonnie Stevens, executive director of the Flagstaff Dark Skies Coalition. Even before 2001, Flagstaff had impressive connections to space. Its lunar legacy includes serving as the training ground for Apollo astronauts such as Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin who walked on the moon in 1969. Scientists transformed the northern Arizona landscape into a re-creation of the moon by using explosives to create a simulated lunar surface in the cinder fields near Sunset Crater. Artists also worked with scientists at the **Lowell Observatory**, which was established in Flagstaff in 1894, to create detailed lunar maps by observing the moon through Lowell telescopes.

The Lowell Observatory has various tours throughout the year as well as the **Giovale Open Deck Observatory**, which is a collection of six advanced telescopes that allow visitors to see the stars up close. There's also the **Wupatki National Monument's** parking lot north of Flagstaff off Highway 89, a popular viewing spot because it has almost no light pollution or obstructions to block moon sightings, and **Buffalo Park**, situated on McMillan Mesa northeast of downtown Flagstaff, with 215 acres to see the planets with the San Francisco Peaks and Mount Elden in the background.

For more stars in Arizona, check out Mesa's astronomy dinner cruises on Canyon Lake with the **Dolly Steamboat**, as well as several stargazing spots in Tucson, including **Spencer's Observatory** next to the **Cat Mountain Lodge**, offering private star-viewing sessions featuring the Celestron 14-inch SCT telescope; the **Mt. Lemmon SkyCenter**, a 9,000-foot-tall formation located in Tucson's Santa Catalina Mountains; the **Kitt Peak National Observatory** for nightly stargazing programs and to learn about how the Apollo astronauts visited the observatory, before their moon landing, to view the moon through the McMath-Pierce Solar Telescope; or visit the **Sky Bar**, a solar-powered café with complimentary telescopes on its patio.

IDAHO

Idaho is the location of the only International Dark Sky Reserve in the U.S. It spans more than 1,400 square miles from Ketchum/Sun Valley to Stanley, including lands in Blaine, Custer and Elmore counties and the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. It is the third-largest of 12 such reserves worldwide.

Idaho is also home to **Craters of the Moon National Monument & Preserve**, about 20 miles southwest of Arco. The Apollo astronauts explored the area's lava landscape and learned the basics of volcanic geology in preparation for trips to the moon.

MIDWEST

Stargazing isn't confined to Western states. The **Eastern Iowa Observatory and Learning Center** at Palisades-Dows Preserve near Cedar Rapids has two permanent telescopes and several portable telescopes.

The **John Glenn Astronomy Park** outside of Columbus, Ohio, is located under the dark skies of southeast Ohio's Hocking Hills and offers guided stargazing programs on clear Friday and Saturday evenings March through November.

