



AP Photo/Don Ryan

The moon almost totally eclipses the sun during a near total solar eclipse as seen from Salem.

# Millions converge across the US to see sun go dark

## The grandest of cosmic spectacles

By **MARCIA DUNN**  
Associated Press

Americans gazed in wonder through telescopes, cameras and disposable protective glasses today as the moon blotted out the midday sun in the first full-blown solar eclipse to sweep the U.S. from coast to coast in nearly a century.

It promised to be the most observed and photographed eclipse in history, with millions staking out prime viewing spots and settling into lawn chairs to watch, especially along the path of totality — the line of shadow created when the sun is completely obscured.

The shadow — a corridor just 60 to 70 miles wide — came ashore in Oregon and then began racing diagonally across the continent to South Carolina, with darkness lasting only about two to three minutes in any one spot.

“The show has just begun, people! What a gorgeous day! Isn’t this great, people?” Jim Todd, a director at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, told a crowd of thousands at an amphitheater in Salem, as the moon seemed to take an ever-bigger bite out of the sun and temperature soon dropped noticeably.

With 200 million people within a day’s



AP Photo/Don Ryan

**Catalina Gaitan, from Portland, tries to shoot a photo of the rising sun through her eclipse glasses at a gathering of eclipse viewers in Salem this morning.**

drive from the path of totality, towns and parks braced for monumental crowds. Clear skies beckoned along most of the route, to the relief of those who feared cloud cover would spoil this once-in-a-lifetime moment.

“It’s like nothing else you will ever see or ever do,” said veteran eclipse-watcher Mike O’Leary of San Diego, who set up his camera along with among hundreds of other amateur astronomers gathered in Casper, Wyoming. “It can be religious. It makes you feel insignificant, like you’re just a speck in the whole scheme of things.”

Astronomers were giddy with excitement. A solar eclipse is considered one of the grand-

est of cosmic spectacles.

NASA solar physicist Alex Young said the latest earthly connection like this to the heavens was during man’s first flight to the moon, on Apollo 8 in 1968. The first, famous Earthrise photo came from that mission and, like this eclipse, showed us “we are part of something bigger.”

With half hour to go before totality, NASA’s acting administrator, Robert Lightfoot, enjoyed the moon’s “first bites out of the sun” from a plane flying over the Oregon Coast and declared it “just an incredible view.”

“I’m about to fight this man for a window seat,” Lightfoot said, referring to a fellow NASA scientist.

The Earth, moon and sun line up perfectly every one to three years, briefly turning day into night for a sliver of the planet. But these sights normally are in no man’s land, like the vast Pacific or Earth’s poles. This is the first eclipse of the social media era to pass through such a heavily populated area.

The moon hasn’t thrown this much shade at the U.S. since 1918, during the country’s last coast-to-coast total eclipse. In fact, the U.S. mainland hasn’t seen a total solar eclipse since 1979 — and even then, only five states in the Northwest experienced total darkness.

“It’s really, really, really, really awesome,” said 9-year-old Cami Smith as she watched the fully eclipsed sun from a gravel lane near her grandfather’s home at Beverly Beach.

## Eclipse: ‘It’s just not the same until you see it’

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“A lifetime event. It’s better in a group,” said Sue Farmer, who watched with several others in the parking lot of the Astoria Library downtown.

### At the Astoria Column

As clouds rolled away from the hills surrounding the Astoria Column about 8 a.m. this morning, cars carrying eclipse viewers rolled in.

Workers at the Column were not entirely sure what to expect. “Happy Eclipse Day,” two gift shop employees said to each other when the shop opened.

The gift store opened an hour early, and park host Fred Pynes said he fielded many questions about the eclipse from visitors over the weekend. But about an hour before the event began, clouds were just starting to disappear and not a lot of people had arrived. “We thought we were really going to get hammered,” Pynes said.

But as the morning progressed, the parking lot filled to the point where park staff started double-parking drivers and traffic at the top of Coxcomb Drive stalled.

Jim Richardson, a park keeper at the Column who lives in Astoria, said the influx of visitors would be good for the Column. Of course, if

any of the eclipse doomsday scenarios that had been theorized actually happened, it might not have made much of a difference.

“We’re all going to disintegrate at 10:30 anyway,” Richardson said with a laugh.

When the moment of near totality took place just after 10:15 a.m., the sky turned to dusk, the hundreds of viewers became quieter, birds stopped chirping and the surrounding trees changed tint.

“It’s goofy the way it looks,” said Dale Walluski, who lives near the Clatsop County Fairgrounds. “I know I’m not sick, but for a moment you feel like you are.”

As the sky brightened seconds after the moment ended, eclipse viewers began hurrying to their cars to escape the traffic. Within the next few hours, it was just another sunny day at the Column.

