

Outside totality, the view is worth staying home

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
and **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

There were plenty of oohs and aahs at Butte Park on Monday morning as young and old gathered to watch the solar eclipse.

Some eclipse-watchers set up chairs in the back of pickup trucks, while others spread out picnic blankets or hiked up to the top of the Butte. There was even a group doing yoga under the slowly disappearing sun.

Vivian Sullivan, Alexis Sullivan and Sergio Rangel were hurrying down the Butte trail about 15 minutes before the eclipse's peak.

"We've got to go back and get our lawn chairs. We were just too excited," Vivian said, laughing.

Alexis was busy viewing the eclipse's path through her protective eclipse glasses, and noted that she was surprised the eclipse wasn't more obvious to anyone walking around without the special eye gear.

"I thought you would actually be able to see it just looking," she said.

Not everyone at Butte Park was a local. While many out-of-state travelers headed farther south to the path of totality, Lisa Cochrane and Sandy De La Rosa were in Hermiston from Yakima.

"We wanted to get as close to totality as we could without fighting all the traffic," Cochrane said.

The women stayed at the new Holiday Inn Express — a hotel they said Hermiston should be proud of — and then grabbed their lawn chairs and headed out.

"We found this beautiful park and settled down," De La Rosa said.

She said the whole event was giving her flashbacks to watching Oregon's last solar eclipse when she was in sixth grade.

Traffic troubles

Monday afternoon Umatilla County caught some of the post-eclipse traffic jams that had been predicted. Traffic backed up for several miles on Interstate 82 near Hermiston and Umatilla, made worse by a bottleneck on the bridge over the Columbia River, which is down to one lane of traffic due to construction.

Out of concern for safety as vehicles attempted to merge into that single, non-stop lane of traffic moving onto the bridge, the Oregon Department of Transportation closed the bridge's westbound on-ramp at Umatilla off of Highway 730 for a few hours. The bridge remained gridlocked into the evening.

"It's hazardous to get on and off there," ODOT spokesman Tom Strandberg said.

ODOT also urged drivers to avoid traveling on Highway 395 northbound from Long Creek to Pendleton, as the 209 interchange in Pendleton became clogged in the early afternoon.

To alleviate traffic on those highways, a detour



This Saturday photo shows the crowd at the Big Summit Eclipse 2017 event near Prineville.

Oregon State Police via AP



Assisted living home residents watch the eclipse at McKay Estates in Pendleton Monday.

Photo courtesy of McKay Estates

for car traffic was placed at the intersection of McKay Drive and Highway 395 to Tutuilla Road to help relieve congestion on Southgate in Pendleton.

Pendleton's view

The review for Monday's solar eclipse from Pendleton's McKay Estates were unanimous.

"Once-in-a-lifetime" and "unforgettable" were just some of the descriptors some of the assisted living home residents used to characterize the phenomenon.

McKay Estates took the residents outside and supplied them with eclipse glasses.

Shirley Sagrero recalled

the sensation of putting on the protective spectacles and peering at the partially-obscured sun for the first time.

"It looked like a banana," she said.

For others, looking into the sky and seeing the rare occurrence felt like a religious experience.

"I felt close to God," Maxine Patterson said.

This isn't the first time Oregon's been under the shadow of a high-profile eclipse.

In 1979, a total eclipse worked its way through Oregon and eventually passed over Idaho, Montana and North Dakota before moving north into Canada.

"I felt close to God."

— **Maxine Patterson,**
McKay Estates resident

Unlike this year, the path of totality went right over Pendleton, although according to reports at the time, cloud coverage obscured views of the eclipse for many ground-bound viewers.

While some McKay Estates residents were living in other parts of the country at the time, others remembered the previous eclipse's local effects.

Wiley Cook recalled working for Umatilla County in 1979. On the day of the eclipse, he remembered having to turn the headlights on as he hauled rock to be used as gravel for roads.

"It's like a moon in reverse," he said of the eclipse.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

ECLIPSE: Next U.S. total solar eclipse is 2024

Continued from 1A

said with a smile. "But we wanted to come prepared."

A number of visitors traveled not just cross-country, but across an ocean to see the uniquely North American event. Bart Verbrugge and his wife, Veronique, came all the way from their native Holland with their two children, Isabel, 11, and Jurien, 9.

Bart Verbrugge said he has witnessed two other solar eclipses in his life — one in northern France and the other in Zambia, Africa. But he wanted to be able to share the experience with his kids, so they flew together to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada about three weeks ago for vacation and made their way to John Day by Friday.

"We wanted to show the kids this awesome experience," he said. "I just want to share with them this magical moment."

Bernd Schatzman also flew in to the U.S. from Germany, where he met

friends in Los Angeles before coming up to the path of totality together.

The feeling of watching an eclipse is incomparable, he said.

"It's like some special kind of gray darkness," Schatzman explained. "At the same time, the sun gets this silvery kind of shine."

After totality, some at the industrial park decided to stay while others hit the road right away. Worries of severe traffic backups were perhaps overblown, according to Tom Strandberg with the Oregon Department of Transportation, who said only minor delays were reported along highways 395 and 26.

"It's actually been a lot calmer than we anticipated," he said. "People seem to be behaving, for the most part."

The United States will not experience another total solar eclipse until 2024, and Oregon will not see another until 2108, when one is expected to graze along the coast.

NAPA **ROCK 'N ROLL TOOL SALE EVENT**



MONDAY, AUGUST 28, 2017
EVENT HOURS: 10AM-4PM
HERMISTON AUTO PARTS
200 S. 1ST PL, HERMISTON, OR 97838 • 541-567-5569

PRICING ALSO GOOD AT:
901 6TH ST, UMATILLA, OR 97882
210 S. MAIN ST., BOARDMAN, OR 97818

VIP INVITATION 

Come Work, Learn, and Grow with SYKES

Work that matters. Great opportunities. Exciting culture with amazing teams. Where every day is different in a career you'll love. We elevate the customer experience and hire awesome professionals - just like you!

Join us today!

SYKES



Apply Online: sykes.com/Milton

Text for more info: "sykes151" to 85760

Listen everyone, have you heard?

Ronda Morley's last day of work is drawing near. I've been told that it's August 31st!

Hey Everybody, stand up and cheer, Join her in hoisting a retirement beer!

Congratulations for being with FedEx for 26 years!

Work that matters. Great opportunities. Exciting culture with amazing teams. Where every day is different in a career you'll love. We elevate the customer experience and hire awesome professionals - just like you!

