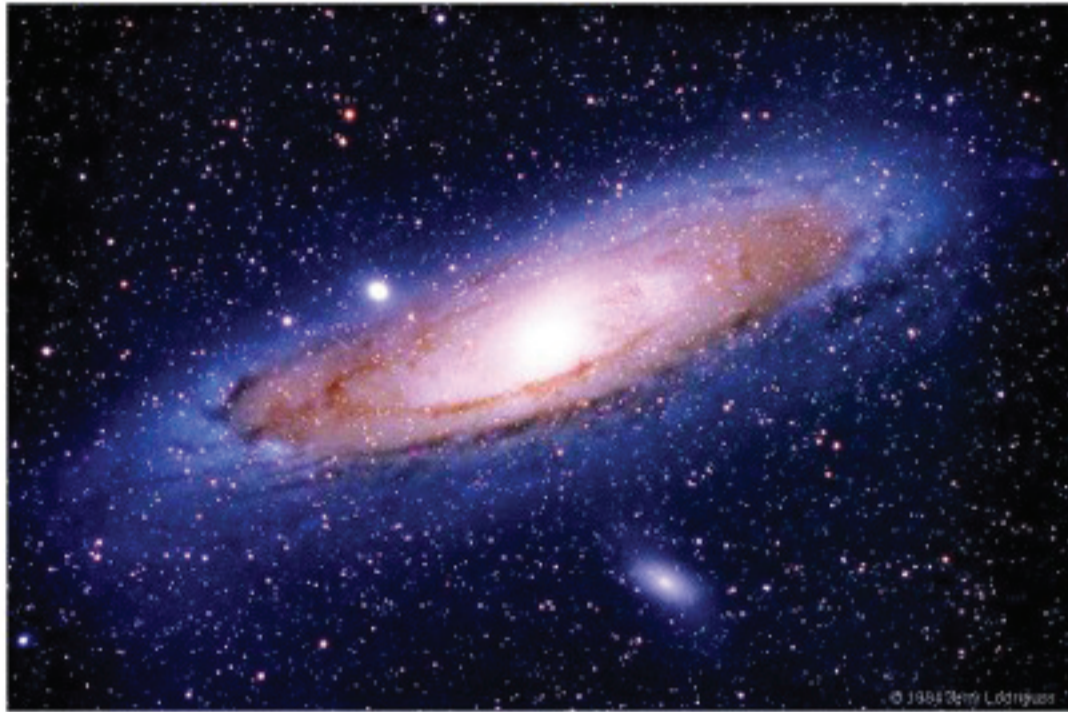


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## Ultimate Geek Vacation- Swiss "Astro Retreat" Gives You a Suite & Telescope



For those of us who would love to explore outer space, but don't have an extra \$200,000 lying around to buy a Virgin Galactic ticket (or the stomach to handle zero-G), there will soon be a more affordable and grounded way to peruse the universe. Opening in 2009, a Swiss Astro-Retreat known as AAV

Lue-Stailas, will offer 6 studios to rent by the night, each equipped with its own dome, telescope, and photographic gear. Want to take personal photos of a nearby nebula for your dorm room wall or office cubicle? Go for it. Imagine how your geek-cred will soar when someone compliments your poster of galaxy merger and you respond, "Yeah, I took that photo myself actually."

The retreat lies in the easternmost part of Switzerland near the Italian border in a pristine area of land around 3,173 meters above sea level. This uninhabited stretch of forests, alpine grasslands and bare rocks are strictly protected, and normally open only to a handful of researchers from around the globe carry out various scientific studies in the area.

This new center for amateur astrophotography, AAV Lue-Stailas, is located in a geographical location that offers excellent sky-gazing conditions and 250 clear nights annually. The retreat is the brainchild of Václav and Jitka Ourednik who both hold a PhD in neuroscience. They have been studying the regenerative capacity of the central nervous system for over 20 years. As amateur astro-photographers themselves, they share a "unique love of both the micro and macro cosmos" reports Universe Today. They say that the microstructures of the human brain mirror the macrostructures found throughout the universe.

"The views through a microscope [of neuronal cell cultures] can be remarkably similar to vistas in the universe imaged through a telescope such as the Hubble Space Telescope (HST)," says Jitka.

The pair aims to promote public awareness for the need to protect the natural habitat and the need to maintain areas free of light pollution.

"Recent statistics show that the global interest in astronomy increases every year dramatically," says Vaclav, "Moreover, people are not only interested in astronomy and astrophotography but they also realize how important their contribution is in the preservation of our global natural habitat, which also includes the protection of dark night skies by a strict control of light pollution."

I realize that the majority of our readers, myself included, will likely never make it to AAV Lue-Sailas, it's always nice to hear about beautiful places and beautiful ideas in my book. If any Daily Galaxy Readers do make it there, make sure to send the rest of us back some of your cosmic Kodak moments.

Posted by Rebecca Sato

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Sources:

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