

Conferences

International Meteor Conference 2018 report

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The International Meteor Conference 2018 was held between 30th August and 2nd September in Pezinok, Slovakia, a city lying in the shadow of the Little Carpathian mountains.

Attendees travelled from all corners of the globe; those representing the Desert Fireball Network traversed half the world with 12 hour flights, whilst others such as Alan Shuttleworth took two week motorbike trips out of choice! I had a trip of many firsts: I had never flown alone before, it was my first conference, and I had never visited Slovakia before.

Since the age of 13, I had been interested in radio meteor detection, writing Python programs for the radio group at my local observatory. Later in my education I had the opportunity to work on a self-led research project, for which I chose to investigate temporal and spatial variation of radio data, as well as the diurnal shift phenomenon, which I then published in WGN: my first interaction with the IMO. A friend at the radio group, Alan Shuttleworth, had attended the IMC before and told me what a great experience it was. Once I started a degree in Mathematics, Emmanuel College of the University of Cambridge was able to fund my attendance at the conference, for which I am thankful and I promptly started organising my journey.

Expectations were for a formal, serious, intimidating atmosphere and consequently I felt anxious when I arrived. This feeling led me to choose not to present my research; something I now greatly regret. A warm reception desk at Hotel Rozálka welcomed participants to the conference, followed later in the evening with a short presentation by the IMO president, Cis Verbeek, and the Local Organising Committee, who did such a fantastic job of creating IMC 2018 and presented the latest in beer-buying technology: IMC coins! The hotel provided excellent food, always starting with a hearty bowl of soup and followed by a meal that all participants will have appreciated after their journeys! As the day progressed, I felt increasingly composed and realised how wrong my premonitions were: everyone I met was friendly and eager to engage in conversation.

The first day concluded with two talks, the first a tale of searching Southern Africa for a meteorite, by Peter Jenniskens, the second an update on the European Fireball Network by Pavel Spurný, who laid down a gauntlet on clean data collection for all: these talks were a brilliant introduction to the conference; a formal occasion for the presentation of science, yet also a relaxing atmosphere for discussion. Being able to talk about my own research projects with others was extremely helpful and has greatly enhanced my ideas: opportunities such as these are why conferences are so fantastic!



Figure 1 – Hotel Rozálka in Pezinok, Slovakia.



Figure 2 – The latest technological advancement from the IMO: IMC coins!

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An intensive schedule ensured everyone was busy on the first full day, with talks from 9am to 6pm and frequent interludes to re-fuel with coffee and discuss the talks. During these breaks, participants had the opportunity to view the 25 posters, all of excellent quality and demonstrating the capability of amateur science.

The wide variety of topics in the talks should be applauded, ranging from video meteor detection using balloons: the MALBEC project (J. Vaubaillon, A. Caillou), to measurements of the Population Index with cameras (P. Slansky). Felix Bettonvil even demonstrated that meteor science provides an excellent excuse to make a cannon. The conference also exhibited the breadth of possible involvement in meteor detection, with setups costing very little using Raspberry Pi's, to pricetags that startle many with the Desert Fireball Network's observation setup.

The day ended with the IMO General Assembly meeting, where Cis and Marc Gyssens gave an update on the status of the IMO. To summarise briefly, everything's going well! Jürgen Rendtel proposed the IMC 2019 venue in Germany, near Potsdam – I won't give too much away. Both Jürgen and Cis emphasised the need for future IMCs to be proposed, so please do! After every day my mind was frazzled, though especially after such a long day of talks.

The second full day started with a morning of further talks, followed by the excursion. This year, participants visited the Red Stone castle near Modra, where we were led on tours of the Renaissance-Baroque castle dating back to the 16th century, which offers an insight into the historical lives of the noble families of Slovakia.

Upon returning to the coaches to travel to the AGO Observatory, the heavens opened and we could not visit the observatory, and instead returned to the conference venue amid cracks of thunder to discuss the past days of talks. After a conference dinner, participants were treated to a traditional Slovakian folklore performance which later required crowd involvement! Beer started flowing and subsequently the traditional IMC song was sung – Jeremie put down his guitar this year and another took up the duty.

On the penultimate day of the conference, the WGN editor-in-chief Javor asked me if I would like to write this report, as a first-time attendee of the IMC, for which I am thankful. I leaped at the chance, as I now have the opportunity to express my thanks to the organisers, presenters, poster-creators, scientists, and all involved, as well as commenting on the impact of the conference on me. After a final morning of talks, including a plea for data (yes, even more data) by Galina Ryabova, the conference ended and participants departed. I was sad to leave the conference as it had been a truly eye-opening experience: everyone I met left an impression on me, many of the talks captivated me, and the connections formed reach far further than I could have imagined.



Figure 3 – Lecture theatre where talks were held and posters could be viewed.



Figure 4 – IMC participants exploring the red stone castle.



Figure 5 – Traditional Slovakian folklore performance.

The greatest influence of the International Meteor Organisation is communication; from which science thrives. To bring scientists, amateur, professional, or simply enthusiastic, from all around the world is an incredible feat.

The local organising committee organised the conference to the utmost standard: infinite thanks is due to all of them. Equally, the quality of presentations and posters was exceptional. The scientific content available bred many discussions and no doubt inspired many future projects and ideas.

Upon arrival, I was anxious. Upon departure, I felt like I had become an integrated member of the IMO community – a community I hope to remain in for many years to come. Days passed before I fully processed how I felt.

I look forward to meeting everyone again at IMC 2019, and wish clear skies and clean data to all!



Figure 6 – Participants of IMC 2018.

IMC 2019 October 3–6 in Germany

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Every three years, there is the chance to organise the IMC in conjunction with the “Meteoroids” conference. This worked well on several occasions, and it was also tried for 2019 when the “Meteoroids” takes place in Bratislava in June. However, this plan in various modifications did not work out.

Once it became clear that the double conference arrangement will not be possible, the German meteor observers contacted the KIEZ Bollmannsruh near the city of Brandenburg (Havel) which was already the IMC venue in 2003. The location is not too far from Berlin, and they made an affordable offer which allowed us to book the entire campus for the IMC after the main season. The city of Brandenburg can be easily reached from the nearby airports by public transport and by car. So the IMO Council decided to have the IMC 2019 in Bollmannsruh.

The Local Organising Committee consists of Rainer Arlt, André Knöfel, Sirko Molau, Ina Rendtel, Jürgen Rendtel and Roland Winkler. Further details will be given in the next issue of WGN and on the web pages in due time. So mark your calendar: after 16 years back again to Bollmannsruh, Germany, for the IMC 2019 October 3–6. We look forward to see you there.

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