

Galilean Nights Event ID: gn1,167

Number of telescopes: 7 automated Cassegrain telescopes, 25 cm in diameter

Number of organisers: 1

Number of attendees: 25 (14 under 12, most of the adults were their parents)

Event Report:

The host was one of the researchers of the Observatory, working in the field of extrasolar planets. The evening had not a good start: sky with complete cloud coverage! For this reason many people who have booked then decided not to come to Saint-Barthélemy (1675 m on the top of a mountain in the Italian Alps, at the border with Switzerland and France).

Among the brave who came in spite of bad and cold weather, most of them were children under 12 ("Mom and dad, you have promised to take me there!").

Our plan B was a brief presentation of Galileo's observations in 1609-1610. The projection included pages from the book "Sidereus nuncius" and the comparison with modern astronomical images obtained by telescopes and space probes. During the presentation a debate arose about Galileo's trial by the Catholic Church, always a very hot topic in Italy! The grown-ups were interested and participated to the discussion, the children fell asleep dreaming of a clear sky... After 22.00 the dream came true and the brave got what they deserved!

While the clouds slowly disappeared, everybody could look to the heavens with the seven telescopes controlled by the host. The Moon was no more above the horizon, but Jupiter and its satellites were still in the sky with the Summer Triangle in the Milky Way and the Pleiades rising. The researcher explained the link between Galileo and these celestial objects.

At 23.00 the event was officially closed, but most of the participants stayed at the Observatory asking questions to the researcher about general themes of modern astronomy. So here's to you black holes (none so close to us that can eat our planet), extrasolar planets (never seen UFOs, but probably alien life does exist in space), 2012 (the Sun will not explode and no large asteroid is known to impact Earth in few years). Slide show with debate + clouds going away and celestial observations + question time: it has been a happy Galilean Night in Saint-Barthélemy!