



What you need to get started

► **COMPUTER AND INTERNET ACCESS**

All you need to use Slooh is a computer (PC or Mac), an internet connection and an email address. Slooh does work with 56Kbps dial-up modems, but broadband internet is highly recommended. You'll also need a web browser. Slooh works best with Mozilla Firefox ([www.mozilla.com](http://www.mozilla.com)) on a PC or Mac.



► **FREE TRIAL MEMBERSHIP**

You can try Slooh for yourself, free of charge, for seven nights. All you need to do is visit the website ([www.slooh.com/skyatnightmagazine](http://www.slooh.com/skyatnightmagazine)), enter your email address and choose a password. You'll then be asked for your credit card details, although you can cancel at any time during the seven-day trial period. At the end of that period, your card is billed and your year-long Commander membership will begin.



► **FULL MEMBERSHIP**

There are two types of membership. If you purchase a Commander membership at \$99.95 per year, you'll enjoy unlimited access to Slooh's telescopes, free mission reservations and a personal gallery page to store pictures. Alternatively, you can purchase 200 minutes of telescope time for \$19.95 as part of an Explorer membership. As an Explorer you're charged five minutes to reserve missions and you don't get a gallery page. For more details, see [www.slooh.com](http://www.slooh.com)

# See the night sky with Slooh

Use powerful, professional telescopes from the comfort of your own home with a membership to this fantastic online service

**EXPERTISE INDICATOR**

Skill level: **beginner** ► intermediate ► advanced

There's nothing quite like being outside on a clear, dark night, looking through a telescope with your own eyes. Astronomical observing with your own scope is an exciting experience, but it can also be frustrating. Skies can be too cloudy, you can't feel your fingers for the cold, or your telescope might not be as powerful as you'd like to be sitting indoors in front of a computer screen, observing live with a 36cm (14-inch) telescope, located at one of the world's premier observing sites?

Slooh is an internet-based observatory that lets you do just that. Anyone can join. You don't have to be a teacher, researcher or member of an astronomical society, plus it's easy to use – even for complete beginners.

To participate in Slooh, you'll need a computer (PC or Mac), a web browser – it works best with Mozilla Firefox – and an internet connection. Broadband internet isn't absolutely essential, but it

will give you a much better experience than you'd get with a dial-up modem. With a suitable computer and a subscription to Slooh, you have immediate access to telescopes. Two domes, located on Mount Teide on Tenerife in the Canary Islands, have been operating since April 2004. Each contains a 36cm Schmidt-Cassegrain. Dome 1, optimised for deep-sky objects, also has a 34mm refractor. Dome 2 is optimised for planetary observations and its second instrument is an 85mm refractor. You can also see the view from an outdoor all-sky camera.

Two new telescopes in hills near Santiago, Chile, are due to become available this summer and there are longer-term plans for telescopes in Australia. Here we'll focus on using the powerful Canary Island scopes.

