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ASTRAL-GAZING
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Star-Studded Travel

To find awe, wonder and meditative moments at these hotels and resorts, you just need to look up

By **Sandra Ramani**

In recent years, one of the biggest trends in travel has been journeying to place for a specific astronomical event—think the Great American Solar Eclipse back in 2017, or the annual seasonal sightings of the Northern Lights. But to enjoy the beauty of what lies above, you don't have to wait for a once-in-generation display or plan your trip around a limited window of opportunity (and then cross your fingers for good weather). There are plenty of places around the world known for their exceptional stargazing all year long.

Many have been designated as Dark Sky areas by the International Dark-Sky Association (darksky.org), an organization dedicated to spreading education about artificial light pollution and how it can disrupt wildlife, impact climate change and human health, and generally change the way we interact with the night sky. Spanning the globe, these places (which fall into such categories as Communities, Parks, Places, Sanctuaries or Reserves) made the roster based on their location, limited light pollution and commitment to protecting the natural surroundings.

To help promote their setting in a Dark Sky region—or in an isolated area that's just generally stellar for star-sightings—a number of hotels and resorts have created ways to help their guests learn about and engage with the night sky. Here's a look at what some properties are doing—plus a few astronomy-themed spa treatments that aim to harness the power of the stars.

Compass Rose Lodge

Utah has among the highest number of International Dark Sky-designated parks and communities—so many that its governor recently declared April the official Utah Dark Sky Month. Among the 23 such places are five national parks, 10 state parks and even two towns, so there are plenty of opportunities to experience the stars on a road trip, camping adventure or nighttime stroll. An insider's tip: The winter months are actually some of the best for taking in the starry sky fields here, both because it gets dark earlier in the day and because the reduced moisture in the air helps make the stars more transparent to the naked eye—and easier to capture with a camera.

Located in the town of Huntsville, about 15 miles from the North Fork Park Dark Sky area, the 15-room Compass Rose Lodge takes its cues from the surrounding Ogden Valley's agricultural heritage by offering a charming farmhouse experience. The property is also home to the Huntsville Astronomic and Lunar Observatory (HALO), which lodge guests can experience via guided tours and astronomy sessions, when you might spot everything from globular clusters to the rings of Saturn.

