



Challenger
LEARNING CENTER
of Hardin County



jefferson

The Otter Creek Astronomical Observatory

The Observer

June 2008 (#13)

Upcoming Evening Programs:

May 10, June 14, July 5, August 9
All programs begin shortly after Sunset

Join the observatory staff for a tour of what is visible in the night sky, including the moon, stars, and planets. *All evening programs are "weather permitting" -- if the sky is not clear enough for celestial objects to be visible the observatory will not be open.*

Upcoming Daytime (solar) Programs:

May 24, June 28, July 26, August 23
All programs begin at 11 AM Eastern Time.

Daytime programs are "open house" at the observatory. Come safely observe the Sun, with its prominences and sunspots. Walk the model solar system trail and get a sense of the size of things in space. Check out our telescopes and learn about the observatory -- after all, you can't really see what's in the observatory when it is dark. *Daytime programs are held "rain or shine" -- the observatory is open regardless of weather.*

Visit the Otter Creek Observatory web page at

www.ottercreekpark.org

Observatories in the Louisville Region

Otter Creek Observatory is not the only observatory in the area. Within an evening's drive of Louisville there are a number of observatories, each worth a visit. There is no one that is "best" – each has its own advantages and disadvantages. Here is an introduction to each of them, in alphabetical order, with information on Otter Creek Observatory for the sake of comparison. Try to visit them all! A visit to an observatory makes an excellent summer day trip. Before visiting, be sure to contact the observatory first to verify hours and to make sure that the observatory is open in the case of inclement weather.

The Cincinnati Observatory

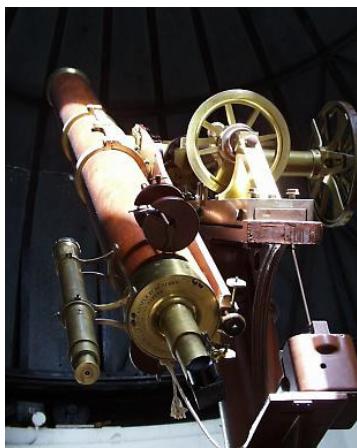
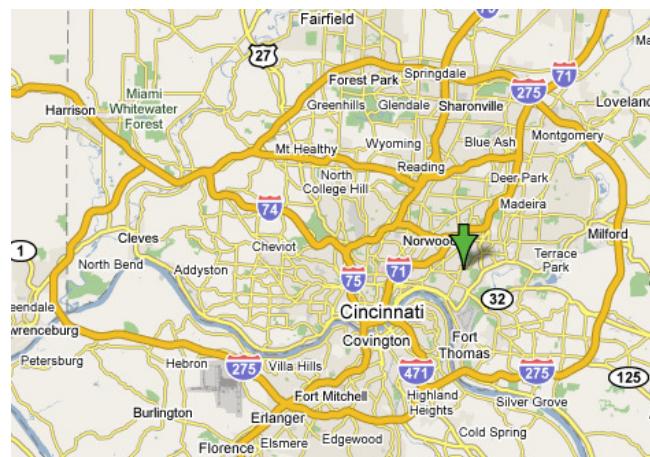
<http://www.cincinnatiobservatory.org/>

The Cincinnati Observatory Center
3489 Observatory Place
Cincinnati, OH 45208
(513) 321-5186

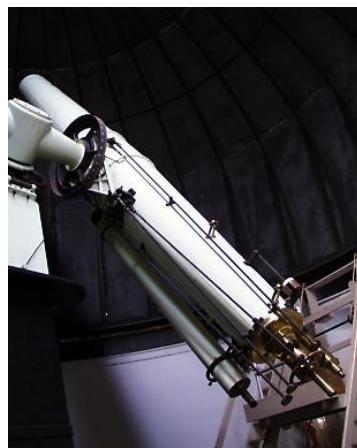
Largest aperture telescope: 16 inch.

This is a beautiful and historic public observatory with classic long-focus refracting telescopes that are beautifully functioning museum pieces in themselves. They are housed in very nice, restored historic buildings. It is located in the heart of Cincinnati and thus lacks dark skies.

Photos are from the observatory web site.



11 inch refractor.



16 inch refractor.



