



NATIONAL OBSERVATORY OF ATHENS
Institute for Astronomy, Astrophysics,
Space Applications and Remote Sensing
HELMOS OBSERVATORY



GUIDE FOR VISITING ASTRONOMERS

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1. Introduction

Dear Observer,

After you have successfully proposed for use of time on Aristarchos telescope, you will travel (<http://helmos.astro.noa.gr/hoto.html>) to Helmos Mountain to obtain your data. This document offers suggestions and guidelines to the visiting astronomer to make his/her observing run as smooth and as productive as possible.

The Institute for Astronomy, Astrophysics, Space Applications and Remote Sensing (IAASARS) provides support for the Aristarchos telescope during the whole observing run, so you will not need to know how to open, close, and, in general, operate the telescope. However, it will be good to familiarise yourself with the telescope and the instrument operation by reading the appropriate manuals (they are available on the Helmos Observatory web page: helmos.astro.noa.gr).

Furthermore, if you would like to give a short presentation of your work to the telescope staff, or perhaps a longer seminar at the Institute base in Athens, please, contact Dr. Alceste Bonanos (bonanos@astro.noa.gr) well ahead of your visit so that it can be arranged. We are always interested to hear about visiting observer's work and will be happy to discuss our own. Note that Aristarchos telescope collaborates as much as possible in the IAASARS's seminar programme.

2. What to Bring

Visiting astronomers should bring:

- **Money**
- **Driver's license and passport and/or ID**
- **Warm clothing, especially in winter**

3. Run Preparation

The details of your observing run are communicated to support staff via the Aristarchos Application for Telescope Time Form (ATAF). The support astronomer will use the contents of your submitted ATAF to configure your requested instrument. This will normally be done on the afternoon of the first night of your run, but some iteration with you may be necessary to establish the exact configuration if there are any ambiguities or special requests. The ATAF has a box for you to indicate any special requirements you might have. Carefully note down anything which you think might help us.

We offer a facility by which you can check the visibility of your objects during your run. Your run can be made much more efficient and void of nasty surprises by using these guidelines.

One point cannot be overstated: Please **READ THE DOCUMENTATION!**

The Helmos Observatory primary documentation source can be found on the web page (<http://helmos.astro.noa.gr>). There is certainly a great deal of information available with which we advise you to be familiar with *before* arrival. Some of it may become clear when you actually see the telescope, instrument or user interfaces, but you should make an effort to have an abstract idea of how everything works beforehand.

4. Observers Health & Safety

Please read carefully through our [Health & Safety Document](#) before arriving at the Observatory.

5. Upon arrival

Your support astronomer will meet you at the telescope around 15:00 in winter time and around 16:00 in summer time on the first day of your observing run. You will then be introduced to the telescope and instruments. Do not be afraid to ask questions! Note that at least two staff members are always present on the mountain and your introducing astronomer and the astronomer in charge are always reachable by phone (2103490030) for the duration of your run.

5.1 Facilities

5.1.1 Facilities on the Aristarchos Telescope (AT):

The main buildings are: Telescope Building (TB) and the Control Building (CB).

The TB houses the telescope and all its supporting equipment and machinery.

The CB has the telescope control room main office, visitor's office, mechanical workshop, electronics workshop, living/dining room with kitchenette, two toilets, storage room, common room and three bedrooms (with a maximum capacity of 7 people, including the NOA staff). Visitors can use the kitchen and use some space on the fridge for the duration of their stay.

In the CB, visitors can find a stereo system, a LED TV with satellite receiver, a DVD player, a Blu-ray player and a collection of books.

The CB and TB are connected by a fiber optic link (Ethernet), and are also connected with the outside world through a link to Athens.

5.1.2 Facilities at the Kalavryta office (KO):

The IAASARS has an office in Kalavryta. The building was once a government building but has been completely re-furnished to provide the telescope group with office space for staff and visitors. The Aristarchos telescope office is located on the **2nd floor**.

