

Star Guide: Telescopes – a great gift idea

By Tony Berendsen

Every young mind, and some older ones, too, are filled with the wonders of learning and exploring. Some limit the exploration to their local neighborhood, some travel the world to exotic unspoiled locations. Well, maybe a lot of us would like to travel to those exotic locations, but adventure travel is expensive.

There is an exotic unspoiled place we can all go to that doesn't require costly travel – that's the cosmos. It's as close as your backyard. You can explore the cosmos just by looking up in the sky at night with your naked eyes, but my favorite way is to wander the depths of it with a telescope.

If you are looking for a fun, educational gift to give this Christmas, why not give a ticket to adventure and discovery; give someone a telescope.

I'm a big fan of computerized telescopes, but they can be expensive and difficult to use for the novice. **Celestron** has a new line of telescopes called Inspire that are low cost, but high value, and perfect for an entry level astronomy experience.

The telescope comes with an azimuth mount for easy pointing of its erect image optics, and a nice sturdy steel tripod designed for quick assembly with a folding accessory tray that can be illuminated by a removable red led flashlight stored in the mount.

The optical tube can be pointed accurately using the StarPointer Pro non-magnified finder scope, and comes with two eyepieces, giving a nice range of magnification.

One of the really cool things about this scope is the lens cap. It is designed to be a cell phone mount for taking images through the telescope. Imagine how fun it would be to take pictures of craters on the moon to share with your friends.

Inspire can be used as at terrestrial telescope, too, offering close up views of wildlife with an innovative calibrated focus micrometer. Yes, you can take pictures during the day using the cellphone adapter.

Inspire is offered in three different apertures options from 70mm to 100mm, ranging in price from \$179.95 to \$289.95.

This is not the only telescope Celestron offers, but one that I recommend for the novice or intermediate level observer.

I began my life of exploration when I received a telescope for Christmas from my parents when I was 8 years old. I've been exploring the exotic destinations of the Cosmos ever since. Maybe you can "Inspire" someone with a telescope for Christmas.

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