

Stargazing Location Guide

Avon and Bristol Area

By: Jo Richardson FRAS
Space Detectives

"Astronomy compels the soul to look upwards and leads us from this world to another...."

Plato



The countryside charity
Avon and Bristol

The Great Orion Nebula – "A Birthplace of Stars"

Pete Richardson Astrophotography

A Stargazing Location Guide to AVON and BRISTOL CPRE REGION

“Astronomy is a humbling and character-building experience” Carl Sagan (Astronomer)

The above statement holds a great resonance with me and many other astronomers worldwide. There is nothing more awe inspiring than looking up at night, when the skies are clear, perfectly dark and filled with the wonders of our incredible Universe. Knowing how incredibly small we are in the grand scheme of the Cosmos does indeed make you look at life in a very different way and as the statement suggests, humbles your entire existence.

Jo Richardson FRAS

Space Detectives

Astronomer and Author Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Looking up to the nighttime sky and truly *seeing* the stars is something everyone should experience. You don't need any in depth knowledge to get started in Astronomy, nor do you need to buy expensive equipment. Your eyes are all that you need!

Stargazing is something that can be done at any time of the year and is suitable for everyone, both young and not so young!

Here in the Avon and Bristol region, we know how important dark skies are to us and despite ever increasing threats of light pollution and diminishing dark skies UK wide, we are still within an area of the country where it is entirely possible to find relatively dark skies from which we can observe the Universe in all its glory.

In this guide, we hope to help you find some of those places. Covering the whole area from South Gloucestershire, Bristol, Bath and North-East Somerset and North Somerset, there is hopefully a location for everyone. So come on... look up. There is a Universe out there waiting to be discovered!



CPRE Avon and Bristol Region

BEFORE SETTING OUT

For the best experience of seeing the stars you will need a dry clear night with little or no Moon light. You can check the weather forecasts here:

www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/uk-cloud-cover-forecast

If it is the Moon that you specifically would like to observe, then the best time to do this is when the Moon is in either a Crescent or First/Last Quarter phase. To check out the Moon phases for any time of year, you can use this useful website:

<https://moonphases.co.uk/>

LOCATION CHOICES

The recommended stargazing sites have been chosen with not just dark skies in mind. Consideration has also been given to the direction of view, ease of access, parking, and any nearby facilities. Locations have been sourced and visited by local Astronomers themselves and special credit goes to all of them who helped put this guide together.