### At the Peter Iredale

Many of the people who watched the eclipse at the Peter Iredale shipwreck in Fort Stevens State Park near Warrenton ended up here by accident. One family sitting near the wreck, a sleeping bag spread over their laps, said they often come down from their home in Enumclaw, Washington, to camp. This year, they just happened to make a reservation that overlapped with the eclipse.

Thomas Dietrich of Tacoma, Washington, drove down with his son and their dog Sunday night. As he had hoped, they avoided much of the traffic by leaving later in the day. They found a campsite in the park, but hadn’t been able to find eclipse glasses. Everywhere they checked was sold out.

This didn’t phase Dietrich’s 6-year-old son, Thomas, though. “I just want to feel the temperature drop!” he said.

Temperatures started to drop and the light became dim and purple. Groups of people appeared and disappeared in swirls of marine fog. The beach looked like another planet in the murky twilight. Two dogs raced across the dunes, intent on the chase, oblivious to anything else.

Then, just as Chris and Kyle Carroll of Scott City, Kansas, felt they had begun to really notice the eerie light, it was over. The pockets of sky visible through the fog turned back to blue and people took off their glasses.

“We didn’t think it was going to be a very big deal, but that was really cool,” Kyle Carroll said. She remembered looking at a pinhole setup as a kid, but said looking through glasses provided a completely different experience.

Chris Carroll joked that it was still kind of like Christmas.

“There’s such a big buildup and then, OK, I opened my presents, time to go back to bed.”

### At Haystack Rock

Without context, seeing all of the beach chairs in Cannon Beach facing away from the ocean this morning would have seemed strange.

But beachgoers today turned their back on the Pacific to watch the eclipse. While there weren’t hordes of people, eclipse enthusiasts slowly trickled onto the sand with beach chairs and solar glasses waiting for the sky to go dark.

People huddled in blankets and put on more sweatshirts as the daytime sky began to dim and temperatures chilled. Across the beach, faces looked upward, mouths open with awe. Hotel employees in full uniform jogged onto the beach, glasses in hand, for the brief show.

Within seconds Haystack Rock was enshrouded in fog, the ocean fallen into darkness. The birds stopped flying, and all anyone could hear was the crash of the ocean waves.

“It’s pretty impressive. You intellectually know what is happening, but it’s just not the same until you see it,” Jeff Skinner, of Seattle, said as the eclipse approached its peak.

Elleda Wilson contributed to this report.

## ECLIPSE ODDITIES

Associated Press

### Eclipse watchers came to Oregon, but no traffic nightmare

Dire warnings of bumper-to-bumper traffic on Oregon roads failed to happen in the days leading up to the total solar eclipse.

And most travelers reached their destination with relative ease this morning.

But traffic clogged on some roads as procrastinators headed into the path of totality. The Oregon Department of Transportation said this morning that a 30-minute drive from Redmond to Madras on Highway 97 in central Oregon took at least 75 minutes.

Officials were concerned about jams following the eclipse. They hope drivers will stagger their departures, instead of all leaving at once.

### Dutch Bros Coffee recalls eclipse glasses

Dutch Bros. Coffee has issued a recall notice of all of its eclipse glasses.

The Idaho Statesman reported the Oregon-based coffee company handed out eclipse glasses Sunday at many of its locations. But the company issued a recall after discovering the certification of safety was questionable.

The company posted the recall notice on its Facebook page, warning customers not to use the glasses to view the solar eclipse.

Dutch Bros. is encouraging customers to return the glasses to one of its locations in exchange for a free drink of any size.

### Vermont woman finds letter describing 1918 eclipse

BURLINGTON, Vt. — A Vermont woman says she’s discovered a letter describing the 1918 eclipse that was written by her great-grandfather the day after it took place.

Jennifer Nachbur says the letter written by Arthur Wells, an attorney and astronomy buff who was in the “zone of totality” in Baker City, Oregon, for the June 8, 1918, eclipse. That eclipse was the last time there was a coast-to-coast total eclipse in the United States.

A similar eclipse will cross the continent Monday.

Nachbur told WPTZ-TV she discovered the letter written to her great-grandmother in the family’s summer home in Keene, New York.

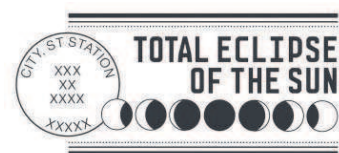
In the letter Wells described the red and yellow rays of the sun and wrote, “the effect on the cloud and landscape was beyond my power of description.”

### Post offices offer special postmarks

BOISE, Idaho — More than 110 U.S. Postal Service offices are offering special postmarks for Monday’s total solar eclipse.

The post offices are in or near the path of the full eclipse, which cuts across the United States, from Oregon to South Carolina.

Spokesman Mark Saunders says the postmarks will be unique in some locations, while most will use one designed by the national office. He says some post offices are using the special postmark only on Monday but others are also using it before and after the eclipse.



U.S. Postal Service

This undated image provided by the United States Postal Service shows a template of a postmark commemorating the Aug. 21, 2017 solar eclipse over the United States.