

FEATURE

FAST Telescope Will Be Open to International Scientists in 2021

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[FAST Telescope Will Be Open to International Scientists in 2021 | Science Times](#)

The world's largest radio telescope, the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Telescope (FAST) in Pingtang, Guizhou province in China, will be open to international scientists in 2021 after the iconic Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico collapsed this year. The Arecibo Observatory was the largest radio telescope in 53 years, not until the completion of FAST in 2016.

The Arecibo Observatory collapsed in November after two cable failures earlier this year. The observatory is now officially shut down for good. But scientists need not worry because FAST is opening its doors to astronomers from around the world.



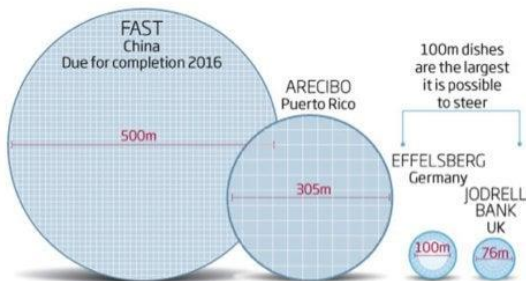
Panoramic photo taken on Jan. 8, 2020 shows China's Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical radio Telescope (FAST) under maintenance in southwest China's Guizhou Province. (Xinhua/Ou Dongqu)



(FAST) in southwest China's Guizhou Province.

"Our scientific committee aims to make FAST increasingly open to the [international community](#)," FAST's chief inspector of operations and development center Wang Qiming said.

Radio astronomy will get a big boost with FAST, the world's most sensitive radio telescope



FAST Will Be Open to International Astronomers

China has said that they are ready to accept requests for 2021 from international astronomers to conduct their research using the FAST radio telescope. Currently, it is the largest radio telescope globally, which has a 1600 foot diameter dish that is even larger than Arecibo.

But as of now, there are no confirmed researchers, yet that accepted this offer. [Slash Gear](#) reported that some research is too sensitive

to be conducted in China using the FAST radio telescope.

Many fear that the Chinese government might spy or steal some parts of the research conducted using FAST. Indeed, the scientific world has lost a valuable asset in the collapse of the Arecibo Observatory, a famous piece of equipment that has appeared in many films.

ALSO READ: [\[WATCH\] Drone Footage Recorded Arecibo Telescope's Collapse](#)

FAST: The World's Largest Radio Telescope

China has located FAST in an area where a three-mile radio silence zone surrounds it. Meaning, cellphones and computers are not allowed in that area.

It is not only the largest radio telescope in the world, but it is also three times more sensitive. FAST began its first operation just this year in January.

Qiming said that they drew inspiration from the Arecibo Observatory when designing the FAST radio telescope. These types of radio telescopes use antennas and radio receivers to detect radio waves from the stars, galaxies, and black holes. It could also send signals to faraway objects in the solar system, like the planets.

According to [Space.com](#), the FAST radio telescope can be used to search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI) or [send interstellar radio messages](#) to the globular cluster M13 in hopes of finding intelligent extraterrestrial life that will somehow send back any signal.

Astronomer and science communicator Carl Sagan co-authored the message sent to M13 to help popularize Arecibo Observatory and the field of astronomy as a whole.

The report also said that researchers may use FAST to explore the universe to study alien worlds and search for alien life. This will determine whether or not these worlds lie in the "[goldilocks zone](#)" of their host star