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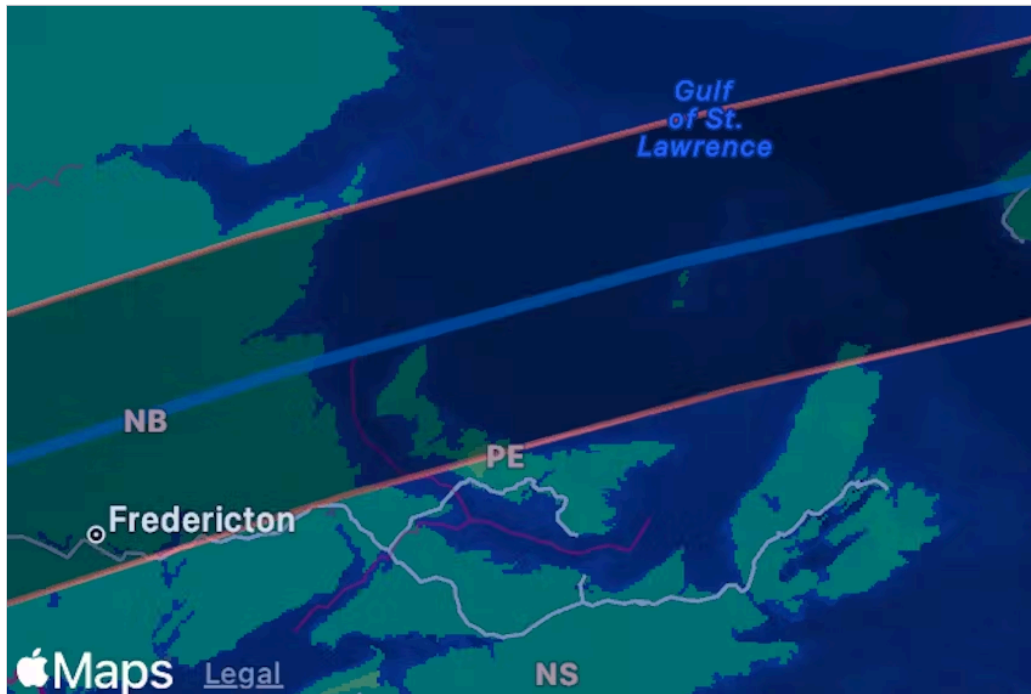
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CURIOSITY

Cape Breton preparing for Monday's eclipse, totality in Meat Cove

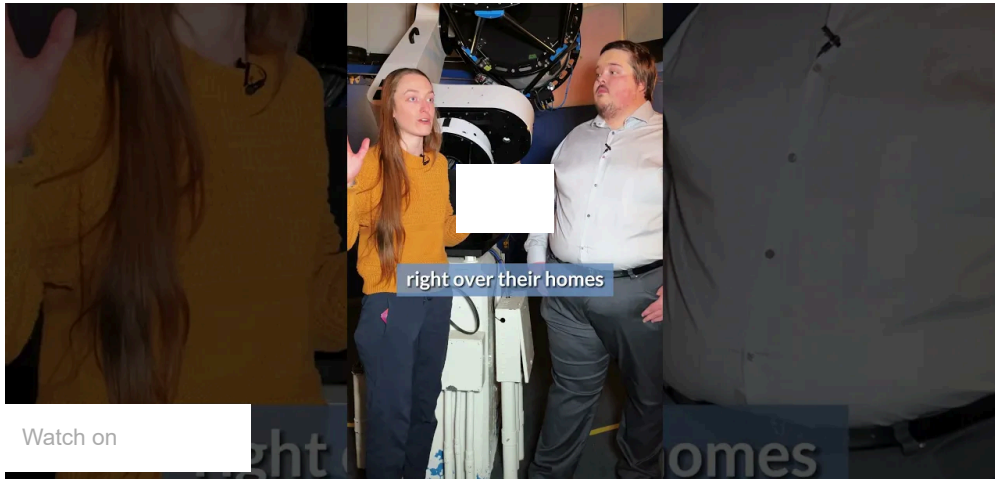
Luke Dymant | Posted: April 4, 2024, 7:18 p.m. | Updated: a day ago | 11 Min Read



A map showing the path of the solar eclipse passing through Atlantic Canada on April 8. The section between the two red lines is where it will appear as a total eclipse — where the sun will be completely blocked out by the moon for up to a few minutes. The totality appears in just a small area of Nova Scotia, in the Meat Cove area. APPLE MAPS/ASTRONOMERS WITHOUT BORDERS - APPLE MAPS/ASTRONOMERS WITHOUT BORDERS

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MEAT COVE, N.S. — At Cape Breton’s northernmost tip, the approaching [solar eclipse](#) has been all the talk for months.

On April 8, most of North America will have front-row seats to the [eclipse](#). The luckiest will get to view the astronomical event at its grandest — the total eclipse.

