Directions to the Dark Sky Observatory (DSO)

These directions are for the non-Parkway route since at this time that route is blocked off due to repairs being done on the Parkway. You will, in fact, follow the Detour route as marked with signs along the way. (This is called the “winter non-Parkway route” on the map.)

Take highway 421 toward Deep Gap/Wilkesboro/Winston-Salem. You will drive about 10 miles and then turn left onto US 221 at the traffic light in Deep Gap. You will follow 221 for 2.8 miles and turn onto Idlewild Rd (SR 1003). Drive 3.5 miles and turn right onto Phillips Gap Road. After another 2.1 miles Phillips Gap Rd crosses the Parkway, jogging left about a hundred yards, and is a state gravel road on the other side of the Parkway—it is NOT the gravel road immediately across from the paved side! It is marked with its name on the post of the stop sign (see sketch at right →).

Travel about 1.5 miles on the gravel road until you come to Observatory Road on the left—it is marked with a green state road sign. There is a large observatory sign just before our gate on Observatory Rd. If you arrive before the scheduled event time the gate will still be locked and nobody will likely be there.

There will be some temporary blue and white signs directing the way, starting at the intersection of Phillips Gap Rd and the Parkway.

At the Observatory:

After you drive past the Lowe's House Observers' Quarters on your left. Go past the first group of domes (one or more of these may also be open), and weather tower, and follow the “Public Viewing” signs for about another 1,000 feet to the 32-inch telescope dome and attached Jo and Don Cline Visitor Center at the end of the road. Park on the grass field around it.

Return Trip Directions:

Drive out our road (Observatory Rd.) and turn right onto the gravel Phillips Gap Road. Drive about 1.5 miles until you reach the stop sign. Jog left at the Parkway and follow the marked Detour route to Deep Gap. Turn right at the light to take 421 back to Boone. If you are heading to Charlotte or Winston-Salem, turn left at the light and follow 421 to I-77 for Charlotte or stay on 421, which becomes I-40, to Winston-Salem.