

The year I discovered space.

Well to be fair, it's always been there. You only have to look up. During the day of course there are clouds which are pretty enough unless they're grey. Blue skies instantly put a smile on your face, mainly for their rarity value. As a rule, I don't wander around the neighbourhood at night. I don't have a dog to walk and not needing the money, I don't join those who ply their trade in the dark.

Lockdown 2020 flipped all our lives. Stop. I know what you're thinking, I took to the streets. No. But I did venture into our back garden. I turned off the house lights and I looked up. Stunning. Black skies like a velvet cloak across my world. And somebody has thrown handfuls of diamonds across the velvet. I can't stop staring at this beautiful picture but I realise my neck is creaking and I'm in grave danger of falling backwards. I pull a lounge into the middle of the garden and lay on it continuing my unique discovery.

My husband, fed up of sitting in a darkened house joins me and says:

"If you wait 10 more minutes you will see the International Space Station pass over. It's coming from the west." He points "It's orbit will, for the first time this month, pass directly overhead."

Turns out this is not a unique event and I was staggered to learn that the ISS has been spinning around the world since 1998 around 15 times a day. And it's got people living in it. Men and women from several countries are living and working in this floating lab.

Space is something that other people discuss and get excited about. I've watched shuttle launches on TV and been impressed by man's ingenuity and bravery. But it's always seemed remote from my life and my everyday world of kids, work and bills. Incredibly intelligent teams of people from across the globe have built this floating laboratory. My husband interrupts my thoughts with his fact download:

"It's 250 miles up and travelling at 17,105 miles per hour."

"Hold on, so we won't be able to see it without a telescope, which we don't have." I then thought of another brilliant and obvious question.

"How do you know it's only 10 minutes away?"

He waves his phone at me. "Because there is a timetable. It will pass across at exactly 10.07 and will take 6 mins. Tonight, it's very bright"

I look at him and think he's winding me up. A timetable? It's travelling at over 17,000 miles an hour and passing over Watford.

Then he points and I see a very bright round light travelling sedately across the sky and keep watching as it travels silently over Watford in a seemingly straight line.

Inside that light real humans are discovering new horizons of knowledge. Risking their lives to make mine better. I find tears are streaming down my face.

Word count 495