



ESO Astronomy Summer Camps at Observatory of Val d'Aosta

1. Introduction

There is a strong interest from students and families for high quality holiday camps that can offer programmes mixing leisure activities, a language experience and training activities. Astronomy represents an excellent theme for an activity camp with a training programme that encompasses night observations, use of professional scientific instruments, lectures about astronomy, hands-on activities. Participants will be engaged in stimulating activities, will interact with camp staff and invited lecturers, and work together with a common mission. Besides the astronomy programme, they will share social moments, enjoy the winter alpine nature and landscapes, build a community with peers from different European countries, and practice language skills. The scientific standards of the camp activities will be guaranteed by the endorsement of the European South Observatory, the partnership with the Observatory of Val d'Aosta (OAVDA) and the other national partners, which will be involved in the programme.

2. Partners

Sterrenlab (www.sterrenlab.com) is the astronomy camp organizer responsible for the camp organisation, including registrations, contracts and insurance. Sterrenlab offers services and consultancy in the field of science communication and education with a core business in the organization of children and teenager camps. Sterrenlab has a unique approach to summer camp organisation because it operates on two equally important aspects of children and teenager camps. Firstly it guarantees high standards in terms of organization, safety and management and relies on accommodations that are selected with the greatest attention to safety, environment, cleanliness and location. Secondly, Sterrenlab is involved in several educational programmes at the European level and follow the debates in the educational community about the latest trends in science education. This two-fold approach is reflected in Sterrenlab's camp activities: stimulating, entertaining and inspiring experiences for the camp participants.

The European Southern Observatory will endorse the camp, guaranteeing the training standards of the camp, contribute to the promotion and provide lectures.

The OAVDA will give access to the observatory telescopes and instrumentation and will design and implement the astronomy programme in collaboration with Sterrenlab.

National astronomical institutions in a number of pilot countries will be contacted to endorse the camp and provide in-kind support (e.g. lecturers), promotion and possibly contribute to the fee of participants from their country.

3. Target group

The camp will be addressed to 30-50, 15-17 years old secondary school students from the ESO Member States (<http://www.eso.org/public/about-eso/memberstates.html>, incl. Brazil) and potential future Member States. The working language of the camp and all material will be English.

4. Location and duration

The camp will take place during the Christmas holidays (26-31 December) to take advantage of longer nights and the possibility of organizing winter sport sessions.

The location of the pilot camp will be the Osservatorio Astronomico della Val d'Aosta (www.oavda.it) in Saint-Barthelemy (Italy), an excellent facility to host an astronomy camp because of the unique location (clear sky, breathtaking scenario of the Alps) and the characteristics and variety of astronomical instruments available for didactical activities. A recently renewed hostel is located next to the Planetarium and 5 minutes by walk from the Observatory itself; participants will be hosted in the hostel in rooms with 4-10 beds and bathrooms. Meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) will be served at the hostel restaurant; common spaces are available for the social moments and free time.

5. Activities

The daily schedule will include 2-3 astronomy sessions, social activities, excursions, winter sport activities nearby the observatory.

The astronomy sessions will consist of lectures, hands-on activities and sky observations with the OAVDA telescopes and instruments. The main theme of the camp will be stellar spectroscopy.

Sterrenlab is working with a team of international counsellors which ensure a multicultural approach and appropriate language skills. The camp staff will consist of:

- camp director
- 1-2 resident outreach professionals
- OAVDA staff (scientists/science communicator)
- visiting astronomers

6. Agreements with partners

The involvement of ESO and the national partners in the pilot astronomy camp will contribute to increasing astronomy awareness with a pilot initiative that has the ambitious goal to become an annual event for European teenagers interested in science and astronomy.

ESO will endorse the camp, promote the camp through its website and other media, approve the final programme to guarantee that science standards are appropriate, provide in-kind support e.g. 1-2 lecturers (TBC) and ESO promotional material, provide a prize of a sponsoring for the participation of 1 participant.

The national partners which will become partners are expected to:

- endorse the pilot camp and give the authorization to use their logo (as “national partners”) associated with the camp promotion
- promote the camp through national networks
- provide in-kind support e.g. 1 lecturer and giveaways
- sponsor the participation of 1 or more participants from their country

The cost of the camp shall be paid by the families and not exceed 500 euros (excl. transportation cost).