

Galilean Nights Event ID: gn809

Number of telescopes: 2

Number of organisers: 5

Number of attendees: 200

Event photos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/satmghana/4089494979/in/pool-galileannights/>
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Event Report:

A well-attended, enjoyable, although somewhat hectic evening took place at the Ghana Planetarium on Saturday October 24th to celebrate "Galilean Nights". Around 200 people attended, which included a large contingent of students from Legon University in Accra and KNUST (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology) in Kumasi, all members of the Physics Students Association of Ghana. They were joined by children and parents, expatriates and Ghanaians, astronomy club members, their friends and relatives.

We were also very pleased to welcome one of the honorary members of the astronomy club, Professor Bortei-Doku, now retired, but a renowned Professor of Mathematics in Ghana, also a traditional chief of Nungua, and a great supporter of all things astronomical.

After a brief introduction and explanation of the background to Galilean Nights, visitors enjoyed an introductory film show which explored in brief a wide variety of astronomy topics including asteroids and comets, solar system formation, artificial satellites, big bang and multiverse theory, x-ray astronomy and black holes. The audience had to be split into batches due to the number of attendees and the limited size of our "auditorium"!

The film show was followed by the opportunity to experience the only digital planetarium in West Africa! Shows on the Moon, Hubble Space Telescope and biodiversity were seen, with the dome full to capacity. This was the first visit to the Planetarium for the majority of visitors, and the experience generated a great deal of excitement and positive feedback from the audience.

We had hoped to follow the Planetarium show by a Domecast with Joel Halvorson of Minnesota Planetarium Society, but a technical hitch meant this was not possible. Instead the audience were treated to another Planetarium show.

Set up on the lawn outside the dome were 2 telescopes, a Celestron CPC 1100 (donated to the Planetarium by one of our astronomy club members) and a Galileoscope. Patchy cloud occasionally obscured the view, but overall, all visitors had a chance to see the moon through one of the telescopes and most were thrilled to be able to see the craters in such clear detail. A frequent comment was "Wow, that is SO cool!"

The evening ended with a Q&A session in the dome, which included a discussion on how the students could start their own astronomy groups in their respective campuses.

The event was definitely a success, publicising the Planetarium to a wider audience, enthusing students at 2 major tertiary institutions, and giving members of the public the opportunity to view the skies as Galileo did 400 years ago!