

Solar power

Sell a trip to see the total solar eclipse this April, as Lynn Houghton charts its path across the US

On April 8 this year, a total solar eclipse will darken a 115-mile path from northern Mexico to eastern Canada – traversing the US from Texas to Maine, with events planned in every state along the path.

For viewers inside the eclipse's 70 mile-wide path of totality, the sun will be completely covered by the moon for up to four minutes and 28 seconds, when total darkness will occur.

The eclipse will enter Texas at the Rio Grande river and move through San Antonio, Fredericksburg, Austin and Dallas, with several small towns hosting events. The path of totality will then sweep through the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, then Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Upper New York State, Vermont and Maine. ➤

PHOTO: NASA/BILL INGALLS



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DESTINATIONS

THE US | ECLIPSE TRIPS



FROM TOP: Main street in Fredericksburg, Texas; High Falls in Rochester, New York **OPPOSITE**: Bald Knob Cross of Peace, Alto Pass, Illinois

PICTURES: Shutterstock/ ShengYing Lin, Yabo Eichas, Vaca Diez Photos

The thrill of being part of this shared experience has created a ripple effect of interest, with accommodation along the path booking rapidly and many events proving popular. We've picked out some of the best trade product for clients hoping to catch a glimpse – with the help of astronomer Angela Speck, chair of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

She says: "As co-chair of the American Astronomical Society Solar Eclipse Taskforce, my goal is to assist communities in readying for eclipses."

TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

The solar eclipse's path of totality will pass north of San Antonio – over Hill Country, which is known for its vast, wild landscapes and wildlife such as Mexican free-tailed bats, deer and multiple species of birds.

Speck recommends those staying in San Antonio head north to the Government Canyon State Natural Area, which covers 4,850 hectares of wilderness, Friedrich Wilderness Park near Leon Springs, or Phil Hardberger Park.

Book it: America As You Like It has a 13-night Texas Lone Star State fly-drive from £2,545 per person, based on two sharing on a room-only basis. The price includes flights from Heathrow, departing on April 3, to Dallas Fort Worth, 13 days' car hire, two nights in Dallas, two nights in Austin, two nights in San Antonio (during the eclipse), three nights in Corpus Christi, two nights in Houston and two nights in Fort Worth. [americaasyoulikeit.com](https://www.americaasyoulikeit.com)

DALLAS, TEXAS

As the eclipse travels further north, it will pass through Grapevine, near Dallas. Speck recommends taking



“Clients can experience a thriving wine scene in Grapevine’s tasting rooms and, in Dallas, explore the city’s Arboretum and Botanical Garden

part in a street party at Peace Plaza in Grapevine’s historic Main Street district. Clients can also experience a thriving wine scene in Grapevine’s tasting rooms and, when in Dallas, explore the city’s Arboretum and Botanical Garden.

Book it: North America Travel Service has a five-night Solar Eclipse trip departing on April 4, priced at £2,810 per person, including economy-class return flights from Heathrow to Dallas, room-only accommodation at the Hyatt Place Dallas and car hire. Also includes VIP Total Solar Eclipse party tickets in Grapevine, with access to

Peace Plaza in Grapevine’s Historic Main Street District, a Grapevine 2024 Eclipse Swag Bag valued at \$200, live music from 11 am-3pm and a \$60 food and beverage card, for use at any of the eight kitchens or two bars inside Harvest Hall. northamericatravelservice.co.uk

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

Hailed as the ‘crossroads of the eclipse’, the small university town of Carbondale is located at the centre of the line of totality, with multiple events celebrating the event (advance booking advised). The Southern Illinois University ➤

