

Total eclipse of the sun coming to Eastern Oregon!

By SUZANNE KENNEDY

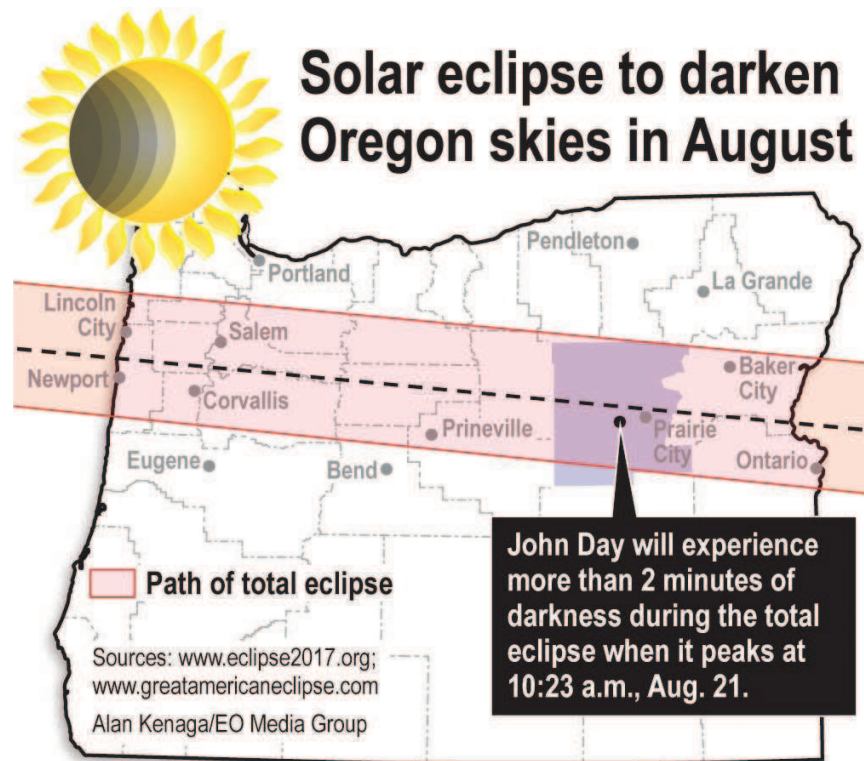
Did you know the Great American Solar Eclipse is coming August 21? It first hits land at the Oregon coast and crosses the entire country. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to share the coolest thing ever with your family.

Total solar eclipses in populated areas are rare events. The moon just happens to be at the right distance from the Earth to appear to be the same size as the much larger sun. Most eclipses are partial — the moon only covers part of the sun. Total eclipses actually happen about every 18 months, however, they are usually inaccessible to people. Most of the planet is covered in water, so it isn't often that an eclipse occurs over a populated area. Experts say that this summer's event will be the first eclipse whose totality path (when the sun is totally covered) lies completely within the continental U.S. — since 1776!

The path of totality runs across Oregon and then continues through Idaho, Wyoming, down through the Midwest, and then on to Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, and finally South Carolina. Alert your friends and family. Eastern Oregon is in its direct path.

Don't wait until the last minute to plan your viewing. Our side of the state promises the best weather in the path of the eclipse and is predicted to be inundated with visitors. Upwards of a million people, from in-state and around the world, will be looking for a spot in the "totality" path. That means full hotels, packed RV parks, and some serious traffic. Oregon State Park reservations sold out in under an hour. Thankfully, those of us in Eastern Oregon don't have to go far.

Keep in mind that the total eclipse will only last about two minutes, so you'll want to incorporate some activities around it. Plan some quality time with neighbors, families, and friends. Two major viewing parties are being organized in Oregon, one in Salem at the fairgrounds and one in Madras. See www.omsu.edu/eclipse-2017 and www.oregonsolarfest.com for



details.

Darkness should hit our side of the state between 10 and 11 a.m. You can see it in its totality by driving down to John Day or Baker City. But right here in Pendleton you will still be able to see an eclipse of more than 95 percent. Pendleton Parks and Rec is planning a bus tour down and back the same day, with a possible stop at the John Day Fossil Beds. The bus leaves at 7 a.m. and will return by 5 p.m. It's limited to 47 people, ages 14 and up and costs \$50 per person.

If you do plan on viewing the eclipse (and why wouldn't you — even I'm not that lazy), remember never to look directly at the sun at any point without eye protection. You can make a special viewing box, or you can just purchase some certified eclipse glasses for super cheap on the internet. You can also "project" the eclipse by pointing the large end of your binoculars at

the sun and focusing the small end onto the ground.

To get your children interested in astronomy, go to stardate.org/teachers/activities and check out the easy lessons they've made available for free download. They are fun, easy, and separated into grade levels and ages. Lessons include a making model of the night sky, a sundial, and a solar cooker that cooks marshmallows. You will seriously

be the coolest parents ever.

For fun, you might download one of the International Space Station phone apps. It alerts you when the Space Station is directly overhead. About 250 miles above the earth and the size of a football field, the Space Station can be the third brightest object in the night sky depending on the angle, so not too tough to spot. Some of the apps even show you what the Space Station is seeing on the earth.

Planning and actually executing science type activities with my family has never been my forte. I'm confident, though, that this summer's big event will be stress free and easy to pull off. I hope it's the same for you!

Suzanne Kennedy is a former middle school teacher who lives in Pendleton with her husband and three children.



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