

Galilean Nights Event ID: gn181

Number of telescopes: None, since it was raining.!

Number of organisers: 5

Number of attendees: 65

Event photos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/44055375@N04/>

Event Report:

Have you ever wondered how it would be like to have a nice cup of coffee on the moon? Or perhaps to eat ice-cream while orbiting Saturn and its rings? And how it would be like... to dine on Mars?

This was our concept for the event.

Navegar Foundation Team members gathered to decide what to do during the Galilean Nights... The meeting was fruitful, nice ideas: day and night sky watch to all... but then we got hungry. For a day and night nonstop observations we should bring some snacks... One topic led to another, it was lunch time. Wouldn't be fun to have our own version of Milliways (Restaurant at the end of the Universe, by Douglas Adams)... well, not at the end of the Universe, of course, but what if we could have a restaurant that could travel through the Solar System... and could actually see, at close, the objects Galileo only took a glimpse of...?

We liked this idea... and that was how "Dinner on Mars" was born. While the participants were dining, they would be taken in a voyage to the planets, taking the advantage of a modern fulldome planetarium projection.

With it, we would have an opportunity to reach other audiences, other kind of public. We still had sky observations with our telescopes for our regular public, but the concept and advertisement of a dinner would allow us to reach those who normally wouldn't come to a science outreach event.

The goal was reached! A group of 65 people ranging from 4 to 76 years old, groups of friends, couples, families... dined at Espinho Planetarium on 24th October 2009. A packed planetarium! The event sold out completely and had a waiting list of people still wanting to join us.

For our Solar System Voyager we had a "Capitan" announcing the main stops of our journey with short introductions regarding the places we were visiting and its relation to Galileo findings. We had a tour guide handed over to all, with descriptions of what was going to be projected on the planetarium dome. The exquisite cuisine prepared some astronomical dishes, like "Olympus Mons Duck" or "Valles Marineris Monkfish", and all tables were named after moons of the Solar System.

It was really a different occasion. Contrary to the usual 30 to 40 minute that people stay in the planetarium during a show, this time we were able to captivate the attention of the public inside the planetarium for a total of two and a half hours.

Some of the participants didn't know what a planetarium was, the majority never had been into a planetarium, but were captivated by this rare and different kind of event. We were gladly surprised when, in the end, we heard that they wanted more scientific content, more information, and this came from people that never ever heard of planetarium shows or night sky observations. In this sense we found the feedback from this event particularly rewarding .