



The Hitchhiker's Guide to Tweetups

All you need to know for your first time

WARNING: This will be a life-changing experience.

Composed for Tweetups in Europe by @akanel

Have you been selected to attend a Tweetup organized by a space or science organization in Europe, such as e.g. ESA, DLR, CNES, ASI, OEWB, CERN, ISU, etc.?

Don't Panic

Here's all you need to know about this life-changing opportunity. This guide contains a comprehensive description of what to expect during a Tweetup, and a collection of priceless tips developed through the years by veteran SpaceTweeps from all over the world, that will help you before, during and after the event.

Ready? Let's get started!

What is a Tweetup?

A Tweetup (sometimes also referred to as a “Social”) is one of the ways that space, science and technology agencies, institutions and organizations, bring their fans and followers “behind the scenes” of their activities. It is a unique opportunity for enthusiasts, like you and me, to get an insight to the “who, what and how” of space, science and technology.

Being selected to attend a Tweetup is a huge privilege and honor for us. It means that a great organization has trusted us with access to people and places that are usually reserved for scientists and astronauts!



This privilege has been granted to you **personally**. For a variety of reasons, ranging from security to logistics, the participants are selected carefully, and the number of the attendees is firm. So, before you continue reading this guide,

make sure you have replied to the invitation email within the deadline. Read the email you have received carefully. Usually all the event specific information you will need is there. If you are not able to attend, make sure you let the organizers know immediately. If you just don't show up, you will be depriving another SpaceTweep from their dream-opportunity!

The personal nature of this invitation also means that we are **not able to pass it on** to someone else, **nor bring friends and family** with us. Any person that shows up without being on the list will not be allowed entrance for any reason. We should not bring the organizers to the awkward position of having to turn people away at the gate.

What happens during a Tweetup?

The schedule of the day depends on the purpose of each Tweetup, but usually it will entail two things:

(a) **speeches** by scientists, engineers and/or astronauts;



(b) and **guided tours** of specialized space or science facilities.



Both are done exclusively for us and to our benefit. We are allowed and encouraged to ask questions, take photographs and video, or even livestream the event (unless specifically told not to). V.I.P. speakers, such as astronauts and scientists, are usually available for autographs and one-to-one photos.

At some point during the day, we will gather for a group photo – don't miss it!



The schedule of the day is usually long and very intense, packed with tons of exciting things. It's always a blast! Be prepared to be amazed, blown out of our socks, and quite exhausted at the end.

Remember, Tweetups are public events, so we should be expecting that we are photographed and recorded at all times.

Where will we be?

Tweetup organizers usually set up a venue where we all gather at the beginning of the event. This acts as our base. This venue is usually referred to as the “**Twent**” in SpaceTweeps jargon, because in the early days of Tweetups, it was actually a big tent set up for the specific event.

The Twent has enough room for all of us to be sitting, and offers Wi-Fi access and enough power outlets to accommodate all SpaceTweeps. Most often, some refreshments and light snacks are offered in the Twent free of charge.

The Twent is usually where the presentations and talks are made by the invited speakers, and from where we depart for the guided visits and tours. When we are out on a tour, we are usually on foot and there is no Wi-Fi or power outlets, until we get back to the Twent. While out on a tour, some of our non-valuable personal items can be left behind in the Twent, but always at our own risk.



What is expected from us?

The organizers are offering us this unique opportunity to learn all kinds of awesome information about their activities and see all kinds of amazing facilities. In exchange, we are expected to share! This is not an experience we should keep to ourselves. Make sure you spread the joy and excitement to everyone you know and is willing to listen, and let them know of all the amazing things you saw and learned.

Each of us has their preferred way of sharing. Most like to live tweet what they hear, see and learn during the event, or post on Facebook, Google+ and similar platforms. Others like to take photos and upload albums with detailed explanations on Flickr, Instagram, etc. Some prefer to soak it all in, and then write blog posts, articles and even books, and publish them in (electronic or not) magazines, newspapers and blogs. Others express themselves better by talking rather than writing: they make presentations in their local communities or to special interests groups, give lessons to children at schools, or give interviews for TV or radio shows. So, no matter what your medium of choice is, **be sure to tell the world!**


Start sharing as early as when you are selected. Tell your friends, family and followers where you will be going and why. Ignite their curiosity, so they are eager to hear more from you when you get back.


It is also useful to do some research on the event's topic before the Tweetup. It's not required, but it will allow you to fully appreciate the experience, to better understand what's going on, to ask the right questions, and to better explain it to everyone else.


Important tip: The organizers would much prefer it, if we use the event's hashtag (e.g. #CERNtweetup, #MarsTweetup, #LucaTweetup) in all our online communications. This helps them track our sharing activities and measure the results of their efforts. Let's help them 😊


How should we act?


Organizing a Tweetup is a complex, difficult and expensive task. A lot of diverse factors need to work together for a successful day. The organizers make a great effort to create the schedule and keep it together; and they spend a lot of money to provide us with this awesome experience. The least we can do is to act accordingly. This is how:

 It is very important that we are **kind, respectful** and **cooperative**; that we follow the organizers' instructions; and that we are on time for every appointment. Keep in mind that you are not alone; there are 50-100 participants in every Tweetup.

 We should always remember that we are invited guests, and that we have been selected among hundreds of applicants, each more eager than the next to have the great privilege that was given to us. **Never take this opportunity for granted**, no matter how many Tweetups you may have attended.