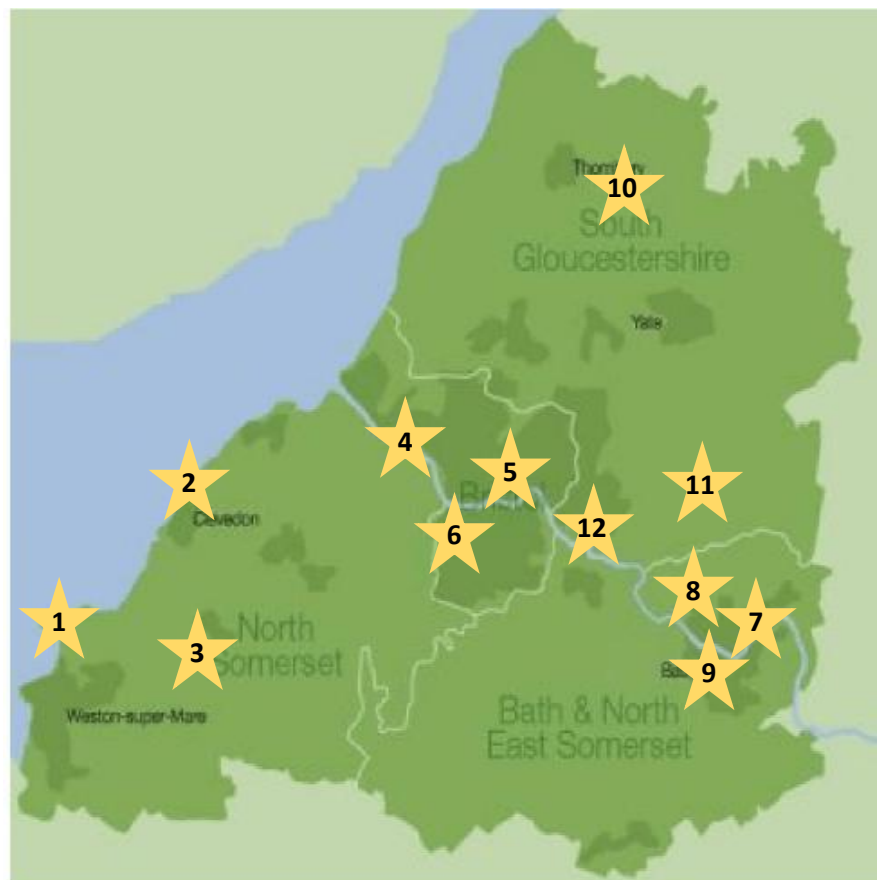


Moon rise over Clifton Suspension Bridge



Photographing the Crescent Moon

RECOMMENDED STARGAZING SITES



No.	Location	Grid Ref/ Postcode	Highlights	Good for
1	Sand Bay North Somerset	ST32875 63245 BS22 9YE	Sunsets	Constellations, Moon, Sunset
2	Clevedon North Somerset	ST39192 70559 BS21 7UF	South Views	Constellations, Bright Planets
3	Lower Langford North Somerset	ST46539 60249 BS40 5BX	Dark Skies	Constellations, Galaxies
4	Clifton Downs Bristol	ST55991 74704 BS9 1FG	All round view	Constellations, Bright Planets
5	Troopers Hill Bristol	ST63052 73148 BS5 8BS	High Up	Constellations, Moon
6	Victoria Park Bristol	ST59350 71409 BS3 4QF	Overhead views	Constellations, Bright Planets
7	Alexandra Park Bath	ST74974 63904 BA2 4RR	Overhead Views	Constellations, Moon
8	Lansdown Park and Ride, Bath	ST73104 68122 BA1 9DT	North View	Constellations, Galaxies
9	South Stoke Millennium Viewpoint, Bath	ST74432 61378 BA2 7DS	Dark Skies	Constellations, Milky Way, ISS
10	Tytherington Hill Wotton Under Edge	ST67239 88641 GL12 8UR	South View	Constellations, Bright Planets, Moon, ISS
11	St Johns Baptist Church Old Sodbury	ST75609 81773 BS37 6NB	West View	Constellations, Bright Planets, Moon
12	Overscourt Woods Siston	ST68772 74858 BS16 9LR	Overhead View	Constellations, Bright Planets, Moon, Galaxies

NORTH SOMERSET

★ 1 Sand Bay

Observation Site

Sand Bay forms part of the coastal area of Weston Super Mare and overall is a quieter area to that of the main bay located in the town.

There are 3 public car parks located along the beach front, however the site chosen is flat, tarmacked and allows for direct access onto the beach.

Views are mainly to the North and West with good views of Circumpolar Constellations, the brightest Planets, and the Moon.

The bay itself often bears witness to amazing sunsets.

Facilities

Ample car parking, space for telescopes and chairs.

No toilets on site.

Nearest toilets are found in the main public car park which can be accessed further up Beach Road on the right and refreshments can be accessed at the Commodore Hotel which is directly opposite the location.

Directions and Parking

Location: Car Park 708021, Beach Road Sand Bay, WSM BS22 9YE

What 3 Words: ///eggs.villa.rises

UK Grid Reference: ST32875 63245

Accessed via bus or car from central Weston Super Mare on the Toll Road (free). Turn down into Beach Road and the car park with location number 708021 can be found on the left before you reach the right-hand bend and the Commodore Hotel.



Sunset at Sand Bay

NORTH SOMERSET

★ 2 Clevedon Pill

Observation Site

Clevedon Pill is a coastal area to the South of the town of Clevedon which boasts wonderful views out across the Severn Estuary towards Wales to the North and over the Salt Marshes to the South. The area is flat with a mixture of gravel path and tarmac, plus it is flanked by a large open area of green public land called Marshalls Field, ideal for picnic rugs and telescopes.

