



## **GTC visitor information**

Version: May 2011

Dear Visitor, the Director of GRANTECAN and his team wish you welcome at the observatory and hope you will have a safe, productive, and pleasant stay at the Gran Telescopio Canarias (GTC). GRANTECAN is committed to assist you to the best of our ability to achieve the objectives of your visit.

This brief document highlights information that will help you understand our work procedures for as far as they are relevant for visiting astronomers to the GTC at the Observatorio del Roque de los Muchachos (ORM). Please take a moment to read this, preferably in advance of travelling to the summit. It contains basic information on aspects such as safety, travel, accommodation, catering, transport on site, and provides contact points.

### **1. Transport and Accommodation**

Visitors are expected to make all their own transport and accommodation arrangement. This includes the transfer to/from the island as well as transport to/from the observatory site and transport on site, hotel accommodation, and booking of the observatory Residencia (see <http://www.iac.es/eno.php?op1=2&op2=5&lang=en>). GRANTECAN is not in a position to make these arrangements for visitors, but in case you need advise you may contact the GRANTECAN secretary at telephone (+34) 922 425 720, or by sending an email to [gtc@gtc.iac.es](mailto:gtc@gtc.iac.es).

The access road to the observatory winds its way up the steep mountain. The road is in reasonable condition and it taken about 90 minutes to drive from the airport to the observatory. Make sure you have sufficient petrol or diesel in your tank to make the journey up and down the mountain. There are no facilities to refuel beyond the main town of Santa Cruz de la Palma.

Even in the best of conditions you must watch out for rocks on the road. Weather and road conditions may vary strongly between sea level and the mountain top. We strongly discourage visitors from driving the mountain road at night or in bad weather. Road conditions can vary drastically with altitude, and it is not uncommon to encounter rocks scattered on the road. Mobile phone connectivity on large stretches of the mountain road

is non-existent. Because of these peculiarities we strongly advise that in case of any doubt, and especially in winter when there is risk of bad weather, to contact the IAC Residencia (telephone 922 405 500) and ask for advice.

## **2. The ORM Residencia**

When entering the observatory grounds the first building that you will see on your right is the ORM Residencia. The Residencia offers sleeping accommodation and dining facilities for visitors and observatory personnel. It is managed by the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias (IAC). The capacity of the Residencia is limited, so make sure you arrange your bookings well in advance.

### **On arrival**

The check-in desk is opened from 9:00 to 19:00 every day. If you arrive late you should find your room key on the reception desk, or it will be handed to you by the night porter. If you have to notify any changes in accommodation requirements, please contact the IAC Residencia from Monday to Friday between 9:00 and 15:00, calling 922 405 500.

Make sure the reception passes you the Residencia door code so that you can get access to the building at night.

The Residencia hosts a wireless network service. Ask the receptionist for the access code.

### **During your stay**

Staff and visitors could be sleeping at any time of the day or night, so please be quiet in and around the Residencia. At night, lower the blinds on all windows and turn off any unnecessary lights. Water is a scarce commodity on the mountain; don't waste it.

Book your lunch and dinner one day in advance with the Residencia receptionist. On the reception desk there should be a form you can use to book your meal and a menu with all the meal options available. Before going to the dining room pick up and sign your ticket at the reception desk and take it with you. This ticket must be handed to the waiter in the dining room.

Breakfast is available at any time in the self-service area. You must fill in a form where you indicate what you have used.

Lunch is served between 12:30 and 13:30.

Dinner is available between 18:00 and 20:00 in summer, and between 17:00 and 19:00 in winter time.

The Residencia kitchen also prepares night snacks. At the reception desk you can fill in a night-snack form, and around diner time your snack can be collected in the breakfast area. Please fill in the form several hours in advance in order to avoid disappointment.

Coffee and tea and bottled water are available at the kitchen of the GTC, where there is also a microwave oven. There are no cooking facilities at the telescope.

### **On departure**

All invoices must be paid to the IAC Residencia before departure. Please return the room key to the receptionist when paying your bill and make sure you have returned the walkie-talkie to GRANTECAN. Leave a forwarding address for any outgoing freight or post if necessary.

## **3. At the telescope**

### **Your first observing night at the GTC**

During the day time the maintenance team is working at the telescope. Transfer of control of the telescope to the night team normally takes place around 4pm. It is therefore not advisable to come to the telescope before 4pm.

