

EDITORS' PICK | May 31, 2020, 08:11pm
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Six Space Museums, Observatories And Facilities You Can Visit from Home



Valerie Stimac Contributor ©

[Science](#)

I cover space and astrotourism where travel and science intersect.





The Zeiss planetarium projects the start onto the dome of the planetarium in Berlin, Germany, 26... [+] PICTURE ALLIANCE VIA GETTY IMAGES

As we enter the summer months, most parents will be looking for ways to keep kids entertained and educated after an unusual school year. Heck, most adults will be looking for ways to stay entertained too since summer vacations may or may not be happening.

That's where the internet can help! There are a number of science museums, observatories, and even NASA facilities, that offer online resources to help keep us all busy while staying home. Read on to learn about each and choose one to try this week. It might not be as fun as visiting in person, but it will do until these facilities re-open for visitors again.

Adler Planetarium, Chicago, Illinois, USA



Outside the Adler Planetarium in Chicago, Illinois GETTY

Google Arts & Culture has put together an incredible interactive site that allows visitors to explore Chicago's Adler Planetarium from anywhere in the world. From online exhibits and photo galleries to a point-of-view Google 'Street' view that allows you to 'walk' through different parts of the Planetarium, this is a great opportunity for space enthusiasts to explore the historic 90-year old building and all of the modern artifacts and exhibits.

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While you can't explore the whole museum or enter the planetarium for a show, take a 'walk'-through of the Mission Moon exhibit and gaze in awe at the Apollo 13 command module, nicknamed *Odyssey*. After exploring the Adler Planetarium online, you could end by watching *Apollo 13*!

[Click here to explore the Adler Planetarium on Google Arts & Culture](#)

**ALMA (Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array),
Atacama, Chile**



ATACAMA, CHILE - JULY 10: Radio telescope antennas at the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter... [+] GETTY IMAGES

The Atacama desert in northern Chile is one of the best places on earth for observational astronomy. Low humidity, high altitude, and minimal light pollution come together to create a pristine stargazing spot – and professional astronomers take full advantage of that at ALMA.

If you take the ALMA virtual tour online, you'll explore the facility through a series of 360-degree photos. From the antenna array (which does the observational work for astronomers doing research at ALMA) to the administrative spaces, this gives you a peek behind the scenes at how much technology it takes to discover and study astronomical wonders like a ['baby planet'](#) or [Comet 2I/Borisov](#).

[Click here to start the ALMA virtual tour.](#)

Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Washington, D.C., USA



CHANTILLY, VIRGINIA - AUGUST 20: The Space Shuttle Discovery is the back drop as U.S. Vice President ... [+] GETTY IMAGES

Thanks again to Google Arts & Culture, both locations of the National Air and Space Museum are available online for anyone around the world to explore. You can tour the National Mall Building in Washington D.C., which includes an exhibit dedicated to astronaut Sally Ride, halls and exhibits of space science artifacts from different eras, and a great up-close view of the LM-2 Lunar Module in the Boeing Milestones of Flight Hall.

At the virtual Udvar-Hazy Center, you can explore the James S. McDonnell Space Hanger which includes a prized space vehicle on display: the Space Shuttle *Discovery*. On your virtual 'walk,' you can go all the way around *Discovery* – but don't forget to use your mouse to look up and around at all of the other space vehicles and scale rocket replicas.

[Click here to explore the National Air and Space Museum online.](#)

