

## Quarterly CONNECTIONS on 12/3/25 - Follow-up Questions and Comments addressed by Dr Barentine

### Regarding unanswered questions,

- Christopher Hill: What do you feel is the role of astronomy clubs in support of astrotourism?

JB: Astronomy clubs can directly support astrotourism either as a public service (i.e., for free) or to support their activities by charging fees to operators. Clubs often have members well-equipped with telescopes because they usually conduct outreach activities. These can also be provided for substantially the same purpose for astrotourists (i.e., paying customers). A tour operator might prefer to contract telescopes (and people to staff them) rather than buying their own and staffing them. So it could work out as a financial win-win for both the operator and the club.

- L.Stoner: I have a Question: This comment shared by Bryan Cashion to Everyone: in the Chat, I didn't quite get: 2025-12-03 12:36:18 From Bryan Cashion to Everyone: I would suggest that a TEAM needs these qualifications, but not necessarily just one person.

JB: I think what Bryan meant was that not all of the items on my qualifications list might be found in one person. It's the "business", which could be a sole proprietor or a company with employees. Technically, of course, Bryan is right. What I meant in explaining some items on the list is that the entrepreneur might have to hire qualified staff to acquire some of the qualifications. On the other hand, you have people like Kevin Poe who is mostly a one-man operation.

### **L.Stoner: Also, I wanted to share a few of the comments pulled from the Chat that I found interesting – comments that inspire and apparent challenges:**

- Christopher Hill: Challenges are safety and red light etiquette.

JB: For this I think it helps to educate visitors/clients at the beginning of a session. Many people have never been to an event like this before. They should understand *why* it's important to not use white light so as to allow their eyes to adapt. Some tour operators provide inexpensive red flashlights to guests so they're less likely to pull out their phones and switch on the flashlight feature when they feel they need light to see. (As Dena Laterza suggested.)

Tour operators may also need to deal with guests coming in their own vehicles. In that case, they need to think about how to deal with the headlight issue as they either arrive (if it's already dark) or if they leave early, in particular.

- Natalie Brannon: Consider daytime activities such as eclipse viewing or solar telescope use as astrotourism as well.

JB: 100%. Daytime solar observing is available every clear day (or even partly cloudy day) and still gives guests the experience of seeing something through a telescope. Eclipses are even better, but they're harder to order up on demand!

- Carey Beam: Here in Navajoland (Cuba, New Mexico), eclipses are taboo. Culturally-sensitive programming is important in Indigenous communities.

JB: Yes, and I totally forgot to share DarkSky International's "[Principles of Responsible Astrotourism](#)", number four of which is "Honor local and First People cultures".

- Tina Grange: Challenge for our dark sky observers to participate and assist is the cold.

JB: I recommend thermal suits. I have one made by Wear Guard (the Sno Rider Snowsuit) that I absolutely swear by. They're a little spendy up front, but they hold up well with a lot of use. Paired with good gloves and insulated socks, I'm good to go in below-freezing air temperatures for hours.

- Christopher Hill: Must have insurance as there is liability with running these types of events.

JB: 100%. And it may be a rider on top of a general business insurance policy, given the nature of the activity.

- Christopher Hill: Important to get exit criteria from your sessions. Identify what they want more of, less of, start doing and stop doing...

JB: For conventional sky-viewing activities, an operator can have a menu of options to choose from. For bespoke sessions, communication with clients during the activity is important so as to give them exactly what they're looking for.

John