

10 Best Places to See the Total Solar Eclipse on August 21

For the first time since 1979, a solar eclipse will be completely visible in the United States, with the arc of total visibility stretching from Oregon to South Carolina. According to scientists, this is also the first solar eclipse to be entirely in the United States since 1776. So pack up your viewing glasses (remember to never look directly at the sun under any condition) and hit the road for this truly once in a lifetime event.

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Oregon

According to [scientists at NASA](#), the total [solar eclipse](#) 2017 will begin in Oregon around 9:05 am PDT, and "totality," when the moon completely covers the sun, will start at 10:16 am. The total solar eclipse will then chart its course across the United States for approximately 93 minutes. [Oregon Solar Fest](#) in Madras is an official NASA viewing site in Oregon, although there will be excellent sight lines throughout the Willamette Valley and Central and Eastern Oregon. Bend is one of the first large towns that will be in the eclipse's path, and the brand-new [SpringHill Suites](#) there is hosting an Art of Local event for both guests and the community on August 19, where local photographers will provide tips and tricks for how guests can best capture the rare event.

Idaho

Next up for the total eclipse viewing is Idaho, where Idaho Falls will be the largest area to experience totality. The [Museum of Idaho](#) here is the official NASA viewing site. Both the Teton Mountains and Sun Valley will be in the viewing path, making towns such as Victor, Ketchum, and Driggs three of the top 10 busiest for room rentals, along with Idaho Falls, according to Airbnb.

When you're planning your viewing, note that the American Optometric Association (AOA) says that "If you're within the 70-mile wide path of the total eclipse, you can safely witness the two or more minutes of totality with the naked eye." But, "don't look directly at the Sun without eye protection, even briefly, except during totality."

Wyoming

Wyoming is one of the few states where the "[path of totality](#)" will span the entire state, covering 365 miles, including six state parks and historic sites, plus all of Grand Tetons and Fort Laramie National Parks and large areas of Yellowstone. Other National Park sites, such as Devil's Tower and Bighorn Canyon, will be in the 90 to 95 percent viewing area. Jackson Hole is an ideal place to overnight, and at press time, the centrally located [Springhill Suites by Marriott](#), 15 minutes from the southern part of Grand Teton National Park, still had availability.

Nebraska

With 470 miles of total solar eclipse totality, there will be many spots in the Cornhusker State that offer great viewing during the state's predicted 2.5 minutes in the dark, one of the longest full eclipse durations. For organized activities, visit the town of Stapleton, which is offering an [Eclipse on the Range](#) event complete with protective eye wear (if you won't be in Stapleton and need protective eye wear, Space.com recommends visiting your [local library](#), many of which are distributing eclipse glasses for free).

Missouri

The Show Me state really wants to show residents and visitors the eclipse, which travels through a large part of the state, including over 40 parks. Although Kansas City is right on the border of the path of totality, so viewing will be slightly less than perfect. St. Joseph is right in the center of the 70-mile wide path, as are the towns of Marshall, Boonville, and Jefferson City, to name a few. [Visit Missouri](#) has an eclipse information page that rounds up all the events in the state, including St. Clair's cleverly named "Get Your Eclipse on Route 66."

Illinois

Just the very southern tip of Illinois will experience totality, but it will be for the longest duration of any spot in the country. One of the best spots for viewing is the tiny town of [Makanda](#), whose 600 residents are at the center of the eclipse path.

Kentucky

If you've been thinking "extraterrestrial" when you read about the total solar eclipse 2017, many folks in Hopkinsville agree with you. This town, which holds a Little Green Men festival every year to commemorate a UFO sighting in the 1950s, is supposedly the inspiration for Steve Spielberg's film *E.T.* And, according to [Kentucky Tourism](#), it's also near the point of "Greatest Eclipse," where not only can you be a part of 2 minutes and 40 seconds of totality but also the exact instant when the axis of the Moon's shadow passes closest to the center of Earth. Family-friendly Bowling Green and Mammoth Caves National Park, is another good option, among many spots in the state, for viewing.

Tennessee

As the largest city entirely within the path of this total solar eclipse, Nashville, is one of the most popular viewing spots in the country. Music City even created a [Solar Eclipse Vacation Package](#) that includes a picnic blanket and viewing glasses so you can comfortably watch the solar show. One top hotel option is the newly opened [Kimpton Aerston](#) in midtown where the rooftop pool will provide a top floor view. For a non-city eclipse experience, consider heading to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, whose entire western half will be in the path of totality.

Georgia



The main path of the eclipse will just touch the northeast corner of the state; but it's a scenic corner. Totality will begin in Clayton, Georgia, at 2:35. One great spot to watch from will be at the [Brasstown Valley Resort & Spa](#), nestled within the valleys of the North Georgia Mountains; reservations were still available at press time.

South Carolina

The eclipse wraps up in South Carolina, where in addition to historic Charleston, which will be in the path of totality, there are several towns with the honor of having superlative viewing titles—longest, clearest, last: Columbia is predicted to be the home of the longest total solar eclipse for a metro area on the East Coast. Centrally located in downtown, the [Courtyard Columbia Downtown at USC](#) is the perfect hotel for travelers looking to celebrate all week long as the town will host more than 50 eclipse-related festivals and events from August 18 to 21. And the tiny town of Greenwood will be close to the "end" of the eclipse as it stretches across the United States and will near the center line of totality as it passes through South Carolina, a position that's important because it provides the best and longest "viewing" of this historic event. The [Inn on the Square](#) will serve "Lunch in the Dark" that day and at press time still had availability. Greenville has one of the highest percent chances of having viewable conditions the day of the eclipse at about 65 percent (Columbia is at 44 percent, Charleston is at 53 percent), and will experience totality for a full 2.5 minutes. Greenville (named one of *The New York Times'* 52 Places to Go this year) is offering a number of educational and entertainment experiences for the eclipse, including family fun at [The Children's Museum of the Upstate](#) including pinhole projectors, moon phase activities, and Spark! lab activities focused on women in astronomy.