NASA Langley Research Center, Virginia, USA



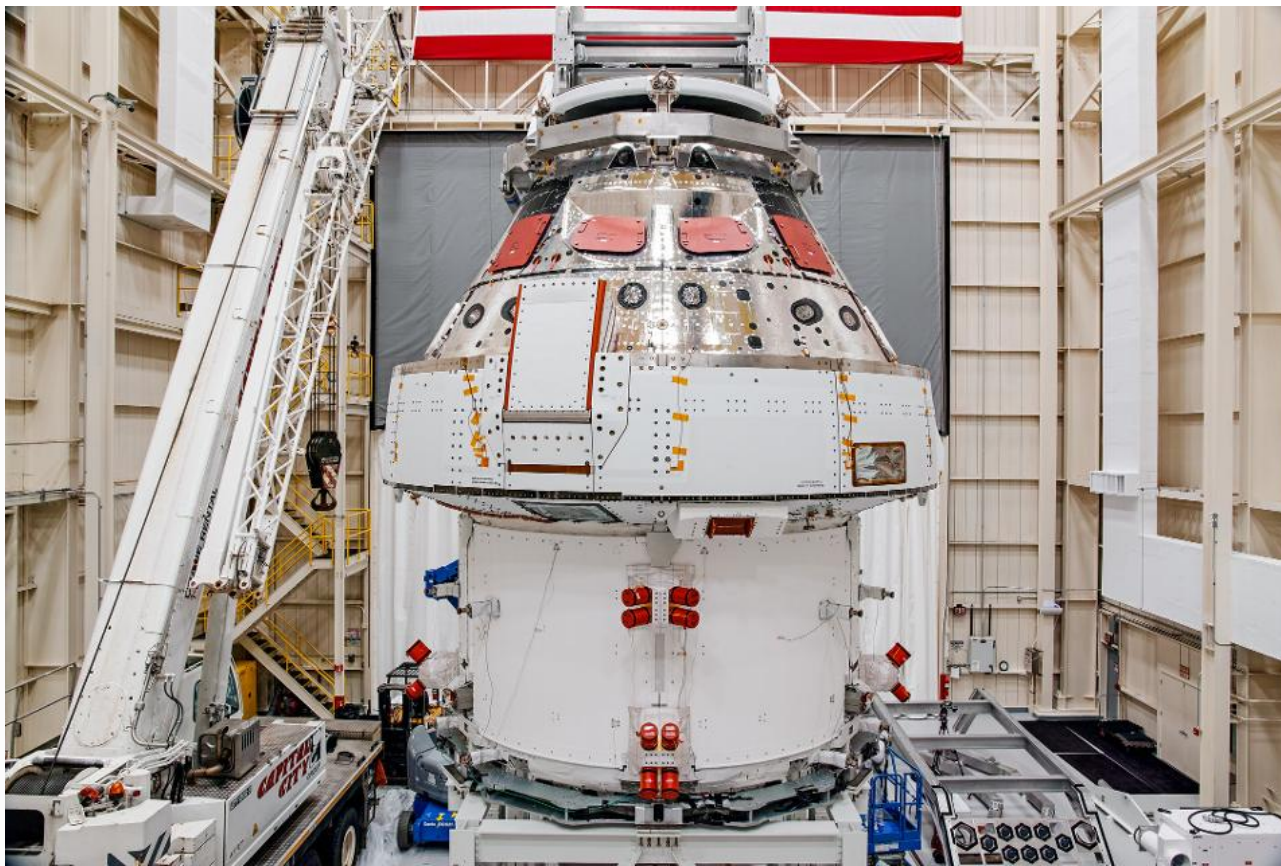
The NASA Globe and sign at Langley Research Center. NASA LANGLEY/ DAVID C. BOWMAN

You might recognize NASA Langley Research Center as the facility where *Hidden Figures* like Katherine Johnson worked during their careers helping NASA reach space. Langley is not one of more popular NASA facilities for visitors; crowds usually gather for in-person tours of Kennedy in Florida, Johnson in Texas, JPL in California, and even Goddard in Maryland.

But since in-person tours at those facilities aren't an option right now anyway, why not take a virtual tour of this one? You can learn about Building 2103 (the Katherine G. Johnson Computational Research Facility), 'step into' the subsonic wind tunnel, and 'explore' the Flight Research Hangar. Some places on the virtual tour are places you couldn't even visit in-person if you wanted to!

[Click here to start the virtual tour of NASA Langley.](#)

