

Where and when you can watch Venus transit the sun

June 5 2012



In this June 8, 2004 file photo, amateur astronomer Jody McGowen looks through a telescope to watch the transit of Venus from Sydney's Observatory Hill. Venus will again cross the face of the sun on Tuesday June 5, 2012, a sight that will be visible from parts of Earth. This is the last transit for more than 100 years. (AP Photo/Mark Baker, File)

(AP) — It's your last chance to catch one of the rarest cosmic spectacles — Venus slowly crossing the face of the sun. Weather permitting, the transit of Venus will be visible from much of Earth — Tuesday from the Western Hemisphere and Wednesday from the Eastern Hemisphere. This sight won't come again until 105 years from now — in 2117.

The nearly 7-hour show can be seen in its entirety from the western Pacific, eastern Asia and eastern Australia. Other parts of the globe will catch portions of the transit.

Here's a sampling of local viewing times: 12:10 p.m. Honolulu, 3:06 p.m. Los Angeles, 5:06 p.m. Mexico City, 6:04 p.m. New York — all on Tuesday — and 5:37 a.m. London, 6:10 a.m. Beijing, 6:12 a.m. Hong Kong, 6:38 a.m. Cairo, 7:10 a.m. Tokyo, 8:16 a.m. Sydney, 10:15 a.m. Auckland on Wednesday.

As in a solar eclipse, do not look directly at the sun. There are ways to watch the Venus transit without blinding yourself.

If you still have your pair of eclipse glasses from the May 20 "ring of fire" solar eclipse, now is a good time to reuse it. You can also find the special viewing glasses at your local museum — if they're not already sold out. Another option is to buy welder's glasses from a home improvement store, but make sure it's number 14 or darker.

To celebrate the last transit in a century, museums, observatories and astronomy clubs are setting up telescopes with special filters for the public. Many will also feature special programs including lectures.

If clouds spoil your view or if you're shut out, there's always the Internet. NASA plans a live webcast from Mauna Kea, Hawaii. Slooh.com and the Exploratorium in San Francisco are among others that will the sky show broadcast online.

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