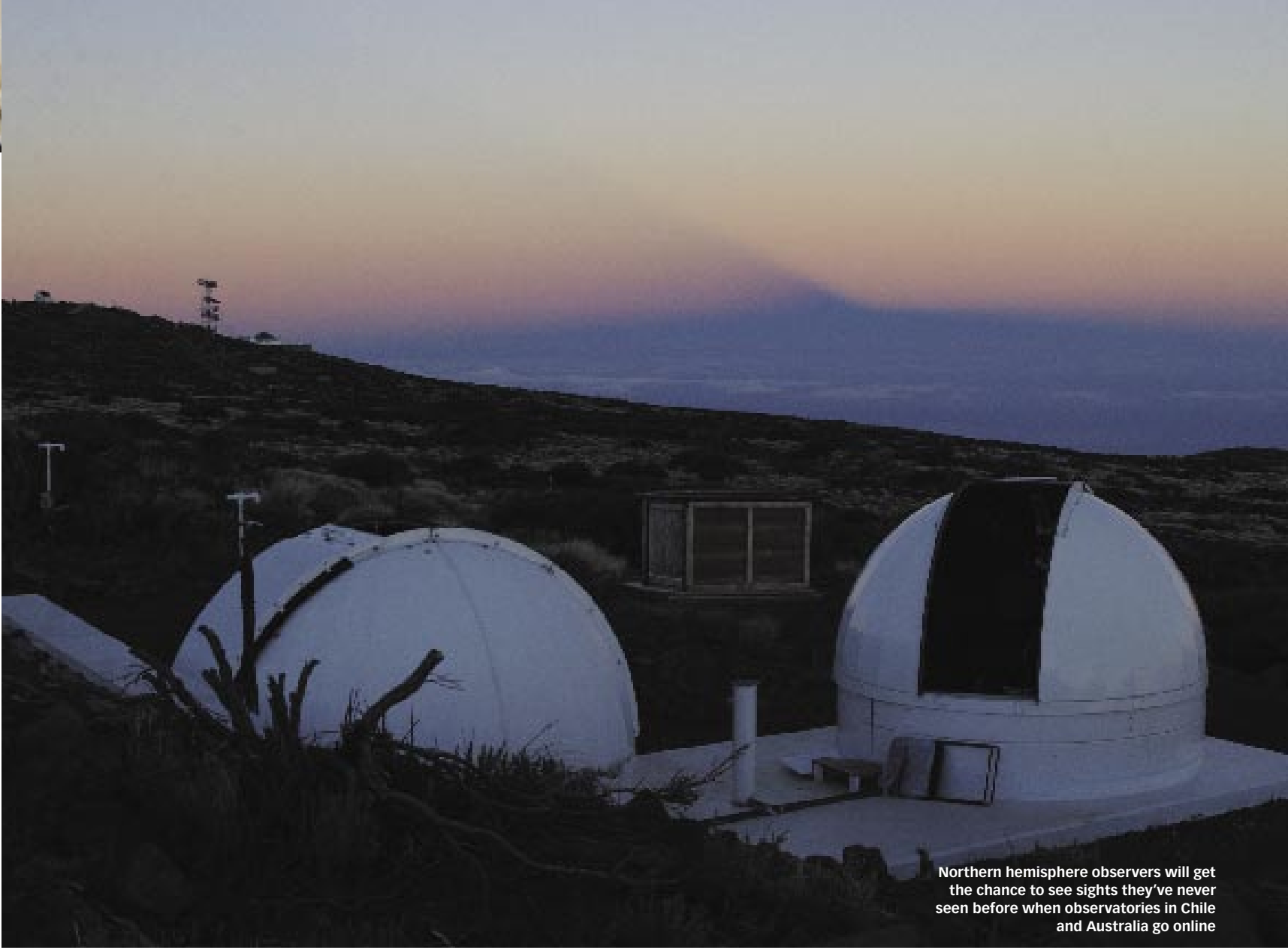
Slooh's telescopes operate whenever it's dark enough, weather permitting. For UK users, that's during the evening and night. In the day you can check

the coming night's schedule, but remember that the observatory uses Universal Time (UT), which is one hour behind British Summer Time. Ultimately, it won't matter what time of the day or night you tune in; Slooh will offer observing 24 hours a day when Chile and Australia join its network.

**Join the club**

There are two kinds of Slooh membership. The difference is that the annual Commander membership gives you unlimited use of the service for a flat fee, while the cheaper Explorer membership is a pay-as-you-go service giving you 200 minutes of telescope time. A free seven-day trial of Slooh is available if you sign up for a Commander membership, although you can cancel during this period. See *What you need to get started* on the left for further details.

After signing up, you'll be ready to explore the many features of Slooh. When you click the log-in ►



Northern hemisphere observers will get the chance to see sights they've never seen before when observatories in Chile and Australia go online

► **A step-by-step guide to viewing the sky with Slooh**



► **STEP 1**  
Arriving first at the Mission Interface you'll see the round portal, which acts like the eyepiece for the telescopes. Various buttons alter the view, control sound and change the left-hand panel. It's best to just explore what they do in turn. Moving your cursor around brings up helpful tips.