During the observing night at the telescope you will have the help from a GRANTECAN staff astronomer and a Telescope Operator who will carry out the observations on your behalf. Since they work on a night schedule they will not be available during the day. However, in order to prepare the instrument for your observations on the day of your first observing night there will be a day-time staff astronomer to assist you until the night team commences.

When your observations are scheduled in classical visitor mode your presence at the telescope is essential. Therefore, if on the first night of your observing run you have not arrived at the GTC control room at least half an hour before sunset without notifying the daytime astronomer, you will lose the whole night and the observing time will be transferred to queue schedule observing programmes.

### **Some house rules**

The front door of the GTC building is locked with a push-button lock. Ask your support astronomer for the access code so that you can enter any time without assistances.

At night in the GTC facilities, please keep window blinds down and lights to a minimum. Carry a torch when moving around the building, and keep the doors closed.

Alcoholic drinks and smoking are not allowed in the telescope building. Drinks and cold snacks are allowed in the control room, but hot meals have to be taken in the kitchen. You may use the refrigerator, but remove all your items at the end of your run. It is very useful to label them.

## **Observing at night**

The observations are carried out by a staff astronomer from GRANTECAN who will be at the telescope all night. The staff astronomer is assisted by a Telescope Operator who is also present all night. Responsibility for the security of the installations at night lies with the Telescope Operator. This includes the final responsibility for deciding whether the dome can be opened or must be closed, and whether the facility has to be abandoned in case of bad weather.

As a visiting astronomer you may assist in the data taking, but most likely you want to concentrate on the quality of the data and on the detailed planning of the observations, rather than on the technical practicalities of the observing process.

## **Preparing your observations**

All observations are carried out following the definition of Observing Blocks through the GTC Phase-2 preparation tool at <http://gtc-phase2.gtc.iac.es/science/F2/>. This allows the planning and execution of the observations in a structured fashion and facilitates the automatic execution of the observations. So also when observing as a visitor we strongly advise that you prepare your observations in this way. This is best done well before the observing night, but can also be done while at the observatory. By defining the observing blocks well ahead of the observations the GTC staff can ensure that the instrument is properly prepared, for instance that the correct optical components are available and tested.

## **Computing**

In the control room there is a Linux PC for the use by visiting astronomers. Through this PC you will have access to the science data. You can use this machine for reducing your data (basic reduction tools are installed and you can access the Internet from here), or you can just use it as an interface to allow you to copy your data to your private notebook.

The above scheme gives you access to your data in near-real time and GRANTECAN assumes by default that you will copy and take the original data with you. If for whatever reason at a later date you would require another copy of the original data then this can be provided either through the GTC FTP server or through the (future) central data archive. At the end of your run the information on this PC will be deleted.

If you bring your private notebook you can get access to the Internet through the external GTC wireless network. Ask your support astronomer for the access code.

## **Feedback**

GRANTECAN is interested in your opinion about any aspect of your observing experience. Therefore we kindly ask you to fill in the feedback form at <http://gtc-phase2.gtc.iac.es/science/feedback/feedback.php>. It helps us to improve our service.

## **4. Safety matters!**

### **Who is coming to the observatory?**

GRANTECAN would appreciate if you could indicate well before your arrival who will be coming to the observatory, and what will be the contact telephone number (preferably a mobile phone), so that visitors can be contacted in the unlikely event of an emergency situation. Please send these details to [astro-helpdesk@gtc.iac.es](mailto:astro-helpdesk@gtc.iac.es)

### **Weather**

The weather conditions at the ORM can rapidly change and therefore all visitors must come well prepared with warm clothes, good footwear, and a torch. In winter, paths and roads can be slippery. Also be aware that any time of the year visibility can change from perfectly clear to dense fog in a matter of minutes. During the day it is advisable to protect your eyes and skin from the intense Sun.

### **Inside and around the GTC facility**

The dome is a potentially dangerous place and therefore special precaution must be taken when accessing the telescope enclosure. You must adhere to the following rules:

- When you need to access the telescope enclosure, first ask explicit permission from the Jefe de Turno or the Telescope Operator;
- During the day you must wear a hard-hat while inside the dome;
- Always take a torch with you;
- Never go into the dome at night on your own.
- Do not touch electrical or electronic equipment and adhere to common-sense safe practice.

