Press release

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Lights out – stars out: Tasmania's quest to become a dark sky destination

The northern lights attract 1.1m international tourists to Iceland each year – could Tasmania repeat this feat with our Southern Lights?

Humans have been captivated by the night sky since the dawn of time. It has inspired us and spawned myths, legends and stories still told today. However, with the growing problem of light pollution, it is getting harder and harder to glimpse our heavenly friends.

Not so if you are in Tasmania. Unlike major city centres like Sydney and Melbourne covered by "light domes" – Tasmania's pristine dark skies really stand out. For the dark reason. Not only can you see the Milky Way in Tassie's skies – if you are lucky you may also see an aurora without travelling to the other side of the world to Iceland.

The desire to see the night sky in its undimmed glory is fuelling a rise in "Noctourism", identified as one of 2025's top travel trends. Noctourists are looking for destinations where the stars are the stars, where astral events like meteor showers can be seen and experienced more fully. DarkSky International is at the centre of this trend, supporting locations all over the world in accrediting their dark skies to attract this new type of tourist.

One new applicant is the village of Ross in Tasmania. If successful, it will become only the second Dark Sky Community in Australia and the first in Tasmania. At least it will not be alone in Tasmania with two other organisations seeking different levels of dark sky accreditation: The Wellington Park Management Trust is applying for Wellington Park to become a Dark Sky Reserve and the Wilderness Society is seeking to accredit the South West World Heritage Area as a Dark Sky Sanctuary.

So what does it take to get your sky accredited as truly dark? The first part is to do with light, naturally, or rather its absence. You need to demonstrate that your night sky is truly dark and then complete a lighting inventory and develop a lighting policy. You also need to demonstrate community support for the application.

For the village of Ross, demonstrating suitable darkness was smooth sailing. Part two of the application is now in progress with strong support from the Northern Midlands Council and the recently formed Ross Astronomical Society, which will help host star gazing and astro-photography events to promote the concept.

"Ross is a perfect destination for dark sky tourists and the accreditation will help promote this and put us on the map. This is something that other villages and towns across Tasmania can consider doing, to attract more tourists and put Tasmania on the map as the Dark Sky State," says Nigel Davies, Chair of the Ross Local District Committee. "I can think of many places such as Sheffield, Bothwell, St Helens, Swansea, Geeveston, the West Coast towns and the Tasman Peninsula which would also be ideal dark sky locations."

Whether Tasmania could be the Dark Sky State is a question for Tourism Tasmania. With a coordinated effort Noctourism could be added to the many attractions that bring people to the Apple Isle today.

For those budding star gazers, Dark Sky Tasmania is hosting 'A Sky Full of Stars' on Wednesday May 7 at The Shambles Brewery, 222 Elizabeth Street, Hobart to explore the magic of Tasmania's night sky.

Come down for air. Stay for the stars. Lights out.