

## AstroBlast 2011

Hi all,

Here's a brief report of Astroblast 2011, plus a side trip.

After watching the dismal weather reports, I decided to cancel my camping trip up to Oil City for the 2011 Astroblast Convention, the weekend of September 23-25. <http://www.orasorg/astrbldst.htm>

Instead, I drove up Saturday morning to give my presentation on Solar Observing, and Suzanne came with me to make a day-trip out of it. We arrived shortly after 12:00pm, met with the event organizer - Tim S, and sat in on the last part of the 1st presenter. I was up next at 1:00pm, and after a quick setup, with help from Suzanne, I introduced the Sun to about 25 attendees.

Afterwards we walked around and visited with the other ORAS folks that I knew, including John O and his wife, and checked out the good number of door prizes that they had. John mentioned that the rain had finally let up Friday evening, and they had scattered sucker holes for some limited observing, while fighting off a heavy dew. There were only a handful of campers on the observing field when we arrived, and maybe an overall attendance of about 40. The rain really put a damper on the event!

Around 3:30pm, we left the convention under mostly cloudy skies and continued with our weekend-trip plans, (wine restocking), driving up thru Allegheny National Forest to the city of Kane, where we visited the newly opened Kinzua Bridge. <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/findapark/kinzua/bridge/index.htm>

The scenic railroad bridge had been mostly destroyed by an F1 tornado back in 2003. The remaining portion has been stabilized, and a walkway and glass bottom observation deck built out to the edge:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/AB2011-01.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/AB2011-02.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/AB2011-03.jpg>

There, you can look out at the twisted wreckage of the bridge, 300 ft straight down, or along the valley beyond:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/AB2011-04.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/AB2011-05.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/AB2011-06.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/AB2011-07.jpg>

As we were leaving the bridge, the sun was hanging low on the western horizon, and we were rewarded with a nice crepuscular ray and sunburst display:

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/AB2011-08.jpg>

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/AB2011-09.jpg>

Then we headed off to one of our favorite wineries in that area, and stayed overnight at a local B&B. Sunday, we headed further north up to the Lake Chautauqua region to a couple more favorite wineries. The best has a porch overlooking Lake Erie, where you can enjoy a bottle, snack, and the view.

<http://home.comcast.net/~kiskiastronomers/images/conventions/AB2011-10.jpg>

I've decided that instead of a retirement job as a Starbuck's Barista, I'm leaning toward working at a winery! ;)

Hope for better weather next year!

Larry