 In some instances during the Tweetup, we might be visiting areas which, for a variety of reasons, might require **special behavior** on our part (e.g. keeping very quiet, refraining from photographing, etc.). Keep in mind that you are not visiting a theme park; but rather some of the world's most advanced and cutting-edge-technology facilities.

 We should take time to **get to know our fellow participants**; there will be people from all over the world there, sharing the same passion and excitement as us. Don't feel intimidated. We are all there because we are alike! Some great life-lasting friendships have started at Tweetups.

 We should also take the time to **talk to the organizers** that are present during the Tweetup, and make sure we tell them how thankful we feel for this opportunity, and how we appreciate all the hard work that has gone into making this day especially for us.

- 🚀 We should **respect all different opinions** we may hear during the Tweetup, whether they come from other participants or the speakers themselves. Carefully phrase your questions and comments to voice your own opinion, while avoiding insulting anybody else.
- 🚀 We should **carefully listen to what the speakers have to say**. It will be a rare opportunity to hear each of them explain their life's work and passion to us. It is always nice if you have done a little research on the speakers and their topics, and have prepared some questions beforehand. Whether you prepared or not, **ask questions!** This will get the discussion going into more detail, and will make the speaker feel more appreciated. Remember, there are no silly questions!
- 🚀 And of course, we should **have fun!** Lots of fun! Let yourself be amazed and blown away, free to feel like a kid again. And trust me, you will!



Is there something we should do before coming to the Tweetup?

Yes! Connect with the SpaceTweeps community! We are a large community of space, science, & technology lovers from all corners of this rocky planet, who share our passion through social media. We call ourselves **#SpaceTweeps** (www.spacetweepsociety.org).

As soon as the participants are announced, veteran and rookie SpaceTweeps come together and self-organize activities around the Tweetup. When booking your travel plans, keep in mind that SpaceTweeps usually also meet on the day before and after the Tweetup for dinner, drinks and visits to various other (science related or not) sites in the city where the Tweetup will take place. They share hotel rooms or flats, and they carpool.












For European Tweetups, Facebook seems to be the place where such planning usually takes place. A dedicated Facebook group is usually created for the Tweetup and all confirmed attendees are invited to become members. This forum is used to exchange tips and information about travel, accommodation, pre and post events, and share background information about the event's topic. By the time the Tweetup day arrives, we already all know each other, at least virtually.




One other important thing is organized there: the **Thank-You Project!** Putting together an event like a Tweetup is not an easy job. And the more easy it ends up looking, the more hard work was put into making it. SpaceTweeps always feel the need to thank the speakers, the hosts and the organizers for all the trouble they have gone to just for us. We like to express our thanks by offering a symbolic gift to the organizers as

a souvenir from the Tweetup. The gift can be anything from a commemorative poster with all our signatures on, to pins, mugs or other special objects that have to do with the event's topic. Each group may decide to do something new or follow their predecessors. Deciding on the gift, and making it, is half the fun!

What should we pack?

Properly packing is one of the most important ways to enjoy your Tweetup. This is what you'll most need:

-  Government issued photo ID. Without it you will not be allowed entrance to the Tweetup.
-  Your preferred sharing device for your tweeting, posting, blogging and photographing (e.g. phone, tablet, laptop, camera, tripods, etc.).
-  Power charging cables, chargers, spare batteries, extra memory cards, and plug adaptors, if your home country uses different sockets than the country where the Tweetup takes place.
-  Money (e.g. cash, plastic, traveler's checks, etc.). Not a lot, but not too little either. You might need it for food and drinks, where the organizers don't offer any, and for transportation to and from the meeting point. Oh, and for shopping: some Tweetup venues have great gift-shops!
-  Comfortable shoes. You should expect a significant amount of walking and standing.
-  Weather appropriate clothes. Usually the best choice is to dress in layers.
-  Backpack, tote or other method of transporting your gear during the Tweetup. Zipper locks for keeping for gear safe. Make sure your bags and all your gear is labeled with your name, in case you misplace it.
-  For autographs: Permanent marker and something to collect signatures on.
-  Your personal snack, if you have special dietary requirements.

-  Your medication, if you have a specific condition.
-  Plenty of business cards or contact info cards, which include your twitter handle and other social media identification. You will be meeting a lot of new people!
-  ...and for the HGTG fans among us...bring a towel! ;-)

And after the Tweetup?

Stay connected with the SpaceTweeps community! Tweetups may end, but the memories stay with us forever. So do the friends we will have made. Staying connected with the community through social media will keep you learning new and exciting things, and may lead to you taking on new projects, or even the next step in your career.

All of the V.I.P. speakers and guests that we meet at Tweetups, such e.g. astronauts and famous scientists and engineers, are courteous, open and friendly, and most of them are willing to engage actively with us on social media after the Tweetup (..even when they are up in Space!). We should take advantage of this unique opportunity. Be careful, though, not to abuse it. Whenever you are connecting to one of them, keep in mind that their schedules are very busy, and they are trying their best to connect with us while doing their very important work. So, personal favours and private requests are not such a good idea. Also, if you want to invite them to an event you might be organizing, the best way is to go through their press offices.

Oh and one last thing! **Keep spreading the word!** After your first Tweetup, you are now the new Ambassadors of the knowledge you acquired. Keep it flowing!

Welcome to the party!