Views are commanding and good for mainly bright constellations, due to the surrounding light pollution from Clevedon itself, the Moon and Sunsets.

Facilities

Large flat expanse of green recreation land as well as the designated coastal pathway.

No toilets on site but these and refreshments can be located a short distance on the main sea front area at Clevedon and within the main town itself.

Directions and Parking

Location: Clevedon Pill, Old Church Road, Clevedon, BS21 7UF

What 3 Words: [///drumbeat.wallet.composes](http://drumbeat.wallet.composes)

UK Grid Reference: ST39192 70559

Follow Old Church Road almost to the end until you are level with St Andrews Church. Parking is on the roadside and access to Clevedon Pill is via a footpath at the end of the road. Access to Marshalls Field is also located along this path.



Coastal Path



Marshalls Field

NORTH SOMERSET

★ 3 A38 Lower Langford

Observation Site

The A38 at Lower Langford travels through an amazing scenic valley towards the Somerset boundary. The road is wide with plenty of safe pull ins along the way.

This location offers southerly views which is good for constellations, the Moon, Planets and Milky Way. One advantage is that there is very little light pollution with little or no street lighting in the immediate vicinity.

Facilities

The pull off is shielded from the main road with a central grass reserve, as well as being level and tarmacked. There is limited room for telescopes and chairs due to passing cars.

No toilets on site.

Nearest toilets and refreshment facilities can be found in Churchill or the village of Lower Langford itself.

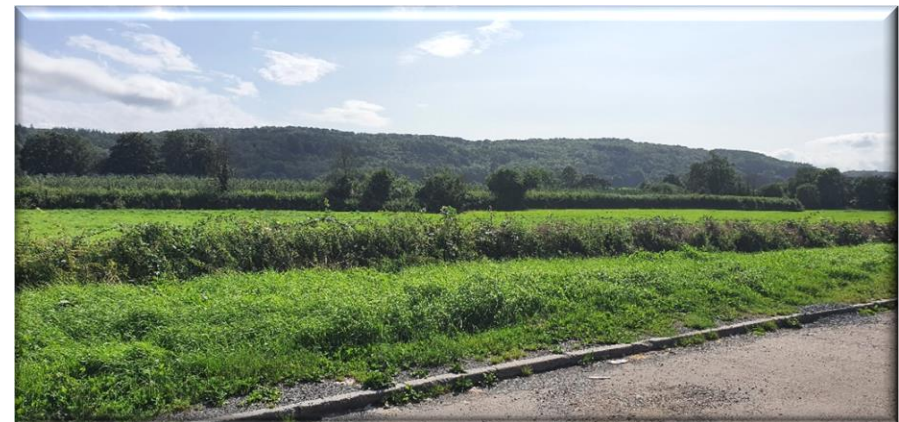
Directions and Parking

Location: A38 Lower Langford BS40 5BX

What 3 Words: [///rudder.searches.fallback](#)

UK Grid Reference: ST46539 60249

Accessed from the North (Bristol) and South (Taunton) via the main A38. As you pass through Lower Langford the pull in can be found off the main road directly opposite the line of trees and farmland that shield the village. It has plenty of room for several vehicles.



Good South Views

BRISTOL



4 Clifton and Durdham Downs

Observation Site

A fantastic expanse of publicly accessible land makes up the Clifton and Durdham Downs and it is hard, when visiting, to remember that you are in the city of Bristol.

The location provides an almost 360-degree view with some low restrictions to the East because of the tree line.

Flat grasslands are interspersed with narrow road access throughout and some strategically placed viewpoints, with views over the River Avon and Clifton Suspension Bridge.

The Bridge viewing deck itself halfway around the circular road provides a wonderful area to set up telescopes and chairs with views of bright constellations, the brightest planets and the Moon.

Facilities

Mixture of grassland and tarmac. Flat and easy access.

Nearest toilets located at the Western end of the circular road but have a closure time of 5pm, with refreshments being available in the nearby Clifton district of Bristol.

