

Galilean Nights Event ID: gn73

Number of telescopes: 1

Number of organisers: 14

Number of attendees: 300

Event photos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/oanasandu/4104312218/in/pool-galileannights>
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/oanasandu/sets/72157622803741684/>

Event Report:

After the tremendous success we had with 100 Hours of Astronomy, we were anxiously waiting for the Galilean Nights to repeat the story. We planned four nights of telescope viewing in the University Square, right in the center of Bucharest. But just a few days before the event the weather forecast was not on our side. Rain did not seem to stop pouring down and members from our club, completely discouraged, gave up the idea and planned other things. It seemed that Galilean Nights were just not going to happen for us.

On Tuesday night, October 20, at our weekly meeting at the astronomy club, four determined and enthusiastic people met and thought: we cannot just leave Galilean Nights pass us by. We need a plan B! We had only 2 days before the event started, no organizing team left, no room rented, no public announcements made and a terribly rainy weather. What could be done under these circumstances? And then suddenly, it came to us: what if we invited people to spend their rainy evening at the Astronomical Observatory and warm up with a cup of hot tea and inspiring experiences about the universe?

And so, "The Galilean Night with hot tea and a journey to Jupiter" was born. The following morning, we sent out a press release announcing the event. After just half an hour we had the first radio interview. A couple of hours later, the news was spreading on the internet. We then received a phone call from the national TV station that wanted us in the studio at the 19:00 o'clock news edition – the prime time for news! Other three radio stations took us interviews before the day ended. But this was not all!

Thursday, we received another two phone calls from two major TV news stations that wanted to join us for a live transmission. We said yes, of course! Last, but not least, the Galilean Nights Blog (http://cosmicdiary.org/galilean_nights/?p=243) honored us with a funny post about our event. Thursday was also the day for administrative tasks, when we bought 250 tea bags, sugar, cups and cookies.

And then, the Galilean night arrived. Encouraged by our enthusiasm several club members joined to help. We had announced presentations every hour in the interval 20:00-24:00. It was 19:30 and people were already queuing in front of the Observatory. What followed next was a night to remember. A queue that spread all along the sidewalk, hundreds of tea cups prepared at the speed of light every time a new session began, talks about Galileo Galilei, a journey to Jupiter with the help of an astronomy program and even...telescope viewing for a few lucky people who had for a short time clear skies during their session! At 01:00, people were still waiting to enter and, therefore, we made one more presentation and finished all tea bags!

During 6 hours, we had 300 visitors, 250 tea cups prepared and 6 presentations made. The event was broadcast by 3 major TV stations, 4 radio stations and 9 websites, among which: two of the most visited women websites (with aprox. 60.000 and 12.000 visitors per day), three of the most popular news websites (with aprox. 80.000, 180.000 and 290.000 visitors per day). Counting only these websites, we had 622.000 people reached through PR efforts. The total number of people reached through radio and TV is, however, much bigger and uncountable like it is the word of mouth generated by those who left the presentations with a bit more knowledge on astronomy, but still wondering about the Universe.

In short, four determined and passion driven people took what seemed to be a total failure due to unfavorable weather conditions and transformed it into a highly promoted event and a fantastic experience for some 300 people that left the Observatory that night with the bug to Discover the Universe!