

Visiting Palomar Observatory

Palomar Observatory Public Information (760) 742-2119

Visiting Hours

Palomar Observatory is owned and operated by the California Institute of Technology, and as such it is private property. Visitors are welcome at the Observatory, but we ask that all visitors respect our rules and procedures.

Palomar Observatory is open daily (weather permitting) except 24 and 25 December. Visiting hours are from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm Standard Time (9:00 am to 4:00 pm during Daylight Savings Time).

The Observatory will be closed if travel or other conditions are hazardous. Whenever possible, our Public Information Recording phone number (760) 742-2119 will be updated to reflect any closures.

Public Areas

The public areas of the Observatory consist of the A.W. Greenway Jr. Visitor Center and the Visitors Gallery inside the 200-inch Hale Telescope (P200) dome. The Visitor Center also features the Palomar Observatory Gift Shop, which is open on weekends and most weekdays.

Plan Your Visit

Before You Drive

- **Visitors should be aware that we may close the Observatory to the public due to weather or other unforeseen conditions without advance notice.**
- Palomar Observatory makes every effort to inform the public of our visitation status. Due to the uncertainties of our mountain environment, road conditions and our complex operations supporting our research mission, we can not guarantee that information presented on our website or phone information system will be accurate at the time when visitors arrive at our facility.
- Visitors to the Observatory should be aware that dramatic changes due to weather such as ice, wind, fog and road debris is location specific and general information supplied by state, federal and local agencies may not reflect conditions near or at the Observatory.
- Visitors are strongly urged to pay close attention to signs indicating the Observatory's closure to visitors that may be posted on the bottom of South Grade Road (S6), East

Grade Road (S7) and as the S6 "summit" location approximately 4.2 miles south of the Observatory.

- **There are no service stations on Palomar Mountain.** Check your fuel before driving to the Observatory.
- County Road S6 is a typical mountain road with many curves. Please drive carefully. Watch for fog, fallen rocks on the road, especially during and immediately after rainfall. **Travel on Highway 76 and South Grade Road (S6) may be difficult during and just after rain events. Road closures and rock/mud slides are possible at these times.**
- Winter storms usually mean snow and icy conditions on Palomar generally, in these circumstances, tire chains are required by the Highway Patrol. Again, please drive with caution.
- The Observatory will be closed if travel or other conditions are hazardous. Whenever possible our Public Information Recording phone number—(760) 742-2119—will be updated to reflect any closures.
- Approximate driving times (non-rush hour) to the Observatory are:

From the Los Angeles area	3 hours
From downtown San Diego	2 hours
From Escondido	1 hour
From Temecula	1 hour

Driving Directions

The Observatory is located within the Cleveland National Forest on Palomar Mountain in North San Diego County at an elevation of 5,500 feet (1,675 meters) above sea level. The street address is:

Palomar Observatory
35899 Canfield Road
Palomar Mountain
CA 92060-0200

Please be aware that some on-line and GPS programs can give incorrect directions to Palomar Observatory. We recommend consulting Google Maps.

To reach Palomar Observatory from the Los Angeles or San Diego areas, exit Interstate 15 at state highway 76 eastbound. Follow the signs to Palomar Mountain. Twenty five

miles (40 km) from the interchange, County Road S6 (also known as South Grade Road) exits (5 miles/8 km past Valley Center Road) in a "Y" to the left and climbs to the Palomar summit. S6 ends at the Observatory gates.

To reach the Observatory from the Palm Springs Area, take Route 74 west to 371 south, then Route 79 east and south (toward Indio), then Route 76 west to S7 up to Palomar Mountain and after 11 miles (18 km) on S7 bear right onto S6 another 4.5 miles (7 km) to the Observatory parking lot.

Visitor parking is only available in the visitor parking lot; please keep left at the entry way. Sorry, but visitor overnight parking is not permitted at the Observatory, and the visitor parking lot will be closed and locked at approximately 3:30pm Standard Time (4:30p Daylight Savings Time).

As you walk up the path to the P200 dome, the Greenway Visitor Center and Gift Shop will be on your right.

On the Observatory Grounds

- Please note that the interior of the P200 dome is kept at nighttime temperatures for an elevation of 5,500 feet/1,675 meters. Dress accordingly.
- We do not offer guided tours every day that the Observatory is open to the public. On most days, visitors are welcome to look around the designated public areas on their own, at their own pace.
- Cellphone reception, if any, is very limited on Palomar Mountain.

Information For Mobility-Impaired Visitors

- The P200 dome that houses the 200-inch (5.1-meter) Hale Telescope is at a moderate distance from the parking lot. There is a 1,050-foot (320-meter), slightly uphill, paved walking trail that connects the parking lot with the dome.
- Access to the Visitors Gallery in the P200 dome requires climbing 70 steps. At 9:30 am, 1:00 pm, and 2:30 pm, a staff member will meet those unable to climb the steps, but who do not require a wheelchair, and take them to the Visitors Gallery on a small passenger elevator. We regret that we cannot accommodate wheelchair access to the P200 dome at this time.
- The Observatory's Visitor Center, only 130 feet (40 meters) from the parking lot, is open whenever the Observatory is open and is wheelchair accessible.

Please send your feedback to [palomar-info at astro.caltech.edu](mailto:palomar-info@astro.caltech.edu)