5.2 Computer Policy

The following is our policy for use of Helmos Observatory computers by short term visitors. Following these rules will help protect our site's security and your observations:

- Any and all use of the computers indicated by Helmos Observatory staff is permitted in the pursuit of an observing run.
- Non-profit, personal use of Helmos Observatory computer facilities is permitted provided it does not interfere with observations, normal Aristarchos telescope work and provided all applicable laws are followed.
- New software may not be installed on any Windows computer nor on any Linux machine except for temporary use in the guest accounts.
- Only computers indicated by Helmos Observatory staff may be used by short-term visitors.
- Do not try to connect (telnet, rlogin, ssh, etc.) to other machines in the *astro.noa.gr* domain where you do not have an account.
- Do not advertise any Helmos Observatory passwords outside of the observatory.
- Do not use instrument computers for anything except data acquisition.

- Do not set 'xhost +' on any Helmos Observatory computers.
- Use 'ssh' for communications where possible.
- When leaving a computer unattended for any length of time (i.e. more than an hour), preferably log out but under no circumstances leave a screen-saver active which password locks the display.

6. Data Handling and Archiving

All data acquired using Aristarchos telescope instruments are written on the “Aristarchos Data Archive Center” at the end of each observing night by the Helmos Observatory staff.

It is the duty of either the allocated support astronomer or duty technician to put the data on a flashdisk or external hard drive. No one other than the above personnel may use the ccd cameras PCs in the Helmos Observatory control building. External hard drive or flashdisk must be provided by the visiting observers and the data will be given to the visitors at the end of their run (or after each night, if requested) in the Helmos Observatory control building.

A copy of each night's data will be kept at the “Aristarchos Data Archive Center”. The observers can have access to their own data for a period of 30 days after finishing their observing run at ADAC. For more information, the observer should contact Dr. P. Boumis for details of the required procedure.

Should your copy of the data suffer any accident, you can always ask to download them from the Aristarchos Data Archive Center. Contact Dr. Boumis for the appropriate procedure.

7. Problems at the telescope

If you run into problems, do not hesitate to call out technical or astronomy support. Above all, do not attempt to do anything with the hardware or software which is part of the normal operation of Helmos Observatory. Rebooting computers, removing access panels, resetting fuses, etc. should be left to the staff. Even if it is obvious to you what the problem is and how to fix it, do not do so without at least informing a member of Helmos Observatory staff.

Aristarchos is a reliable telescope. Nevertheless, we do occasionally experience problems and this may happen during your observing run. If it does, please be as patient as you can; our staff will do their best to get you back on the sky as soon as humanly possible.

8. Service and override programmes

As part of its remit, Aristarchos telescope executes a number of service and override observing programmes. These may interrupt your own observations. If they do, you will be told the exact time limits required, after which the telescope will be returned to you.

We realize that it can be frustrating to have some of your scheduled telescope time taken away by a service or override programme.

9. Closure conditions

As part of your introduction, you will be told the weather conditions under which you must actively protect the telescope from possible damage. These include wind speed, humidity and closing up the telescope. However, we are proud and protective of our telescope and aim to maintain it in top condition for all our observers.

10. Bad weather

If it is wet or snowing and then freezes, it can be very difficult, even dangerous, to attempt any movement to or from the telescope. In general, don't take unnecessary risks; your safety is more valuable to us than one night's data!

11. End of Night Report

At the end of each night's observing, we ask you to complete an end-of-night report. There are also three text fields in which we ask you to summarize problems, comments and results you obtained.

12. End of Run Report

At the end of the run, there is one last report we ask you to file: the end-of-run report. This brief report is one of the most important but least appreciated parts of your run. It is the primary route by which we measure the degree of satisfaction, or frustration, experienced by our observers. It is your opportunity to make your feelings about Aristarchos known. Please take that opportunity to share your thoughts. If you do not, we cannot know how to improve conditions for your next visit.

Again, it might be unfair to ask you to fill out this form after your last night's observing, particularly if you have had an unproductive run. Therefore, you can complete it the next day, or even after you return home.

Above all, please write something, even if you indicate how good or bad the coffee was. All comments are welcome!

13. Credit “Aristarchos telescope” in published papers

Publications based wholly or in part on data obtained at the Aristarchos telescope are required to carry the following Acknowledgment, primarily as a footnote to the title but, if such footnotes are not permitted by the journal, book, etc, then in the Acknowledgments section of the paper itself:

“Based on observations made with the 2.3m Aristarchos telescope, Helmos Observatory, Greece, which is operated by the Institute for Astronomy, Astrophysics, Space Applications and Remote Sensing of the National Observatory of Athens, Greece.”