Furthermore, without explicit permission given by the Jefe de Turno (during day time) or the Telescope Operator (at night), visitors are not allowed access to any of the technical areas such as such as the technical service building, clean rooms, laboratories, the pump room, the mirror room, or the intermediate level between the ground floor and the telescope enclosure.

When outside in winter time be aware that the ground may be slippery. Also stay away from the dome since falling ice could be a serious hazard.

### **Lights at night**

The ORM is a dark place at night. Therefore at all times you should carry a torch with you. Make sure to bring one!

When driving a car at night at the observatory, always drive slowly and with maximum attention to road conditions. During the night use dipped head lights and avoid using full head lights as these may affect the observations at any of the telescopes.

### **Communication at the observatory**

In case you need urgent assistance as the result of a safety-related matter, your first point-of-contact is the Jefe de Turno (or Duty Officer). The Jefe de Turno is normally always available during the day. He can be reached in the following ways: through the main GTC telephone number 922 405 600, by mobile phone number 636 917 338, and within the GTC facility by making a call on one of the walkie-talkies. At night the safety function of the Jefe de Turno passes to the Telescope Operator, who is normally around in the facility from sunset to sunrise.

In case you cannot reach the Jefe de Turno, you may contact the reception of the Residencia: 922 405 500. As a last option in case of emergency you may contact the general emergency service number 112.

Mobile phone coverage is good in most, but not all places at the observatory.

To facilitate communication at all times GRANTECAN will make available a walkie-talkie for the visitors. Please make sure to return this at the end of your stay.

### **Medical condition**

If you suffer from a medical condition that may affect your health during your stay at the observatory, then please inform the Director ([pedro.alvarez@gtc.iac.es](mailto:pedro.alvarez@gtc.iac.es)) so that the necessary precautionary measures may be taken. This information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

### **Walking out there**

Please, be very careful when walking around the observatory site. There are lots of precipices and the rock is very unstable. So take only roads and marked paths to enjoy the countryside. Take special care in bad weather conditions. In poor visibility it is extremely easy to lose your way. Snow and ice could make your path, and even the road, hard and dangerous to follow. Do not forget to carry a torch before it gets dark.

If you are going out for a walk, always inform someone that you are going out, where you are going and when you expect to be back.

### **In case of emergency**

If an emergency situation occurs in the GTC facility:

- In case of detection of smoke or fire, raise the alarm at once by operating the nearest break-glass fire alarm. Inform immediately the Jefe de Turno, including

information about: place of emergency, type of incident, substances involved, persons affected, material damages and initiated actions.

- When you hear the general alarm or when the duty person informs you, you must immediately leave the building, following the closest signs of the emergency exit.
- Stay calm all the time. Do not take unnecessary risks.
- Do not take your personal belongings and/or the work equipment
- Once the evacuation has started, do not try to return.
- Do not separate from the group.
- Go fast, but without running.
- In case of smoke, walk bend-over and if possible cover your face with a tissue.
- Go to the MEETING POINT, located opposite the main GTC building on the main road, on the right-hand side of the auxiliary building.
- Wait there until the duty person informs about the end of the emergency.
- Cooperate all the time with the emergency groups.

In the unlikely event of a general emergency at the observatory, for instance when the observatory as a whole has to be abandoned as the result of extreme weather or fire, you must follow the instructions given by the overall emergency coordinator and the authorities.

## 5. CALP: The centre for astronomy in La Palma

The GRANTECAN main offices are located in San Antonio, Breña Baja, only a few minutes drive away from the airport and from Santa Cruz. You are most welcome to spend some time working there, for instance before or after your observing run. You can work there on preparing or reducing your observations and discuss this with our staff astronomers. You will be able to connect to the Internet through the same GTC-guest wireless network as the one at the ORM. Although our astronomy group is small, seminars by visiting astronomers are much appreciated!

## Appendix A: Useful telephone numbers

<i>Place or person</i>	<i>Telephone number (+34 ...)</i>
GTC offices (CALP) switch board This number connects to an operator during office hours, or allows marking of an extension	922 425 720
GTC telescope central number This number will ring several stations at the same time, including the control room	922 405 600 / 602
Residencia	922 405 500
Jefe de Turno (daytime duty officer)	Mobile phone 636 917 338
Telescope Operator	Mobile phone 650 036 986

To get an external line from the telescope building, dial 6 first.