Directions and Parking

Location: Clifton and Durdham Downs, Bristol, BS9 1FG

What 3 Words: ///potato.stiff.hint

UK Grid Reference: ST55991 74704

From the A4 Portway, follow the signs to Bristol Zoo Gardens and enter the A4176 Bridge Valley Road. At the top of the hill, turn immediate left onto Ladies Mile Road. In approximately half a mile, turn left again onto Circular Road. Follow this road around until you reach the Clifton Suspension and Avon Gorge viewing area on your left. Parking is free and along the roadside.



*Avon Gorge
Viewing Area*

Large Open Grasslands



BRISTOL

★ 5 Troopers Hill

Observation Site

Troopers Hill is a nature reserve located to the East of the City Centre and affords wonderful views over a large part of Bristol. It has been designated as a “Dark Sky Discovery” site as there are all round sky views from the top of the hill.

The brightest constellations can be seen from this location, along with bright planets and the Moon.

Facilities

The area is incredibly hilly with steep footpath inclines. Troopers Hill itself is uneven and composed of a mixture of rough grassland and thickets. There is a large stone monument at the top of the hill, with a flatter grassy area which is suitable for chairs and picnic rugs.

No toilets nearby, however these and refreshments can be found in the main commercial area of St Georges which is a short walk away.

Directions and Parking

Location: Troopers Hill, St Georges, Bristol BS5 8BS

What 3 Words: [///soft.cards.mostly](http://soft.cards.mostly)

UK Grid Reference: ST63052 73148

Located in the East St George area of the city. Pathways onto Troopers Hill can be found off Troopers Hill Road and although you can park for free here, access to the hill itself is by foot only.



Top of Troopers Hill

BRISTOL

★ 6 Victoria Park

Observation Site

Victoria Park Bristol is not far from the City Centre and sits between the Totterdown and Bedminster districts. It affords a wide-open public space surrounded and shielded by vegetation and housing.

Again, designated another Dark Sky Discovery Site, from the centre of the park a good overhead view is available, however the horizon is somewhat restricted due to the surrounding trees and buildings.

Facilities

The Park itself is hilly but has easy access with wide paths meandering through the parkland. There is ample space to set up telescopes, chairs and picnic rugs.

Only disabled toilets available at certain times on site., however other toilets and refreshments can be found in abundance both in the Totterdown and Bedminster areas which are both within walking distance.

Directions and Parking

Location: Victoria Park, Hill Avenue, Bristol, BS3 4QF

What 3 Words: [///flows.motion.script](#)

UK Grid Reference: ST59350 71409

Located South of the City Centre and between Totterdown and Bedminster. Accessed via the B3120 St Johns Lane Bedminster. The mini roundabout with Redcatch Road, turn into Park Avenue and then right into Hill Avenue. The Park is located on your left. Free roadside parking is available in nearby streets.



Victoria Park, Bristol

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

★ 7 Alexandra Park

Observation Site

The primary attraction of this site is its proximity to the centre of Bath, its height and ample flat grass space.

Reasonable views of the overhead stars with a limited horizon other than north over Bath. It is a “Bright object only” site due to local light pollution but adequate for learning the more prominent constellations.

Facilities

Ample space for telescopes, chairs, and picnic blankets. Children’s playground. Toilets on site.



Fantastic Facilities

Directions and Parking

Location: Shakespeare Ave, Bath BA2 4RR

What 3 Words: ///guard.junior.opens

UK Grid Reference: ST74974 63904

Easily accessible from the centre of Bath by foot, bicycle, bus, or car. The hill is steep to walk directly up from Bath and so it is easier to go up the Wellsway via Bear Flat. The Park is closed at night, but street parking is available just outside the entrance.



Scenic Views over the City of Bath

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

★ 8 Lansdown Park and Ride

Observation Site

This is perhaps an unlikely location for stargazing, but just north of Bath, below the racecourse, it is easy to get to and beside it is several council owned playing fields as well as views of the City of Bath.

Despite suffering from light pollution, the Northern views are very good for Bath and so circumpolar constellations are easily visible including some of the faint fuzzies like the Andromeda Galaxy. The site is higher than those on the south side of the city and suffers less from mist.