Buildings and grounds of the Cincinnati observatory



Holcomb Observatory

<http://www.butler.edu/holcomb/>

Butler University

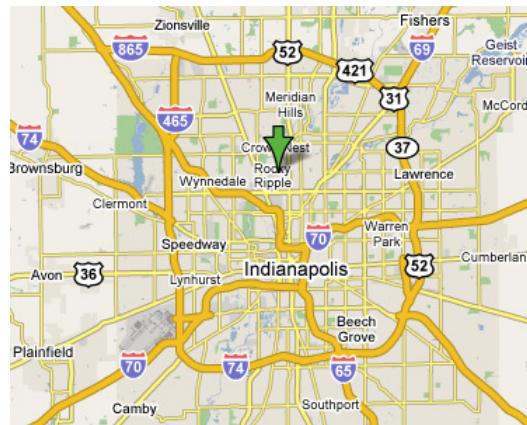
4600 Sunset Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46208

(800) 368-6852

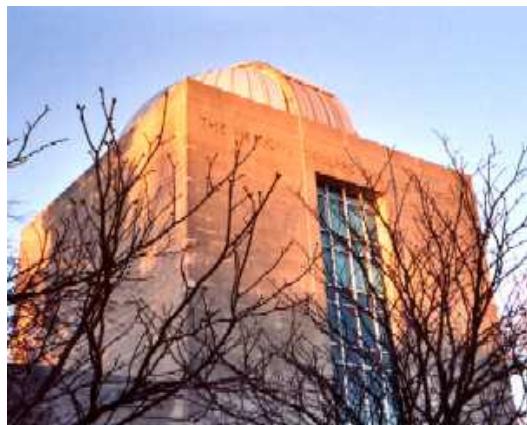
Largest aperture telescope: 38 inch.

This observatory features a very large Cassegrain telescope. It is located at Butler University in the heart of Indianapolis and thus lacks dark skies. It is an impressive facility -- one of the largest public observatories in the world. It also has a planetarium.

Photos are from the observatory web site.



38 inch Cassegrain telescope.



Holcomb Observatory building.

Indiana University Southeast (IUS) Observatory

Indiana University Southeast

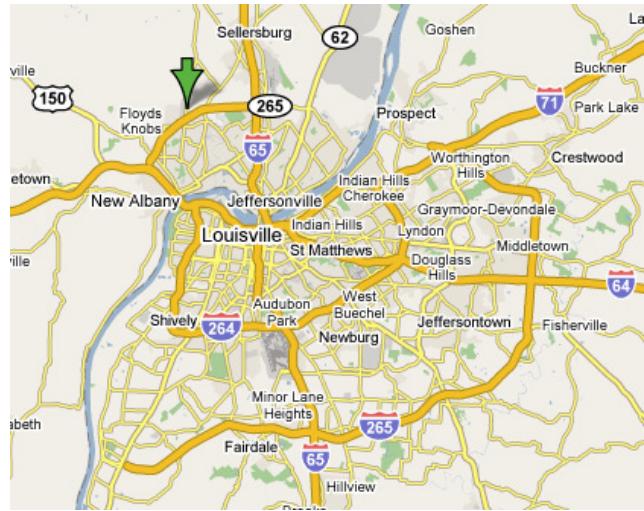
4201 Grant Line Rd., New Albany, IN 47150

(812) 941-2333

Largest aperture telescope: 7 inch.

The IUS observatory holds regular public programs but you will need to call for information. It features a 7 inch refractor. It is located in the Louisville's Indiana suburbs, and so has average skies – not particularly dark but better than the observatories that are located in the heart of large cities.

Photos courtesy of Tammy Duncan,
Jefferson Community & Technical College student.



IUS Observatory building.



The 7 inch refractor.

Kirkwood Observatory

<http://www.astro.indiana.edu/kirkwood.shtml>

727 East 3rd Street, Swain West 319
Bloomington, IN 47405
(812) 855-6911

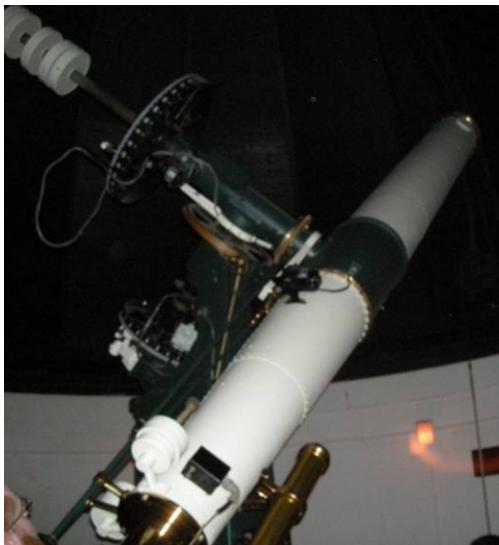
Largest aperture telescope: 12 inch.

Kirkwood Observatory features a classic refracting telescope housed in a picturesque building on the beautiful Indiana University campus. It is in the heart of Bloomington, which is a relatively small town. Thus Kirkwood will not have truly dark skies, but the skies will be better than the skies over observatories located in major urban areas.



The observatory also houses a solar telescope. The solar telescope consists of a heliostat on the roof of the building that directs an image of the sun down inside the observatory. The solar telescope can then display the sun directly (in "white light"), display a Hydrogen-alpha filtered image of the sun, or display the solar spectrum. Note that parking can be difficult near IU – when visiting, plan time to find a parking place.