NORTH CAROLINA

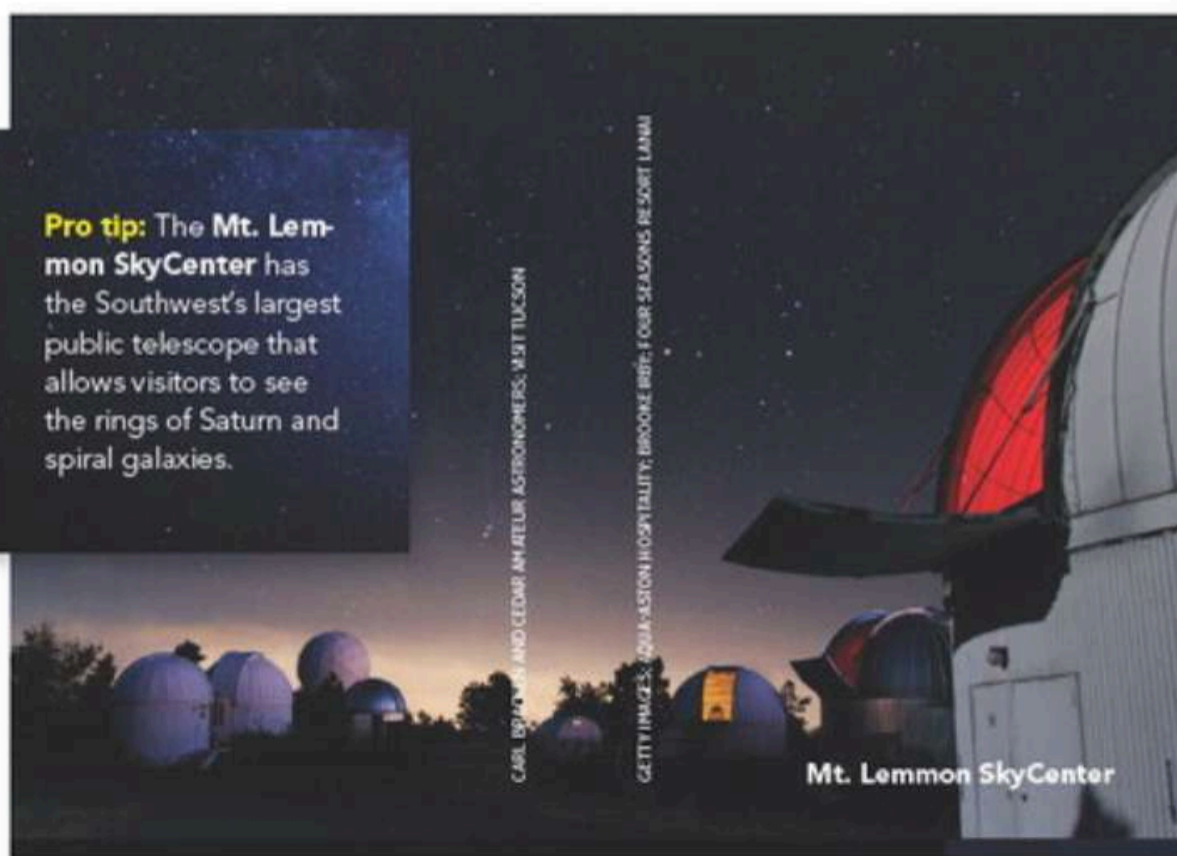
Cape Lookout National Seashore is a 56-mile strand of beaches that make up the coastal islands of eastern North Carolina, one of the world's few remaining natural barrier island chains. In 2021, the site was certified as an International Dark Sky Park, the first Atlantic coastal dark sky place in the national park system to be named.

Pro tip: Visit Idaho's International Dark Sky Reserve in August to view the **Perseid meteor showers**.



Palisades-Dows Observatory in Iowa

Pro tip: The **Mt. Lemmon SkyCenter** has the Southwest's largest public telescope that allows visitors to see the rings of Saturn and spiral galaxies.

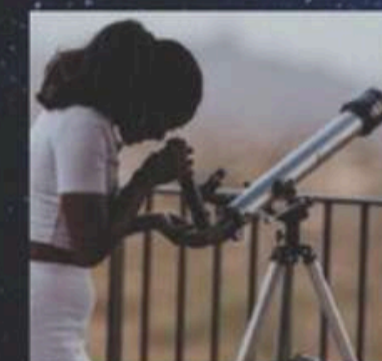


Mt. Lemmon SkyCenter

STAY + STARGAZE

Book a cosmic retreat at these resorts:

ARIZONA



The **Adero Scottsdale** located in the Sonoran Desert is the only Autograph Collection Hotel that lies within a certified Dark Sky Community. Guests can enjoy views of the starry night skies from their balconies and from the hotel's Stargazing Lawn where the Star Dudes, the hotel's resident Dark Sky Zone experts, conduct guided stargazing events. Telescopes are also available for use, as is complimentary access to the StarWalk 2 app, which guides star seekers on how to view planets, stars and constellations. The **Loews Ventana Canyon Resort** in Tucson has an onsite telescope that the Mt. Lemmon SkyCenter's astronomy guides use to show guests a kaleidoscope of stars, planets and galaxies.



IDAHO

The **Hotel Ketchum** in Sun Valley, located in the Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve, has a telescope, constellation chart, binoculars and star guides for guest use. In July and August, these meteor showers are visible from the hotel: Delta Aquariid meteor shower (peaking on July 29) and the Perseid meteor shower (peaking Aug. 11-12).



HAWAII

The **Four Seasons Resort Lanai** has a new Lanai Observatory that offers night sky tours of planets, star clusters, galaxies and the moon using a 1-meter telescope. Guests can also learn how Indigenous Hawaiians used celestial elements to guide their ocean journeys.

— Lisa Davis