Best views are overhead and to the south over Bath. North horizon obscured but east and west reasonably accessible.

Facilities

You need to walk around the sports field changing facilities to escape car park lights and get into open, flat grassland. The playing fields to the south are reached by a track leading off to the left and from there you can watch the Moon rising above Beckford's tower.

Pay to use toilet on site.

Directions and Parking

Location: Overlooking Bath, Lansdown Rd, Lansdown, Bath BA1 9DT

What 3 Words: ///broom.rush.rungs

UK Grid Reference: ST73104 68122

Accessible by Park and Ride Bus, car, or foot. Park and ride lighting is turned off around 10pm, so conditions improve as the evening progresses. Ample parking.



Moonrise over Beckford Tower

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

★ 9 Southstoke Millenium Viewpoint

Observation Site

Great views down to the southern horizon from east to west thanks to its 174m elevation and darker skies south of Bath.

These are the darkest stars you will get this close to Bath and is a great location for observing meteors, the Milky Way and deep sky objects. The great horizon means it is also good for seeing the rising and setting of planets as well as the International Space Station and the Moon. It is also a great location to sit and learn the constellations and return every so often to see new constellations cross overhead as the seasons pass. If you are also thinking of taking up widefield astrophotography, then this is a good place to start.

Facilities

The viewpoint's only facility is a bench seat. This is built into an artificial bank which can give shelter from any chilly southwest breeze. The grassed area is large enough for 10-15 people but be careful as it drops off to the south down into brambles. Nearest facilities are available within the Packhorse Inn in Southstoke about 500m away. The pub garden is also a good location back up, with useful views to the south and an astronomy friendly landlord.

Directions and Parking

Location: Manor Farm Buildings, South Stoke, Bath BA2 7DS

What 3 Words: [///boom.stay.young](http://boom.stay.young)

UK Grid Reference: ST74432 61378

Accessible by foot from Southstoke village on concrete paths for about 400m or park on Southstoke Lane and walk around Manor Farm. There are no local light sources and so torches recommended to walk to and from the site. You can also reach the site by crossing fields by the footpath from the carpark at Sainsbury's Odd Down.



Southstoke Millennium Viewpoint

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

★ 10 Tytherington Hill

Observation Site

Located just South of Wotton Under Edge and to the East of Thornbury in South Gloucestershire, this large open, relatively flat grassland, command's fantastic views over the surrounding countryside. With views largely to the South and Southeast, it is a fantastic spot for seasonal stargazing. There are some views to the North, however these are obstructed in places with vegetation and trees.

From here, you will be able to navigate seasonal constellations as well observe the Moon and some of the brightest planets. You may even be able to spot the International Space Station as it passes over the UK.

Facilities

There is ample place to site telescopes and chairs, along with 3 permanent park benches overlooking the view. Access to the hill is easy, however care needs to be taken as there are areas of rock and stone as you make your way from the car parking areas.

No toilets or refreshments on site. These are located within the village of Tytherington itself, namely the Swan Inn and local shop.

Directions and Parking

Location: Tytherington Hill, off New Road, Tytherington GL12 8UR

What 3 Words: ///appraised.crackled.dance

UK Grid Reference: ST67239 88641

Access is possible both by car and on foot from the village. Take New Road and approximately 1 mile up, turn right into an unmarked road which is signposted as a "No through road." Entrance to the site is at the end of this road and on the left. Car parking is along the grass verges.



Fantastic South Views

Level Grasslands



SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

11 St Johns Baptist Church, Old Sodbury

Observation Site

St Johns Baptist Church is situated at the top of the village and provides access out from the rear onto a grassy bank, which overlooks the surrounding area far and wide.

The site provides a wonderful North, South and West view with the East being unfortunately blocked by the church itself.

From here you should be able to see the brightest constellations, despite possible light pollution from Yate, as well as the Moon and International Space Station passes.

Facilities

Access to the site is through the graveyard and then out through a metal gate at the rear of the church. This opens onto a large grassy banked field with a wooden bench and small Millennium monument. Whilst it would be possible to site telescopes in the main part of the field, it may be better to site near the church wall on the raised concreted area. It would also be fine for picnic rugs and chairs, if not using the bench itself.

