

Danes taking to the skies to secure best seat for solar eclipse

March 19 2015, by Sören Billing



Eclipse watching tourists ride dog sleds outside of Longyearbyen, Svalbard, an archipeligo administered by Norway, on March 19, 2015 ahead of the March 20 total solar eclipse

To make sure clouds don't block their view of Friday's total solar eclipse in the Faroe Islands, a group of 50 Danes were on Thursday preparing to watch the event from a Boeing 737.

"At a height of 11 kilometres we're guaranteed not to have any clouds,"

John Valentin Mikkelsen, a 63-year-old teacher from the Danish city of Aarhus, told AFP.

The view comes at a price—and not just the 15,800 kroner (2,121 euros, \$2,261) Mikkelsen and his wife paid for their own row of three seats on the plane.

While they will be shielded from the vagaries of Faroese weather, there are some things they won't get to experience when watching the [eclipse](#) from the sky.

"If you're on the ground you can hear the birds behaving differently, and the temperature falls," he said.

"And maybe we won't get the full view as the windows are quite small," he added.

The Faroe Islands, located north of Britain and home to 50,000 people, is along with the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard the only place the [total eclipse](#) will be visible.

The Danish plane was chartered by a science magazine which charged 7,400 kroner for a single seat in the middle of the aircraft and 8,900 kroner for a window seat.

Despite its 148-passenger capacity the aircraft, which will attempt to follow the moon's shadow, will only carry 50 eclipse chasers.

The last of 48 tickets was snapped up in January. Two people won their spots in a competition.



School children show off eclipse bags they bought at the Svalbard Museum on March 19, 2015 ahead of the March 20 total solar eclipse in Longyearbyen, Svalbard, an archipelago administered by Norway

'A bit hooked'

Danish astronomer and astrophysicist Anja Cetti Andersen will speak on the flight, which takes off from Copenhagen at 0715 GMT and will reach the Faroe Islands' airspace two hours later.

Mikkelsen admitted to having become "a bit hooked" on solar eclipses after driving with his family to Munich in 1999 to watch the phenomenon for the first time.

"I inherited some money from my brother, who unfortunately passed away, and we wanted that to benefit the whole family. So we took our

children and their partners to Turkey in 2006 to watch the [solar eclipse](#) there, and it was really, really spectacular," he said.

Since then he has also travelled to Russia, China and Australia for the same reason.

The Danish autonomous territory is expecting a surge of more than 8,000 eclipse tourists according to tourism officials, a boon to an economy otherwise largely dependent on fishing and an annual subsidy from Copenhagen.

"It will seem as though time has been paused, as people from all across the world will gather together with Faroese locals to witness the rare and extraordinary occasion," stated a website set up by its tourism board for the occasion, which will live-stream the two and a half minute blackout.

The only caveat: Faroese weather is known for being cloudy and unpredictable, and Friday's forecast is for partially cloudy weather with showers.

"Chances of the skies being overcast were a bit high, so we didn't want to spend money on that," said Mikkelsen, who initially balked at the high price for watching the eclipse from a plane.

"But then we agreed that we had some money to spare, so we said: 'You only live once, so why not?'" he added.

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