
Total Solar Eclipse 2019: Another Total Solar Eclipse Is Coming. Here's How To See It

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If you were remiss about missing out on the spectacle of totality during summer 2017's solar eclipse mania-or if you just want to live it all over again-you're in luck. Another total solar eclipse is happening soon, this time dazzling South America.

On July 2, starting off the coast of New Zealand, the solar eclipse will reach its peak about 1,000 kilometers north of Easter Island, says Alex Young, an associate director for science at NASA. Parts of Chile and Argentina will be in the path of totality, with a partial eclipse visible in Ecuador, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay, if weather permits. This one is expected to last four minutes and 33 seconds at its peak, longer than the two minutes and 40 seconds in 2017.

The Prime Location:

As luck (and the cosmos) would have it, Chile, one of the only spots on land from which to view the eclipse in totality, happens to be one of the world's best stargazing regions as well, with new luxury lodging and adventure options for intrepid stargazers.

The Elqui Valley, with its pisco distilleries and world-famous vineyards, should be your home base. You can visit the small town of Vicuna, home to five observatories with a near-perfect climate (low humidity and amazingly clear skies) and the birthplace of poet Gabriela Mistral. The Observatorio Cancana, Observatorio del Pangué, and Observatorio Mamalluca in Vicuna are all open for stargazing.

The CasaMolle, a luxury hotel in the middle of the Elqui Valley, offers an all-in-one resort option with infinity pool, golf course, and outdoor terrace for practicing yoga or meditation, along with an amphitheater for additional stargazing and guided horseback riding. It's also close to the Capel and Aba Pisco distilleries, as well as Elqui Wines Vineyard, where you can sample local products and learn about the winemaking process. Local wineries Tabali and Palernia are additional great stops for tastings.

From the Elqui Valley, a short plane ride gets you to the Atacama Desert, the Andean plateau 4,000 meters (13,123 feet) above sea level and the world's driest desert. By day, salt flats, active geysers, intense, blue lagoons, and small, picturesque villages make for otherworldly sightseeing. By night, famous stargazing spots such as the APEX Observatory on the Chajnantor plateau and the Alma Observatory will have you dreaming of other worlds.

Guided Tours:

If a guided approach appeals more, boutique travel company Upscape still has spots on a five-day itinerary that includes eclipse-viewing from a deluxe, tented camp in Elqui, along with an overnight in Santiago and tour of the city. The schedule also features horseback riding and an observatory visit to learn about the southern hemisphere's night sky from astronomers. Prices start at \$4,995 per person.

Wild Frontiers is also offering a 15-day solar eclipse tour that begins in the Chilean town of San Pedro de Atacama, then goes to the Salar de Atacama and the Atacameno Highlands before crossing the Andes into neighboring Argentina. The viewing of the eclipse takes place in Argentina's Valle Fertil before the trip ends in its Mendoza wine region.

Nalia Shaikh, senior travel consultant for Wild Frontiers, says the reason people join these tours is that eclipses are visible only from very specific places, and it's difficult for people get to the prime locations on their own. "The advantage is they are guaranteed accommodation and transport, and it's also more cost-effective," she says.

Extending Your Trip:

After the solar eclipse, there's still more to do in Chile, especially in its capital and largest city, Santiago, situated in a valley surrounded by the Andes and the Chilean Coast Range.

Luxury accommodations to consider are the Hotel Magnolia, a renovated 1929 mansion in Santiago's historic downtown area, with a restaurant serving seasonal specialties such as conger eel soup, shellfish with pica lemons and quinoa, and king crab-stuffed salmon. The Mandarin Oriental Santiago is located in the Las Condes district, with easy access to the downtown area and surrounding mountains-plus a three-floor, on-site spa.

Activities in Santiago include touring the Bellavista neighborhood, home to eclectic eateries and art galleries, and visiting the Plaza de Armas to tour the Metropolitan Cathedral.

Another Chance:

Even if you can't swing a visit this July for the eclipse, there will come an additional chance next year, when the cosmos will really be showing off. The Chilean Lake District, about 470 miles south of Santiago, will experience a total solar eclipse on December 14, 2020, just after the Gemini Meteor Shower is expected to peak the previous night.

Interpid Travel - whose 2019 trip is already sold-out - will offer a 13-day Argentina tour in December 2020, with astrologist John Mason, beginning in Buenos Aires and ending in Santiago. Guests will watch the eclipse from a private viewing site in Piedra del Aguila.

Emmanuel Burgio, president of Blue Parallel luxury tours, is currently designing a 2020 tour that will include high-end camping and a journey through Argentine Patagonia. He's received lots of interest from customers about eclipse viewings, he says.

"It's a natural phenomenon they are going to be able to see and enjoy," Burgio explains regarding the appeal of eclipses. "The fact that this only happens a few times in a lifetime makes it an item to check off their to-do list."

Members-only travel club Prior is also offering a 14-day trip in Chile's Araucania lakes region and nearby Quetrupillan and Lanin volcanoes. The itinerary features a guided excursion to national parks in Patagonia, followed by eclipse-viewing in a luxury tented camp and private wine tasting in the Casablanca Valley.

Sasha Lehman, a travel consultant for the company, says the 2020 eclipse may be even better than the one this year, because it will take place in South America's summertime, meaning there's a smaller chance that cloudy skies will obscure the view. "Those who have experienced eclipses know it is a really powerful experience; it takes you away from the day to day of our small concerns," she says. "It reminds you of the incredible beyond."