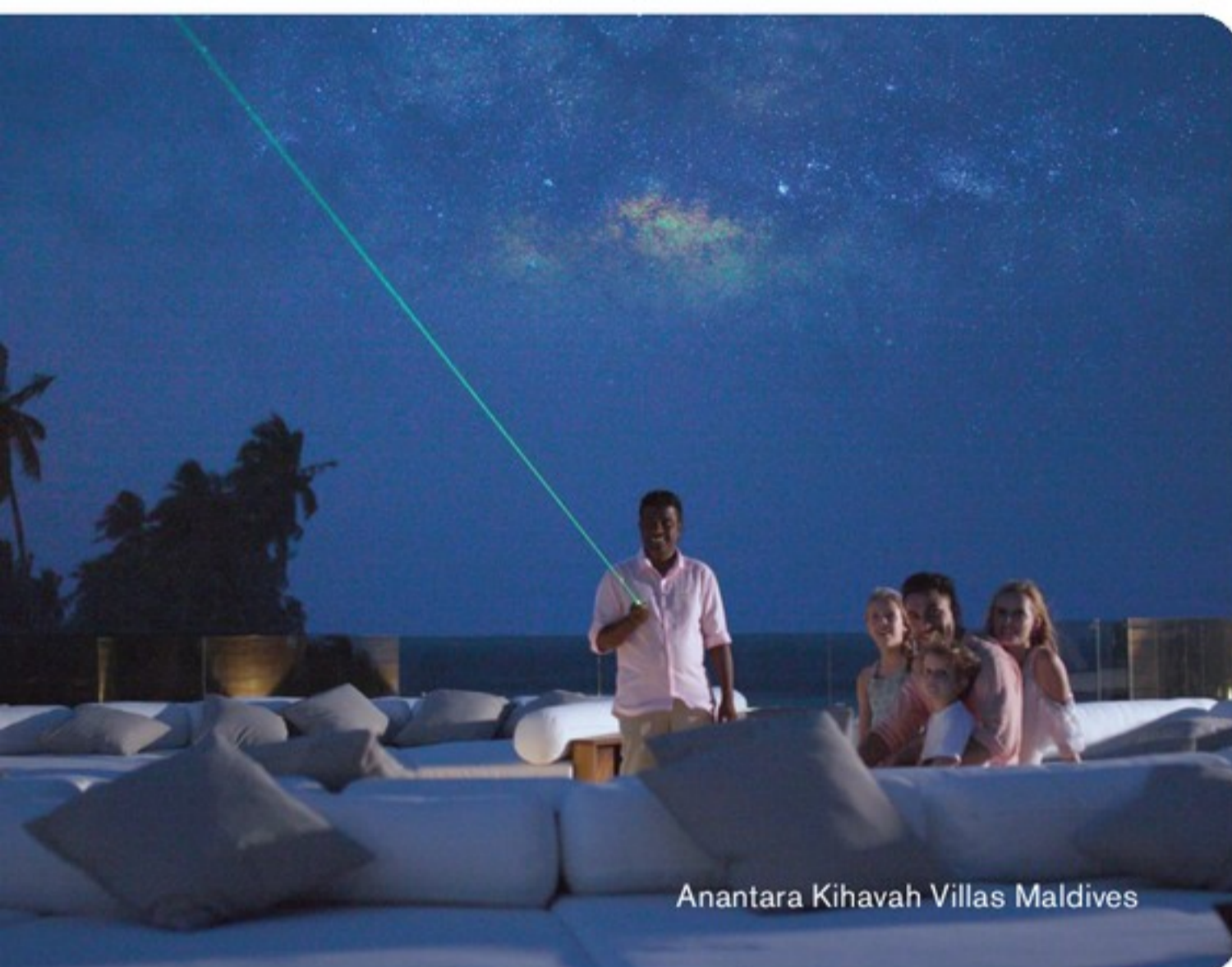
compassroselodge.com



Shore Lodge Resort

As the home of the country's first and only Dark Sky Reserve with Gold Tier status—a designation given to only the darkest of night skies—Idaho is a prime spot for star-chasers. About two hours away from that reserve, on the edge of one of the largest areas of protected wilderness in the continental U.S., you'll find this mountain resort perched alongside a 5,330-acre lake.

Come in the summer to catch the annual meteor showers, which boast about 30 shooting stars each hour, or head out on a private stargazing picnic sail on the lake. In cooler months, take in the sky while snuggled under blankets on the private beach or while around a bonfire, s'mores in hand. The Lodge can also arrange for guests to journey to a private yurt up in the mountains for an even more undisturbed look at the stars. shorelodge.com



Anantara Kihavah Villas Maldives

Surrounded by nothing but the crystal-clear waters of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, this island resort is home to SKY, the Maldives' first and only over-water observatory. The custom-built domed structure holds a research-grade telescope that can be remote-controlled to move 360 degrees, ensuring you won't miss a thing up above.

Guests can visit the observatory for sessions with the resident Sky Guru, Ali Shameem, who has over a decade's experiences as a professional astronomer (and whose mentors include noted astronomers from Italy and Chile, as well as U.S. astronaut Buzz Aldrin—a Maldives regular). Because of the Maldives' position just above the equator, the star-scape from both hemispheres can clearly be spotted from the observatory—and likely even from one of the resort's private sandbanks. anantara.com



Mauna Kea Resort

Thanks to low light pollution, regularly clear skies and unobstructed views of the sky, the island of Hawaii is a dream for stargazers. Learn more about what lies above at the beachfront Mauna Kea Resort, which is made of the timeless Mauna Kea Beach Hotel and the nearby family-friendly Westin Hapuna Beach Resort. The hotels partner with Star Gaze Hawaii to offer guided seaside astronomy sessions for all ages, multiple times a week; the experience is open to both hotel guests and the public. The experts leading the activity will also share a bit about the history of astronomy and the mythological lore of the stars.

maunakearesort.com