

# 'Awesome' solar eclipse wows viewers in Australia, Indonesia

April 20 2023, by EDNA TARIGAN and MADDIE BURAKOFF

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The sun and moon are photographed near Exmouth, Australia, during a solar eclipse on Thursday, April 20, 2023. The lucky few in the path of the hybrid solar eclipse will either get plunged into the darkness of a total eclipse or they'll see a "ring of fire" as the sun peeks out from behind the moon. Credit: Aaron Bunch/AAP Image via AP

Under a cloudless sky, 20,000 eclipse chasers crowded a tiny outpost to watch a rare solar eclipse plunge part of Australia's northwest coast into brief midday darkness Thursday while temporarily cooling the tropical heat.

The remote tourist town of Exmouth, with fewer than 3,000 residents, was promoted as one of the best vantage points in Australia to see the eclipse that also crossed remote parts of Indonesia and East Timor.

An international crowd had been gathering for days, camping in tents and trailers on a red, dusty plain on the edge of town with cameras and other viewing equipment pointed skyward.

NASA astronomer Henry Throop was among those at Exmouth cheering loudly in the darkness.

"Isn't it incredible? This is so fantastic. It was mind-blowing. It was so sharp and it was so bright. You could see the corona around the sun there," the visibly excited Washington resident said.

"It's only a minute long, but it really felt like a long time. There's nothing else you can see which looks like that. It was just awesome. Spectacular. And then you could see Jupiter and Mercury and to be able to see those at the same time during the day—even seeing Mercury at all is pretty rare. So that was just awesome," Throop added.

First-time eclipse chaser Julie Copson, who traveled more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) north from the Australian west-coast port city of Fremantle to Exmouth, said the phenomenon left her skin tingling.



A partial solar eclipse is seen through the cloud over Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. A rare solar eclipse will cross over remote parts of Australia, Indonesia and East Timor on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana

"I feel so emotional, like I could cry. The color changed and seeing the corona and sun flares . . .," Copson said.

"It was very strong and the temperature dropped so much," she added, referring to a sudden 5-degree-Celsius (9-degree-Fahrenheit) fall in temperature from 29 degrees Celsius (84 Fahrenheit) when the moon's shadow enveloped the region.

It was the fifth eclipse for Detroit resident Shane Varrti, who began

planning his trip to Exmouth a year ago.

"It's very exciting. All this effort has come to fruition," Varrti said.

In Indonesia's capital, hundreds came to the Jakarta Planetarium to see the partial eclipse that was obscured by clouds.

Azka Azzahra, 21, came with her sister and friends to get a closer look by using the telescopes with hundreds of other visitors.

"I am still happy to come even though it is cloudy. It is happy to see how people with high enthusiasm come here to see the eclipse, because it is rare," Azzahra said.

