



A total eclipse with the 'diamond ring' effect, as seen from Casper, Wyo., in 2017. JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

By

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For Mandie Adams, the total solar eclipse on Dec. 4 will be the 12th one she's seen. It will also be the 12th for her teddy bear, Dinky Doo.

Seeing it won't be easy. The [eclipse](#) will be visible only on a sliver of Earth in Antarctica, the South Orkney Islands and the surrounding ocean. Ms. Adams, a rental-property owner who lives in Southend-on-Sea, England, flew from London to Madrid to Buenos Aires to the town of Ushuaia on the southern tip of Argentina. From there, she will board a 15-day eclipse cruise, which sails through the notoriously turbulent Drake's Passage, to see just under 2 minutes of total eclipse darkness —if there aren't clouds.

Ms. Adams, 56, is one of many eclipse chasers who travel to great lengths to witness the complete covering of the sun by the moon, a phenomenon that happens on average every 1½ years somewhere on Earth. The chasers often have their own special traditions surrounding

the event, including wearing celestial-themed outfits, drinking local spirits and bringing along stuffed bears.

“Who better to sit and imbibe the quietness with than a silent companion,” Ms. Adams said of Dinky Doo.



Mandie Adams with Dinky Doo in Ushuaia, Argentina, in front of the ship she will be sailing on to see the eclipse.

PHOTO: MANDIE ADAMS

To avoid the risk of clouds covering the view, Jay Pasachoff, a professor of astronomy at Williams College in Massachusetts, will take to the skies aboard a chartered flight to catch this year's event. It will be his 36th total eclipse.

Dr. Pasachoff, 78, said that eclipses offer a rare opportunity to [view parts of the sun](#) that can't normally be seen. “There are things in the upper layers of the sun you can study in detail,” he said. One must for his suitcase, along with his viewing equipment, is a pair of orange

pants. He has worn orange pants or shorts to each total eclipse dating back as far as 1977. He doesn't remember why he started wearing them, but now it's just tradition, he said.



Aboard the TSS Fairsea, 1977, off the Mexican Pacific Coast (did not appear in the WSJ print), Steven Saunders, Dan Bruns, Gavin Watson, Jay Pasachoff, Phil Schierer see also the orange pants in Bob King's article about the June 10, 2021, annular: <https://skyandtelescope.org/astronomy-news/chasing-the-sun-at-39000-feet/>

and alumnus Don Cooke '75's photo from Salem



Dec 4, 2021, in Punta Arenas boarding for the total solar eclipse

When was the last time you saw an eclipse? Join the conversation below. Kate Russo, a clinical psychologist in Ingham, Australia, who has seen 12 total eclipses, calls seeing one a chance to “experience the universe in 3-D.” A total solar eclipse can be a powerful experience, she said—much more so than partial eclipses. As the shadow approaches, it can create bands of light on the landscape, a rippling

effect of thin, wavy lines stretching across the Earth. Once the totality hits, with the moon directly in front of the sun for a matter of minutes, the ground is draped in darkness. “You see the environment change, like birds quieting,” she said.

Ms. Russo, 49, who is also the author of several books about eclipses, was planning to go this year but her flight was canceled. She has a tradition of uncorking a local spirit for each event, dating back to her first eclipse in 1999, when she procured some French wine. In Madagascar in 2001, she had homemade coconut rum. In 2008 in Mongolia, she found a bottle of local vodka.

This year, as few as 3,000 people might see the eclipse, estimated Michael Zeiler, a retired cartographer who runs GreatAmericanEclipse.com. He knows of more than a dozen ships, two flights and one expedition group on Antarctica available for interested viewers. In comparison, Mr. Zeiler estimates that 32 million people live inside the path of the next U.S.-based total eclipse, visible from Texas to Maine on April 8, 2024—and that’s not counting those who will travel to see it. (There will be one more total eclipse before then, over western Australia and southeast Asia in April 2023.)

Clint Werner, an author in San Francisco, has seen 18 eclipses. His first date with his now-husband, Donald I. Abrams, was to see one in a Chilean desert in 1994. He and Dr. Abrams, professor emeritus of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, took in the diamond-ring effect—a moment just before and after the eclipse when just a few streaks of sun are visible, appearing as a shining diamond set in a bright ring around the silhouetted moon.



Clint Werner, left, and Donald Abrams at an eclipse in 2012.

PHOTO: BILL KRAMER

For each eclipse now, Dr. Abrams sports a silky robe with astronomical symbols on it from his late mother-in-law, while Mr. Werner dons a shirt decorated with stars and moons. “I saw the shirt in a store window and did a cartoonlike screeching stop, went in and bought it,” he said.

Mr. Werner now always picks the viewing site, out of superstition. The three times Dr. Abrams chose the location, they got clouded out.

Craig Small, a retired professor of astronomy at the Hayden Planetarium at New York’s American Museum of Natural History, has two requirements for his eclipse expeditions: his lucky flag and enough Fox’s U-Bet chocolate flavored syrup to make egg creams for him and his friends to drink after the main event. This total eclipse will be the 35th for Mr. Small, 74, and his traditions have been running since the early 1970s.

His frequent eclipse companion Glenn Schneider, a 66-year-old professor of astronomy at the University of Arizona—and a fellow New Yorker—appreciates the [classic New York drink](#), calling it “a way to connect with home.”



An eclipse viewing group in 2010 in Tahiti surrounds Craig Small’s special flag.

PHOTO: MARK S. MARGOLIS/RAINBOW SYMPHONY, INC.

Mr. Small’s flag is one he created, measuring about 6 by 4 feet with a total eclipse emblazoned on it. Since the flag’s first trip in 1973, to view an eclipse on a ship off the coast of Africa, it has always accompanied Mr. Small or Dr. Schneider, sometimes separately—and wherever it has gone, the eclipse has never been clouded out. Dr. Schneider has been clouded out three times, he said, but never when he had the flag. “The flag has this aura about it. People say, they don’t want me, they just want my flag,” said Mr. Small.

The flag is so cherished that Mr. Small has bequeathed it to Dr. Schneider in his will, he said.

Charles Beichman, an executive director at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, unknowingly kicked off a family romantic tradition when he met Susie Burke aboard a ship off the western coast of Africa during the eclipse of 1973. In two years, they married.

More than four decades later, their future son-in-law proposed to their daughter during the 2017 eclipse in the remote town of Weiser, Idaho. The couple got married the next year.

"It was a diamond ring under a diamond ring," Dr. Beichman said.

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