

Eclipse of sun could be a ray of light for Nevada tourism

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

*Well I hear you went up to Saratoga and your horse naturally
won,*

Then you flew your Lear jet up to Nova Scotia,

To see the total eclipse of the sun.

– Carly Simon, from “You’re So Vain”

It could be an extraordinary tourism event for rural Nevada and it’s been on the calendar for a millennium.

A total solar eclipse.

They don’t happen very often and when they do, they’re usually over the ocean or in the Southern Hemisphere or someplace far away from home.

But on May 20, the eclipse path will cut through the center of rural Nevada.

“It really should be a good one, just as long as it isn’t a cloudy day,” said Dale Etheridge, the planetarium director at the College of Southern Nevada’s Cheyenne campus.

A solar eclipse occurs when the moon passes between the sun and the Earth and casts a shadow on our planet. As the moon and the Earth move during the day, the shadow moves thousands of miles along a very predictable path.

Eclipse chasers notoriously travel thousands of miles to get a look at the rare phenomenon, which only lasts for a few minutes.

Etheridge said the May 20 event would be an annular eclipse, which means the moon is farther away from the Earth in its oval orbit. The effect on Earth is that when the eclipse is at its best, observers will still be able to see a ring of light from the sun around the moon. At no time will the sun be completely blocked by the moon.

The other oddity of the event is that Nevada is on the tail end of it. That means the sun will be setting as the moon creeps in front of it. Etheridge says the sun would set before the eclipse ends, which could produce some unique sunset photos that evening – especially considering some of the incredible vistas in the places where the eclipse will be visible.

The center point of the eclipse path will run from the northwest part of the state to the southeast. For Nevada, the center point will enter the state just north of Reno along the southern shore of Pyramid Lake. It runs just north of Fernley and Fallon, Tonopah, the Extraterrestrial Highway and Caliente.

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