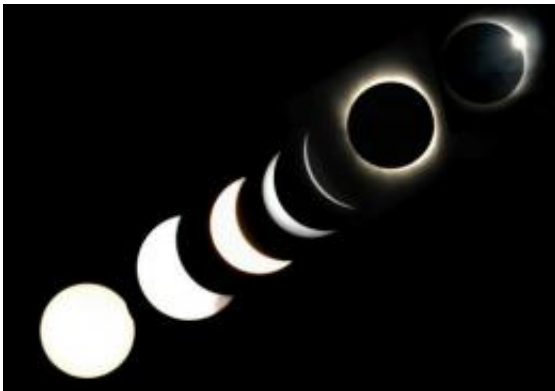


Year's first partial solar eclipse occurs Tuesday

January 3 2011, By ALICIA CHANG , AP Science Writer



File photo shows the various stages of a total solar eclipse.

Early risers in Madrid, London and Paris take note.

The moon will appear to nip a bite out of the [sun](#) Tuesday, a spectacle that will be visible at sunrise across much of Europe.

The partial [solar eclipse](#) can also be seen from northern Africa, the Middle East and central Asia, where it will occur at sunset.

Tuesday's solar show is the first of four partial eclipses of the sun to occur this year. The last time there were this many partial solar eclipses was in 1982. The next time will be in 2029. There is no [total solar eclipse](#) this year.

A solar eclipse happens when the moon lines up between the sun and the Earth. This casts a lunar shadow on the Earth's surface and obscures the solar disk. During a partial solar eclipse, only part of the sun is blotted out.

Tuesday's eclipse will begin in northern Algeria. As the moon's shadow travels east, western Europe will wake up to a sunrise eclipse. In Madrid, a little more than half of the sun's diameter will be covered. In London and Paris, about three-quarters of the sun will be hidden.

The greatest eclipse will occur over Sweden where about 85 percent of the sun will be blocked. A sunset eclipse will be visible from Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and northwest China.

Williams College astronomer Jay Pasachoff planned to be in Israel and meet up with a local astronomy club to test out his cameras and other photography equipment during the eclipse.

Since partial solar eclipses yield little information of scientific interest, Pasachoff instead will educate fellow sun chasers to resist staring directly at the sun. Instead, people should peer through commercially available solar filters to avoid eye damage.

"It will be a run-the-mill partial solar eclipse, but it's more fun than a lunar eclipse," Pasachoff said.

More information: <http://bit.ly/hIuFk0>
<http://bit.ly/fwzZob>

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