

The Virgin Islands Consortium

A Rare, Total Solar Eclipse Is Upon Us. Here's How To Watch It Safely

VIC News / **Published On August 21, 2017 10:40 AM /**

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Today, a total solar eclipse will cross the United States from coast to coast, starting just after 10 a.m. local time in Oregon and ending just before 3 p.m. in South Carolina. In The Virgin Islands the eclipse will be a bit different but very much a phenomenon: The moon will cover 90 percent of the sun's surface between 2:14 p.m. p.m. to 4:47 p.m.

The last time an eclipse traveled across the entire U.S. was in 1918. If you're looking for a watch group for the momentous occasion, [head to the University of the Virgin Islands](#), St. Thomas campus, which has been designated NASA's only official viewing location in the Caribbean.

We need to discuss one more thing, though, which is how to watch the total eclipse safely. To do so, we've linked to our favorite U.S. mainland news organization, The New York Times, with some pertinent safety information.

Shield Your Eyes

According to The Times, if you're planning to catch the eclipse — either in totality or even partially — in person, you'll need a few things to view it safely. Even though an eclipse effectively turns day into night, never look directly at the sun.

Solar eclipses are especially dangerous. Not because of anything special about the light during the eclipse, but because the sudden changes in luminosity can cause retina damage before your eyes have a chance to adapt, or before you have an opportunity to look away.

Get Your Gear

So what should you use to watch the beauty safely? Many amateur eclipse-watchers may drag out a telescope, but in reality, telescopes are not ideal for eclipse-watching because of their narrow field of view. Binoculars however, can enhance the experience, especially if they have proper filters to protect your eyes. Your local Kmart stores should have the one-off binoculars priced reasonably for today's eclipse.

Do It Yourself

A pinhole projector is another safe way of watching the eclipse, and you can make one yourself with two thin pieces of cardboard (or paper plates).

Here's how:

1. Put one piece of cardboard (or paper plate) on the ground.
2. Poke a tiny, round hole into the other piece of cardboard.
3. With your back facing the sun, raise the cardboard with the hole in above your head and aim the hole at the cardboard on the ground.
4. The hole will project an image of the crescent shape of the eclipse.

Or watch the video below. Happy watching, everyone.

[View the original embedded media](#)

Source: [The New York Times](#).

Correction: August 21, 2017 (7:01 a.m.)

A previous version of this story included a text error that gave the wrong times for today's solar eclipse in the USVI. We've updated the story.