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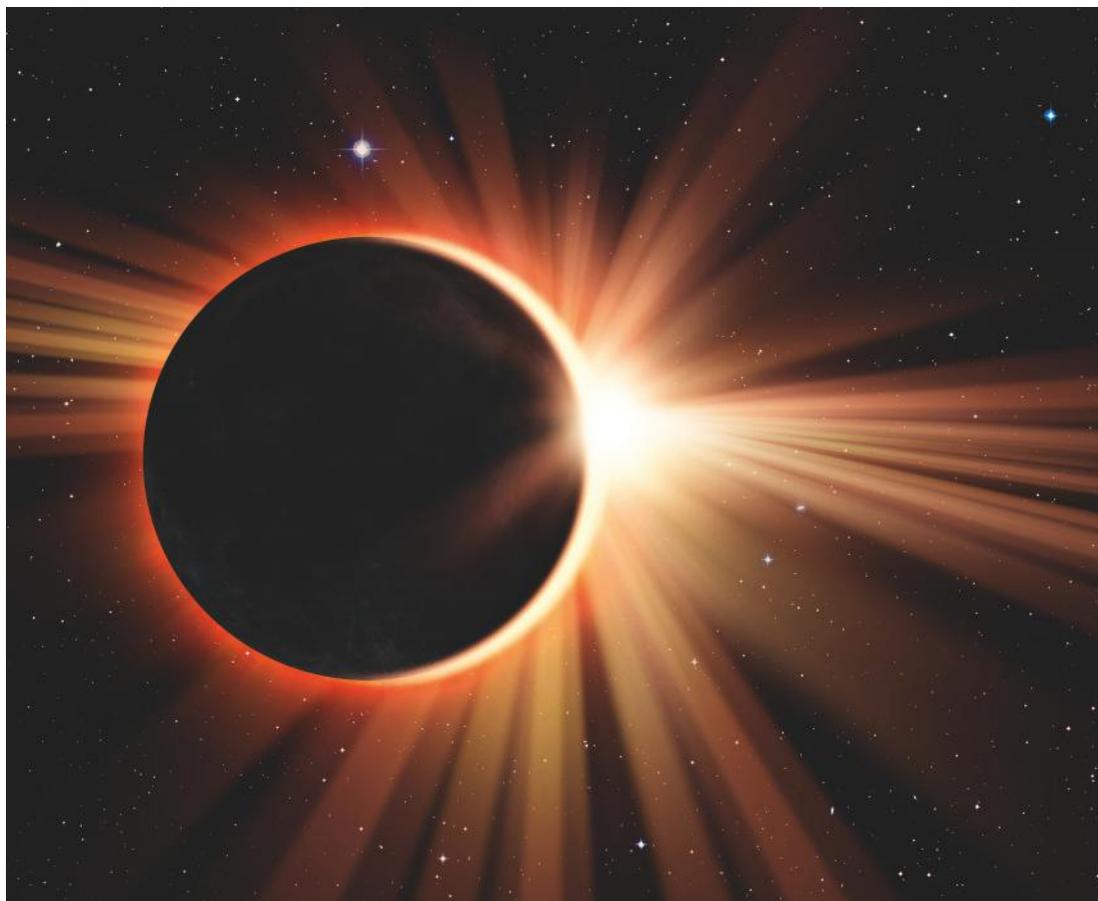
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Schedule shown applies to Summer 2024. Correct at time of print.



ABOVE: The total eclipse will last for more than four minutes and can be viewed across many states in the US

PICTURE: Shutterstock/muratart

campus is promising an unparalleled celestial spectacle at the football stadium, with the Nasa Edge podcasters in attendance. Another viewing experience is at Bald Knob Cross of Peace, at Alto Pass in the hills of the Shawnee National Forest. As one of the path's highest viewing points, it promises an unobstructed view of the eclipse. For visitors travelling from Chicago, there are astronomical things to do along the way such as visiting the Strickler Planetarium in Bourbonnais.

Book it: Gold Medal offers six nights from £1,499 per person, including return flights from Heathrow to Chicago O'Hare departing on April 4. The price also includes car rental, three nights in Chicago at the Millennium Knickerbocker Hotel, then three nights in Effingham at Days Inn with breakfast.
goldmedal.co.uk

“Southern Illinois University campus is promising an unparalleled celestial spectacle at the football stadium

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

The city, on Lake Ontario, is a unique location for an eclipse event as it is considered the optics and photonics technology capital of the world, with Bausch + Lomb, Xerox and Eastman Kodak all based here. There are events happening on April 8, but also throughout the preceding weekend, including activities on themes such as sports, history, food, performing arts, and, of course, science and astronomy.

Book it: Frontier America's eight-night A Solar Eclipse Adventure tour features eclipse-viewing in Rochester and starts from £2,445 per person, departing on April 4. It includes three nights in Manhattan, two nights in Rochester, two nights in Auburn (Finger Lakes) and one night in Long Island, plus flights from Heathrow to JFK with Virgin Atlantic and car rental for six nights.
frontier-america.co.uk

ASK THE operator



Maggi Smit, founder and managing director, America As You Like It

“There is a yearning for exploration and adventure, with holidaymakers looking for more meaningful and memorable ways to travel. This has led to more travellers seeking once-in-a-lifetime experiences, particularly to destinations where naturally occurring phenomena, such as the aurora borealis, bioluminescent shores and solar eclipses, steal the show.”

SELLING ILLINOIS



Sarah Bird, destination manager USA and Canada, Gold Medal

We have tips for agents selling eclipse packages for Southern Illinois:

- Encourage customers to book soon as accommodation along the path of totality is selling out quickly in all states – particularly Illinois.
- Arrive in your destination well in advance of the eclipse as roads will be busy.
- Take advantage of discovering somewhere new and explore the local area.
- Encourage safe viewing by using certified eclipse-viewing glasses.