

After a two-year application process, Goblin Valley State Park has been formally designated as an International Dark Sky Park. It is the second unit in the Utah State Parks system to gain this status, following the designation of Dead Horse Point in June of this year.

“We’re pleased to welcome another Utah State Park into the International Dark Sky Park family,” said IDA Executive Director J. Scott Feierabend. “Utah sets a high bar among U.S. states with the most designated Dark Sky Parks.”

Open daily until 10:00 p.m. and home to 24 campsites and two yurts for overnight guests, Goblin Valley State Park has gained popularity in recent years as a destination for stargazers. Those partaking in this activity understand what professional measurements have now proven: free of any significant sources of light pollution, Goblin Valley is home to one of the clearest, darkest night skies in the world. It is not uncommon to hear someone excitedly proclaim that this is the first time they have ever seen the Milky Way.

In order to attain designation as a dark sky park, Goblin Valley needed more than just a pristine night sky. The state park also needed to commit to protecting its own natural darkness by removing extraneous light fixtures and shielding others so that light is projected only downward to where it is needed for safety. Finally, park staff needed to develop educational programs dedicated to the night sky. Toward this end, full moon hikes and telescope viewing events are held throughout the year.

In celebration of its new International Dark Sky Park status, Goblin Valley will host a public star party on Saturday, October 1 at 7:30pm. All are welcome to attend and no reservations are necessary. Multiple telescopes will be available for viewing, each focusing on a different set of objects in the night sky.

Goblin Valley is situated in southern Emery County along State Highway 24, between the towns of Green River and Hanksville, and is approximately one-hour’s drive from Capitol Reef National Park (another international dark sky park). Established as a state park in 1964, the “Valley of Goblins” has long held worldwide fame for its tens of thousands of short, stunted hoodoos that resemble deformed creatures straight out of a fantasy world. Visitors to the park are encouraged to shape their own adventure by wandering freely through these unique sandstone formations.

To learn more about Goblin Valley State Park, visit <http://stateparks.utah.gov/parks/goblin-valley/> or call the visitor center at 435-275-4584. Information about the International Dark Sky Association, including the locations of more than forty dark sky parks around the world, can be found at <http://darksky.org/>.