

# Star Guide: Plan, plan, plan ... totality is coming

By Tony Berendsen

The total solar eclipse of 2017 is coming to the United States on Aug. 21. Now is the time to start planning your eclipse experience.

There are only 4½ months left before eclipse time and the Lake Tahoe area will only see a partial, so to experience totality you will have to travel north. You will not be alone because millions of people excited to **see this spectacle** will flock to see it with you.

Plan your trip carefully. With so many people traveling to the eclipse path, I recommend arriving a day or two early, otherwise you might get stuck in traffic and miss the event. Also, camping sites, motels, and hotels will be sold out, so don't wait too late to decide on your location.

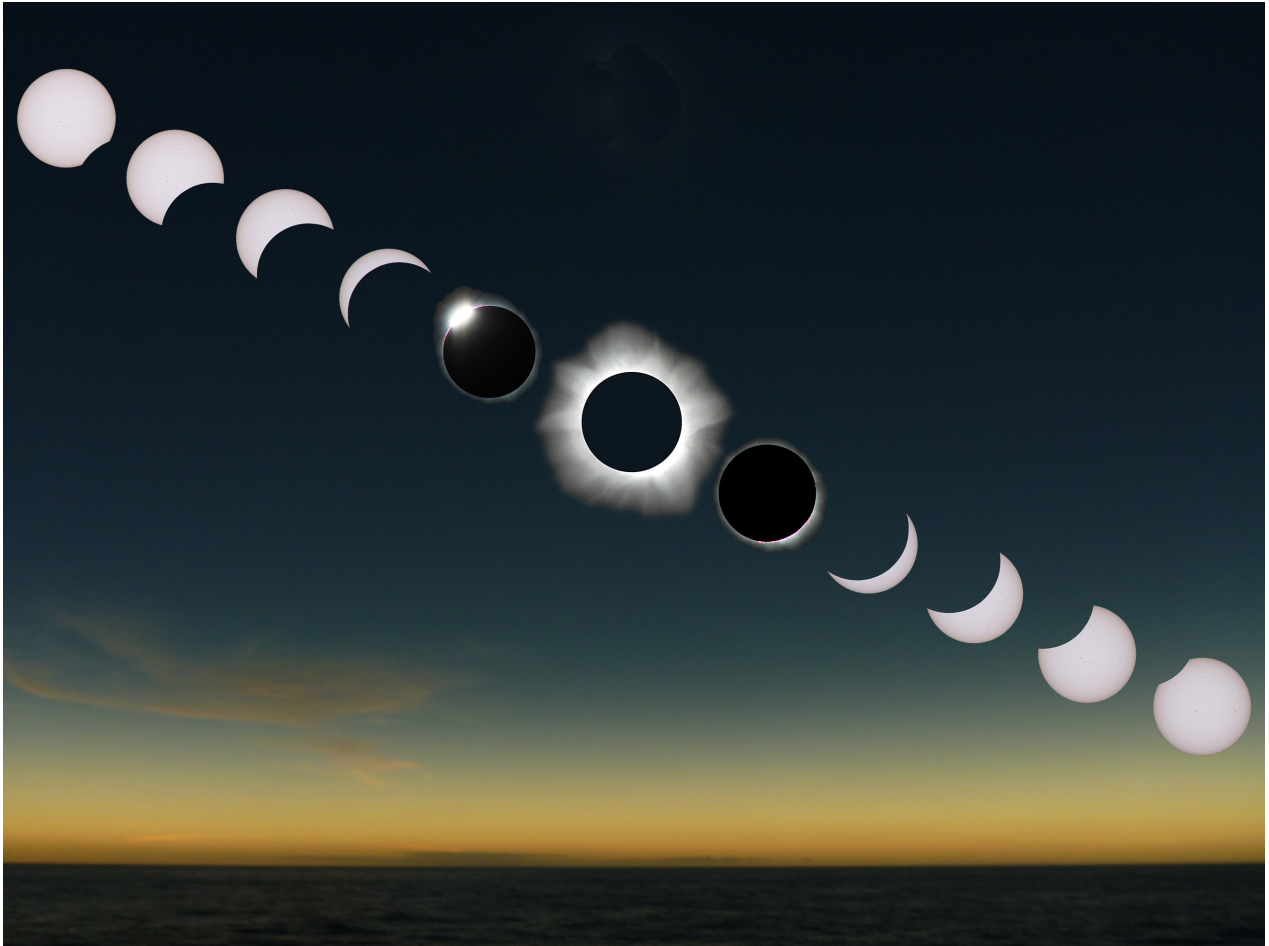


Image showing the phases of the eclipse. Photo/Rick Fienberg

Of course wherever you live in the States you will be treated to at least a partial eclipse on the 21st, so one option is to stay home. Partial eclipses are fun to view and there is a good chance the weather will be clear in our area at 9am when the moon begins its path across the sun. From Lake Tahoe the moon will cover most of the sun, but it will not be safe to look at without **eye protection**. I highly recommend that you purchase eye protection now before the supplies run out.

Decide how you are going to view the eclipse, and remember you don't need eye protection to see the total eclipse phase, but you cannot look directly at the sun during any of the partial phases without proper eye protection. Viewing can be as simple as building a pinhole camera (trees with leaves are natural pin hole cameras, just look at the ground during a partial eclipse and see hundreds of eclipse images) or as complex as

taking images with a camera.

Whether you are planning to view a partial or total eclipse Celestron has put together some affordable solar viewing packages as part of the Eclipsmart product line. Two of my favorites are 2X power glasses, and the Deluxe 3-piece **Sun observing kit**, which includes wrap around viewing glasses, observing guide, and a solar filter that can be used with a DSLR or cell phone camera.

For those of you interested using a solar telescope, and don't have one, **Celestron's Eclipsmart** Travel Scope 50 is a great option ,and if you already have a telescope and need a solar filter I recommend **Thousand Oaks Optical**.

If you are planning to go to the path of totality, I highly recommend taking an image as a remembrance of the event. Totality will only last about two minutes for this one, so it will go by fast. That being said, you don't want to spend all of your time looking through the camera lens because you will be missing one of the most amazing personal experiences of your lifetime. Plan and rehearse your image ahead of time so you can maximize your personal viewing time and still get an image to take home. You will need a solar filter for your camera for the partial phases of the eclipse.

There is a lot of information available on imaging an eclipse, so I suggest spending some time learning about the different phases of the eclipse, what to look for and when, also how to prepare your camera to take the image of a lifetime. The **American Astronomical Society** is a great place to start doing research and has some great tips on imaging .

I hope all of you can get a chance to see the total solar eclipse in August. It's a great opportunity, since this one is in our own back yard. I guarantee you will not regret doing some homework and plan, plan, plan ... totality is coming.

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