

ASSA Dark Sky Director's Report

The past year has seen encouraging progress in the recognition of dark skies as an important scientific, environmental, cultural and tourism resource. In South Africa, a major development was the adoption of the [National Astro-Tourism Strategy and Implementation Plan](#).

The strategy aims to position the country as a leading astro-tourism destination while supporting rural economic development, community participation, indigenous astronomical knowledge and the protection of areas with exceptional night skies.

Internationally, DarkSky International has continued to expand its work in responsible outdoor lighting, public education and the certification of International Dark Sky Places. The programme added nearly 30 certified places during 2024, bringing the worldwide total close to 250. DarkSky International has also continued to highlight the environmental and ecological effects of artificial light at night and to promote its five principles for responsible outdoor lighting.

There is growing interest within South Africa in developing dark-sky destinations and pursuing international accreditation. Recent engagement between government, astronomy organisations, tourism stakeholders and local communities is particularly welcome. These initiatives demonstrate that protecting dark skies can support astronomy, biodiversity conservation, energy efficiency and sustainable tourism simultaneously.

The ASSA Dark Sky portfolio will continue to promote awareness of light pollution, responsible lighting practices and the value of South Africa's exceptional night skies. ASSA is well placed to contribute astronomical expertise, public education and advocacy as the national astro-tourism strategy moves towards implementation.

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