According to maps assembled by experts, major cities such as Montreal, Indianapolis, Ind. and Dallas, Texas, will be plunged into darkness for a few minutes in the [total eclipse](#) shadow. That’s when the moon will fully block the sun, leaving only the star’s illuminating outer atmosphere visible.

Central New Brunswick, including Fredericton, western Prince Edward Island and central Newfoundland will also experience this “totality.”

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Nova Scotia won't be in that path, except for one small area: the very northern tip of Cape Breton, including Meat Cove.

"People have been talking about it for years," said Meat Cove resident Melissa Hines. She's helping organize hospitality and activities for those who make the trip to the community on Monday.

"It does feel pretty special. People all over the place are talking about Meat Cove. It's pretty rare for this to happen and I don't know if I would ever see it again in my lifetime."

The locals have been hearing from people planning to make the trip to Meat Cove on Monday, in hopes of getting a glimpse at the awe-inspiring phenomenon.

She said the community has been preparing for an influx of visitors. The Meat Cove Community Centre will be open that day for refreshments and public washrooms. Parks Canada will also host a hike up the mountain overlooking the community, for the chance at a better view of the eclipse.

Approved eclipse glasses will also be sold.

"We're hearing that a lot of people are going to be up here," said Hines. It could become an overwhelming crowd in a community of Meat Cove's size, but Hines said the area sees between 500-600 visitors on some days during the tourist season and is hopeful it can handle the traffic.

She cautioned visitors to be aware of the cliffs and wilderness up the road to Meat Cove.

"It's not something the community isn't used to, but it's going to be a busy day, no doubt."



Stan Williams looks through a telescope at the Two Rivers Observatory in 2023. The observatory will welcome visitors to view the solar eclipse passing over Cape Breton on April 8. "This is not only bringing awareness to the eclipse, but it's also bringing awareness to the fact that there's an observatory inside the park. A lot of people don't even know it's here." GREG MCNEIL/CAPE BRETON POST

Optimism for clear viewing forecast

While the Meat Cove area will get the privilege of the total eclipse, there won't be many bad places to be in Cape Breton. The moon could be seen covering at least 95 per cent of the sun — as long as weather doesn't obstruct the view.

Stan Williams, who operates the Two Rivers Observatory at the Two Rivers Wildlife Park in Huntington, first wasn't sure if there would be clear skies on April 8. However, the latest forecasts have been promising.

Environment Canada is calling for a mix of sun and cloud on Monday in Sydney. The eclipse is expected to hit its peak in Cape Breton around 4:30 p.m.

"Up until (Tuesday night), I was expecting it to be cloudy with a chance of snow or showers," said Williams.

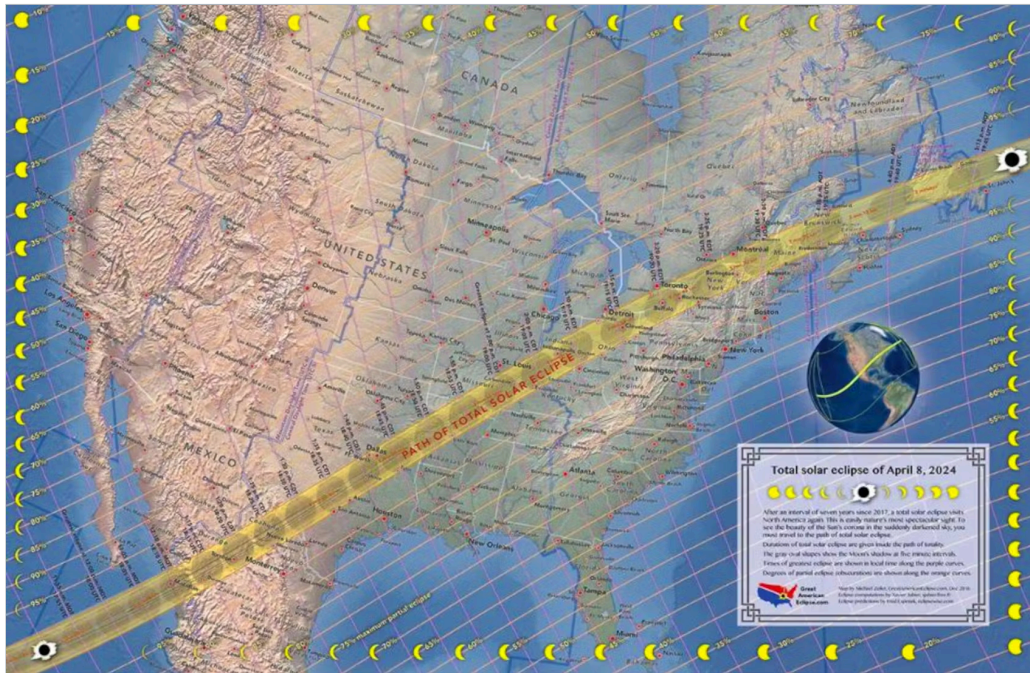
The eclipse is a big deal at the observatory, which will host a public viewing. People can view it through the observatory telescope through a filter, to avoid injuring eyes.