No toilets or refreshments on site. Nearest can be found at the Dog Inn and the local fuel station back on the main road through the village.

Directions and Parking

Location: St Johns Baptist Church, Old Sodbury BS37 6NB

What 3 Words: [///coherent.mute.hands](#)

UK Grid Reference: ST75609 81773

The Church can be found opposite the Primary School at the top of Cotswold Lane. Parking is limited but is available outside the church gate and in the nearby streets.



St Johns Baptist Church Old Sodbury

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

★ 12 Overscourt Wood Car Park, Siston

Observation Site

Overscourt Wood is in Siston which is found a few miles out of Pucklechurch. The car park itself offers mainly overhead views and is shielded from any surrounding light pollution by the presence of trees and the undulating landscape. It is laid to rough gravel and is flat, which would be suitable for a telescope as well as a chair.

If you wanted the option to venture further afield from the car park, an alternative observation site can be found back across the main road and into the large open field, which has public access.

From here you can see prominent constellations, the brightest planets (when overhead) and possibly even a galaxy or two due to the shielding from light pollution provided.

Facilities

Access to the car park is advertised as 24 hours. Ample car parking space and no need to walk far from your car to start observations.

No toilets or refreshments on site, however these can be found nearby in Pucklechurch, just a short drive away.

Directions and Parking

Location: Overscourt Wood Car Park, Siston, BS16 9LR

What 3 Words: ///toward.empty.arrive

UK Grid Reference: ST68772 74858

Travelling from Pucklechurch on the B4465, take the left hand turning into Siston Lane. The entrance to Overscourt Wood Car Park can be found on the left as you pass through the village.



Overscourt Woods Car Park, Siston

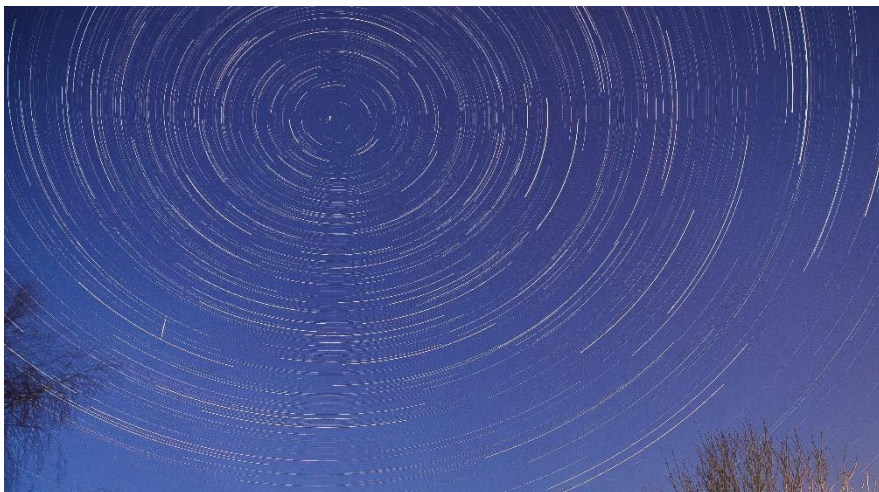
PICTURE GALLERY FROM THE REGION



The Moon from Sandbay
Ian Phillips



Saturn from North Somerset
Pete Richardson Astro



Star Trails over Bristol
Ian Phillips



Mars from North Somerset
Pete Richardson Astro



Andromeda Galaxy from North Somerset
Pete Richardson Astro

GUIDE CREDITS

A special “Thanks” goes to all those contributors, who, without their help, this guide would have not been possible. They are:

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REMEMBER SAFETY!

Please note that whilst consideration has been taken to choose the stargazing locations with safety in mind, many of the sites are within proximity to city areas and/or in isolated more rural spots and care needs to be taken, especially at night.

Suggestion would be to always go with others and ensure children are accompanied. Make sure those left behind know where you are going and what time you expect to be back.

And above all STAY SAFE!