► **STEP 2**  
Go to the Launch Pad window for the night's observing schedule. Objects currently on view are highlighted in yellow. Here you'll also find tabs and a menu for navigating around Slooh's features. To get up to speed, visit the 'Help' page via the button in the menu on the left, and go through the topics.



► **STEP 3**  
You can record up to three images during each mission for your picture gallery using the 'Snap Pic' button. Don't worry if the sky background is too bright or the contrast is too low. Click on 'Tune Display' to bring up a set of dials that control the image's brightness, contrast, saturation and hue.

# How to... SEE THE NIGHT SKY WITH SLOOH



The domes on Mount Teide, Tenerife, give you access to some of the best viewing conditions in the world with a choice of deep-sky or planetary objects

▶ button on the home page, the Mission Interface opens. A mission is a single view of an object or area of the sky. Most missions last for five minutes. Then you're on to the next target right away, with the view switching to another object. One dome, designated 'Editor', follows a schedule of objects selected by Slooh staff. The other dome is dedicated to observations

requested by members. You can switch between the two domes with the buttons above the viewing window.

The 'Editor' programme is drawn from a basic repertoire of around 250 popular deep-sky objects, supplemented by planets and comets if they happen to be visible. On a typical night in May, the dozens of different delights served up included Jupiter, Saturn

and Comet Lovejoy, as well as the star clusters M10, M44 and M93 and spiral galaxies such as M98 and M101. Every night there are also one or two hour-long audio sessions, when knowledgeable guides discuss astronomy and talk about the telescope views live, as you're seeing them.

## Get ready for launch

To find out what's on the menu for the night's observing you need to open the other main interface page, called Launch Pad. If your screen is large enough, it's handy to keep the Mission Interface and Launch Pad windows open side by side. On the Mission Interface you need to choose between the 'high mag' and 'wide field' views for the current target. Which one gives the best image depends on the dome you are in and the size of the target object, so experiment and don't expect both to be satisfactory all the time.

During the mission, the image builds up gradually as the camera captures more light. If you like the image you see in the portal, you can record it for your personal

picture gallery. You can also zoom in closer, though you will start to see individual pixels if you go too far. Remember that you're observing live, so the view may be affected by the sky conditions.

Once you're familiar with the basic features, you can move on to choosing your own targets with the 'Reserve Mission' tab in Launch Pad. Click the 'Help' button to be guided through the process. It's hard to go wrong, because you'll be told if you try something impossible.

Slooh isn't just an observatory. As a member, you join a community of thousands of people in over 70 countries, and there's an active chat room whenever the scopes are active. Whether you're a beginner or a more experienced enthusiast, Slooh has much to offer and it's very easy to get hooked. 🌟

## [WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE]

Slooh:  
[www.slooh.com](http://www.slooh.com)

MySlooh:  
[www.myslooh.com](http://www.myslooh.com)

## ▶ A step-by-step guide to viewing the sky with Slooh



### ▶ STEP 4

Access the images you've taken by opening the 'My Pictures' tab in the Launch Pad. Images are filed under their subject. You can either print them out or download them to your own computer. With practice, you can capture some great views, like this one of the globular cluster M10.



### ▶ STEP 5

Now try reserving a mission of your own choosing. First pick your time slot. When you click on a free one it turns blue and a new dialog box appears. Via three tabs you can select from Slooh's selected target list and 12 catalogues of stars and deep-sky objects, or enter your own co-ordinates.



### ▶ STEP 6

To make contact with other members, visit the Chat Room. It's moderated to keep it family friendly and is a great place to ask questions. There's also a Forum for comments related to Slooh and at [www.myslooh.com](http://www.myslooh.com) you can see members' own web pages, including pictures and animations.