Photos below are from the observatory web site and courtesy of Jennifer Hatchett, Jefferson Community & Technical College student.



12 inch refractor



Kirkwood Observatory



The "inside" portion of the solar telescope

Louisville Astronomical Society (LAS) Observatory
James G. Baker Center for Astronomy

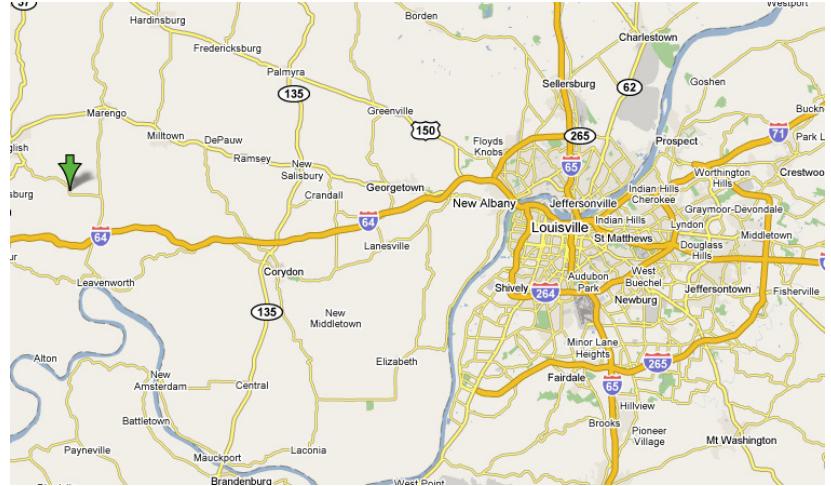
<http://louisville-astro.org/>

3912 East Curby Road
English (Curby), Indiana 47118

Largest aperture telescope: 16 inch.

The LAS is a private club that regularly opens its facilities to the public. Visit their web page and look for information on a "Public Observation at Curby". You will need to contact the LAS for details. The LAS observatory building is a utilitarian structure – not much to look at from the outside, but the observatory features very dark skies for night programs. If you are interested, you can join the club -- they welcome everyone with an interest in astronomy. The LAS has been in existence since 1933.

Photo below is from the observatory web site.



LAS Observatory.

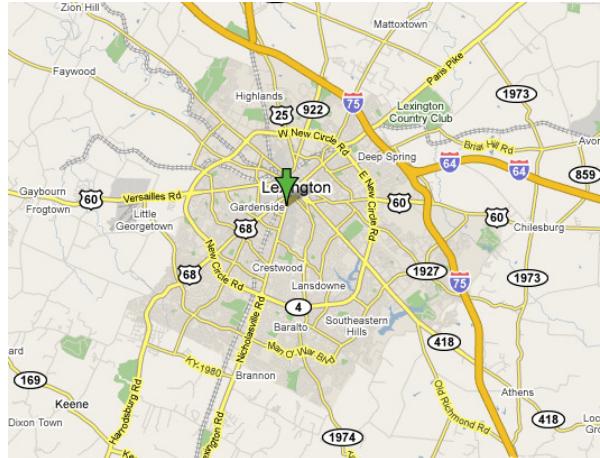
MacAdam Observatory

http://www.as.uky.edu/academics/departments_programs/physicsastronomy/Pages/Observatory.aspx

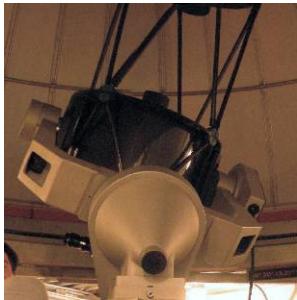
University of Kentucky
500 S. Limestone
Lexington, KY 40506
(859) 257-5330

Largest aperture telescope: 20 inch.

MacAdam observatory is operated by the University of Kentucky. It is a new observatory with modern equipment in a utilitarian structure. It is located in the heart of Lexington and thus lacks dark skies.



Photos below are from the observatory web site.



MacAdam Observatory and its telescope.

Otter Creek Observatory

<http://www.jefferson.kctcs.edu/observatory> or <http://www.ottercreekpark.org>

850 Otter Creek Park Road
Brandenburg, KY 40108
502-213-7344

Largest aperture telescope: 16 inch.

This public observatory is jointly operated by Jefferson Community and Technical College and Louisville Metro's Otter Creek Park. It features dark skies for night-time programs and multiple good telescopes in a rural park setting. Its building is a very utilitarian structure – not much to look at from the outside. Otter Creek observatory also offers daytime/solar programs. It has solar filters and a Hydrogen-alpha telescope for sun viewing, and a model solar system trail that illustrates the true sizes of planets in the solar system.



Photos below are from the observatory web site.



Clockwise: 6 inch refractor, observatory building (roof open),
16 inch Schmidt-Cassegrain, observatory building (roof closed).