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SPACE

Galileo's Telescope Travels Far, Sees Farther

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[Enlarge](#) Melisa Goh/NPR
 Franklin Institute's chief astronomer Derrick Pitts (right) points out details of Galileo's telescope to visitors.

All Things Considered, April 11, 2009 · Instruments of revolution can appear deceptively simple. With a bit of wood, copper wire and paper, Galileo fashioned a telescope that opened the skies for discovery.

The telescope had a magnifying power of 20. By today's standards, that's not very strong, but in 1609, Galileo's telescope surpassed all others. It was powerful enough for him to detect the moon's rough surface, Venus' phases, and Jupiter's moons.

Galileo actually tracked and measured the movement of Jupiter's satellites. His observations gave further evidence of the Copernican theory that the sun was the center of the universe.

For the first time ever, Galileo's research telescope has traveled across the Atlantic. It's at the center of the exhibit, *Galileo: The Medici and the Age of Astronomy* at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. The museum's chief astronomer, Derrick Pitts, says the research telescope symbolizes Galileo's "dogged determination" to understand the universe.

A clear case protects the telescope, but visitors can get close enough to brag that they have looked through Galileo's telescope. They won't see the night sky, however — the telescope points toward the museum's ceiling.

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