There will also be a big screen where the eclipse's movement will be projected, as well as a limited supply of ISO-approved viewing glasses to share. Williams recommends people bring their own if possible, as well as to dress for the weather.

The observatory event will be free, but the park charges an entry fee.

"It's not something you see every day, so people are kind of enthralled with it," he said, adding the eclipse will be a great learning opportunity for visitors.

"This is not only bringing awareness to the eclipse, but it's also bringing awareness to the fact that there's an observatory inside the park. A lot of people don't even know it's here."



Trajectory map of 2024 solar eclipse. NASA IMAGE - Contributed

'Difference between night and day'

There hasn't been a total solar eclipse in Atlantic Canada since 1972 and this will be the first chance for many living in Cape Breton and the province ever to see one.

Planning ahead is perhaps the most important thing in catching that moment, said Dave Chapman. He is an amateur astronomer, a fellow with the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada and has viewed several total eclipses, travelling as far as Nebraska and Caribbean to see them.

The Post asked Chapman about the experience of seeing the sun totally covered.

"The difference between a partial eclipse and a total eclipse is the difference between night and day. Even a 99 per cent eclipse is not the same," he said. "It's a completely different experience being under that shadow in those few minutes of totality."



Dominion Pharmasave employees Irene Boutillier, left, and Corry Smith hold ISO-approved eclipse viewing glasses for sale at the store on Thursday morning. The store has been busy with glasses buyers since receiving its first shipment on Wednesday evening, going through more than 100 pairs that day. On Thursday morning, some people were lined up at the door before opening in search of the glasses. LUKE DYMENT/CAPE BRETON POST - LUKE DYMENT/CAPE BRETON POST

Dedicated viewers: Prepare to travel

For seeing this eclipse, however, Chapman advised those wanting the best chance of seeing the totality without issues should consider travelling to P.E.I., New Brunswick or further. The Halifax resident is going to New Brunswick for the occasion.

He said some factors could interfere with viewing in northern Cape Breton. One is the possibility of changing weather and adjusting to it. The area's lack of roads could disrupt viewers from driving to a clearer viewing area in time.

The Meat Cove area is also at the edge of the totality shadow, which could mean only seconds of total coverage, compared to several minutes toward the centre of the shadow elsewhere. There are also fewer amenities for crowds of people.

He said interest in the eclipse shouldn't be underestimated, adding he's come across highway traffic jams during past events.

"I wouldn't promote it or say 'Hey, this is the place you should be,'" said Chapman about the Cape Breton option for dedicated total eclipse viewers. "I

just see all kinds of problems with that, so I'm pretending it's not going to be (in Nova Scotia).

"If you're going to travel, go somewhere where you can be mobile."



From left to right, Meat Cove residents Kyle McLellan, Kingston McLellan and Harland McLellan try on their eclipse glasses ahead of the solar eclipse passing over Atlantic Canada on April 8. CONTRIBUTED/MELISSA HINES - CONTRIBUTED/MELISSA HINES

Scramble for shades

With the eclipse date fast approaching, many people have just begun preparing to view it — beginning with the certified viewing glasses. However, it's been a challenge to find stores not only supplying the proper eyewear but to find stores that haven't sold out.

A number of stores, including the Bizzy Bee Mini Mart in Dominion and optometrist Vogue Optical in Sydney, told the Post they had stocks of glasses that dwindled rapidly amid the high demand. Local Canadian Tires have also been in and out of stock.

The Showcase store at the Mayflower Mall has also been ordering shipments to keep up with demand. Showcase owner Samir Kulkarni told the Cape Breton Post that thousands of pairs have been sent to the Showcase stores around Canada and the United States ahead of the eclipse.

The Pharmasave stores in Glace Bay, Dominion and Meadows in Howie Centre received a shipment of 1,200 pairs between them on Wednesday. After, the Dominion store went through 100 pairs in the evening and had a lineup of people before opening on Thursday, looking for the shades.

Manager Brian Shaw said the store was late to the eclipse glasses rush, but opted to place an order because of the local demand.

"I did not anticipate the level of interest," he said, figuring the time to get what's left of the stock is limited.

"I wish I would have sourced more because it's not going to meet demand, but hopefully there's more locations on the island. Certainly, I hope everyone who wants a pair gets them."

Everything to know about the April 8 eclipse in Atlantic ...



Luke Dymnt is a multimedia journalist with the Cape Breton Post. Follow him on X (Twitter) [@PostDymnet](#).

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