



Celestial Gazing

by Lisa Banes

What does the Aborigine see when he looks into the sky? What did ancient mariners see when they looked skyward for celestial guidance? What stars make up Andromeda? If you've ever looked up on a clear evening and wanted to know more about the glorious lights of our solar system, you should make your first exploration one of South Carolina's six state-of-the-art planetariums.

In these special domed theaters, "star projectors" recreate the night sky, including constellations, planets, the sun and moon, in addition to providing special effects such as shooting stars, comets, auroras, rainbows, and solar and lunar

eclipses. The rotation of the projectors can create a "celestial time and travel machine," reproducing the exact sky from any date in history or any place on earth!

Though programs vary from planetarium to planetarium, every facility can give you an incredible tour through time and space. And you'll be assured that your next glance into the heavens will reveal more than you've ever seen before.

Visit any of South Carolina's six exciting and educational planetariums, all designed to open your eyes to the wonders of the nighttime sky. Each planetarium presents a number of special shows year-round so it's best to call ahead for details on pro-

grams, admission fees and hours of operation.

DOOLEY PLANETARIUM
Cauthen Educational Media Center-
Francis Marion University
Florence 843-661-1381

Got specific questions about space? Like to take a close look at the surface of Mars? How about a face-to-face meeting with a comet? The Dooley Planetarium is full of surprise answers, supported by space travel simulations, NASA footage and all kinds of unexpected phenomena! Submit questions live or in advance, then get ready for some astronomical fun.

DUPONT PLANETARIUM

*Ruth Patrick Science
Education Center, USC Aiken Aiken
803-641-3654*

Star light, star bright! This cozy theater puts you closest to the star field by displaying more than 9,000 stars down to the eighth magnitude. Or, “fly out to the stars” to see things from a new perspective. Besides all this high-tech, you’ll find some impressive low-tech features as well, including Egyptian obelisk and Roman wedge sundials, and the world’s only known camera obscura (a large, rare pinhole camera) that projects images from outside onto a planetarium dome. It’s like stepping out in space and back in time!

HOWELL MEMORIAL PLANETARIUM

*Bob Jones University
Greenville 864-242-5100*

Like the wise men, why not set your sights on a star? BJU’s planetarium produces and presents a variety of educational programming that is not only scientifically accurate but also consistent with Biblical teachings and a Christian worldview. Even the planetarium’s setting is heavenly, with mural-covered walls depicting the solar system and other astronomical objects, painted by artist Darell Koons.

SETTLEMIRE PLANETARIUM

*Museum of York County
Rock Hill 803-329-2121*

Become a nighttime naturalist in deepest Africa—and still get home in time for dinner! With an extensive collection of African animals and artifacts, complemented by a changing schedule of innovative astronomical programs, this public planetarium offers weekend shows year-round, all for the price of

museum admission!

STANBACK PLANETARIUM & NASA EDUCATOR RESOURCE CENTER

*South Carolina State University
Orangeburg 803-536-7174*

Looking for close encounters of the learning kind? The state’s second largest planetarium focuses on providing free programs for area school children. The public is admitted to all regularly scheduled programs on a first-come, first-served basis, including December’s Christmas specials “A Star for Santa’s Tree” and “Star of Wonder.”

T.C. HOOPER PLANETARIUM/ SCIENCESPHERE

*Charles Daniel Observatory
Roper Mountain Science Center
Greenville 864-281-1188*

Get in the van and go! Starry Nights, held every Friday evening, and monthly second Saturday programs are the public’s opportunity to see this dramatic astronomical facility, normally reserved for use by the School District of Greenville County. Recently named a Star Center One™ partner site, the center is one of only 60 U.S. sites chosen to help build awareness of the International Space Station. Once you’re ready to come back down to Earth, visit the lush nature trails, arboretum and butterfly gardens. Science never looked so good!

Why not spice up your day by venturing into the night? Go ahead, go to the theater and see the stars!