NASA Glenn Research Center, Cleveland, Ohio, USA



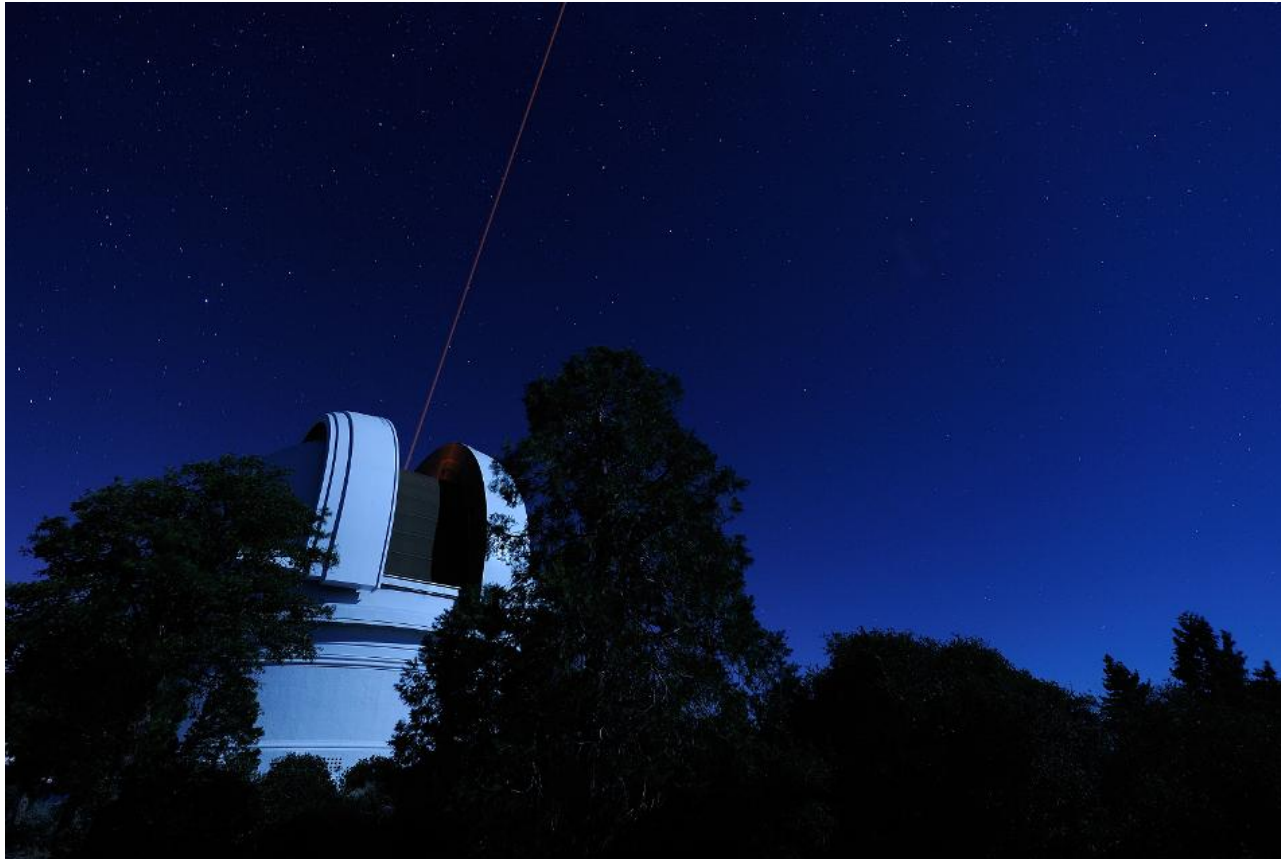
NASA's Orion spacecraft—the crew module and European-built service module—is being lifted into a ... [+] NASA / RADISLAV SINYAK

Glenn Research Center in Cleveland, Ohio is another NASA facility that is overlooked for a visit except by the most space devoted. They too offer a virtual tour though, giving you a look in some of the labs and testing facilities that help NASA ensure spacecraft – like the Orion spacecraft pictured above – are ready to take astronauts to the Moon and beyond.

Virtual tour spots include two wind tunnels – one that's for low-speed testing and another that's for supersonic testing –, a ballistics impact lab (to ensure spacecraft can handle micrometeorites and other space debris), the Zero Gravity facility where NASA studies microgravity, and the propulsion systems laboratory.

[Click here to choose a virtual tour at NASA Glenn.](#)

Palomar Observatory, California, USA



PALOMAR MOUNTAIN, CA - OCTOBER 2008: On Palomar Mountain in California lies the Hale Telescope, ... [+] GETTY IMAGES

One more space place you can take a virtual tour is Palomar Observatory, located high in the mountains outside of San Diego. Palomar is home to the Hale Telescope, a 200-inch telescope which was the largest in the world until 1975. On the virtual tour, you can explore the visitor center, inside the Hale dome, and inside the Oschin and Mayer domes – where two more of Palomar’s telescopes are housed.

[Click here to start the virtual tour at Palomar Observatory.](#)

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I specialize in covering space tourism and astrotourism experiences around the world – and above it. My first book, *Dark Skies: A Practical Guide to Astrotourism*, was... [Read More](#)

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