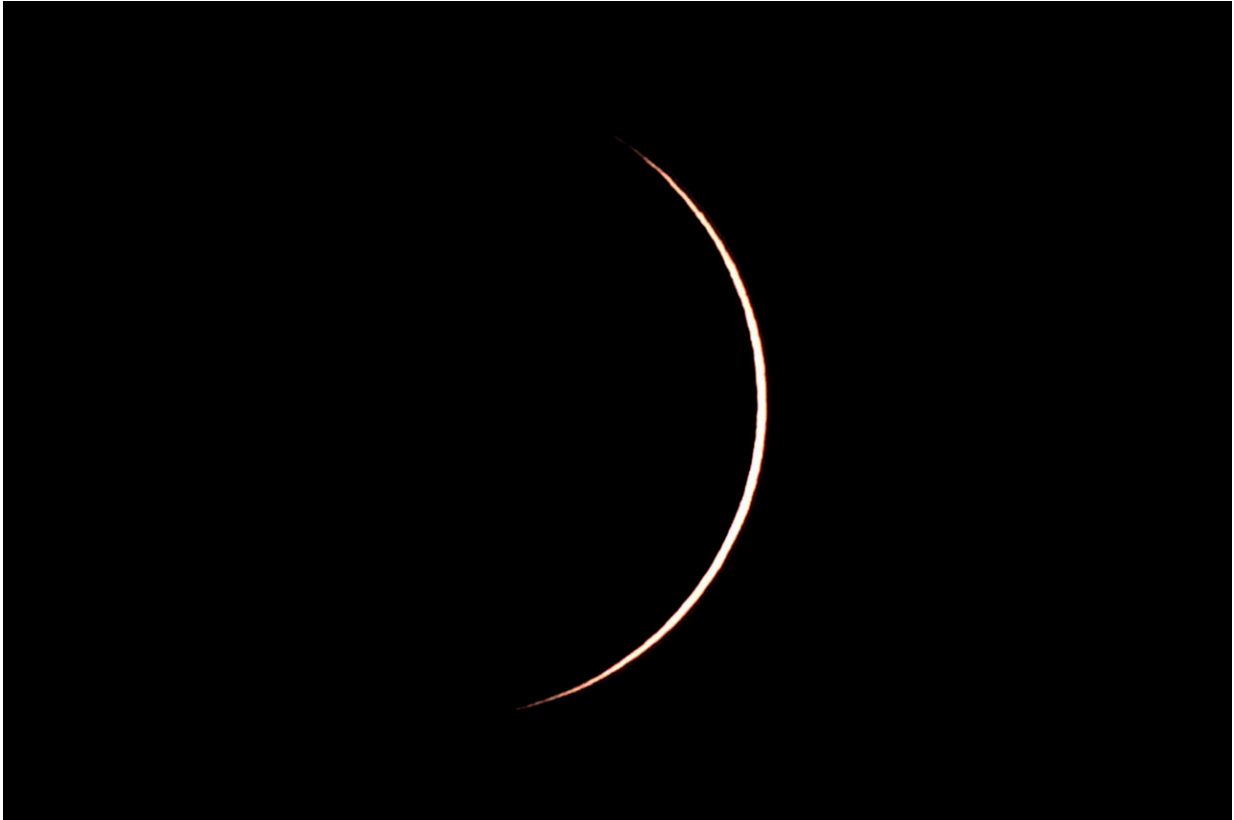


A hybrid solar eclipse is seen from Lautem, East Timor, Thursday, April 20, 2023. The lucky few people in its path either saw the darkness of a total eclipse or a “ring of fire” as the sun peeked from behind the new moon. Credit: AP Photo/Lorenio L.Pereira

The call to prayer resounded from the city's mosques when the eclipse phase began as Muslims in the country with the world's largest Muslim population said eclipse prayers as a reminder of God's greatness.

In East Timor, people gathered around the beach in Lautem municipality, waiting to witness the rare solar eclipse through their eclipse glasses. Some of them came from other countries and gathered with locals to have a clear view of the eclipse.

"Timor Leste is one of the unique countries where the experience is less humid, less cloudy, so we are expecting a clear sky, that's why many international astronomers wish to converge here. We are hoping that there is going to be a clear sky," Zahri Bin Ahmad, astrophile from the South East Asia Astronomy Network of Brunei said as they waited Thursday.



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People cheered as the sun and moon reached maximum eclipse.

"This is a very new natural phenomenon for Timor Leste. It is very important for us to be able to watch and experience it firsthand," said Martinho Fatima, a civil protection authority officer.

The [hybrid solar eclipse](#) tracked from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean and was mostly over water. The lucky few people in its path either saw the darkness of a total eclipse or a "ring of fire" as the sun



peeked from behind the new moon.

Such celestial events happen about once every decade: The last one was in 2013 and the next one isn't until 2031. They occur when Earth is in the "sweet spot" so the moon and the sun are almost the exact same size in the sky, said NASA solar expert Michael Kirk.

At some points, the moon is a little closer and blocks out the sun in a total eclipse. But when the moon is a little farther away, it lets some of the sun's light peek out in an annular eclipse.



A woman and man use protective glasses to view a solar eclipse near Exmouth, Australia, on Thursday, April 20, 2023. The lucky few in the path of the hybrid solar eclipse will either get plunged into the darkness of a total eclipse or they'll see a "ring of fire" as the sun peeks out from behind the moon. Credit: Aaron

Bunch/AAP Image via AP



Children watch solar eclipse reflected on the base of a telescope in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. The lucky few people in its path either saw the darkness of a total eclipse or a “ring of fire” as the sun peeked from behind the new moon. Credit: AP Photo/Slamet Riyadi





A partial solar eclipse is seen through the cloud over Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. A rare solar eclipse will cross over remote parts of Australia, Indonesia and East Timor on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana



People use protective glasses to watch a hybrid solar eclipse in Lautem, East Timor, Thursday, April 20, 2023. The lucky few people in its path either saw the darkness of a total eclipse or a “ring of fire” as the sun peeked from behind the new moon. Credit: AP Photo/Lorenio L.Pereira



A woman uses protective glasses to watch solar eclipse in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. The lucky few in the path of the hybrid solar eclipse would either get plunged into the darkness of a total eclipse or see a “ring of fire” as the sun peeks out from behind the moon. Credit: AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana





People prepare their viewing equipment in Exmouth, Australia, ahead of a solar eclipse on Thursday, April 20, 2023. The lucky few in the path of the hybrid solar eclipse will either get plunged into the darkness of a total eclipse or they'll see a "ring of fire" as the sun peeks out from behind the moon. Credit: Aaron Bunch/AAP Image via AP



Indonesian women use protective glasses to watch solar eclipse in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. The lucky few in the path of the hybrid solar eclipse would either get plunged into the darkness of a total eclipse or see a “ring of fire” as the sun peeks out from behind the moon. Credit: AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana





People wear protective glasses as they look up at a solar eclipse in Exmouth, Australia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. The lucky few in the path of the hybrid solar eclipse will either get plunged into the darkness of a total eclipse or they'll see a "ring of fire" as the sun peeks out from behind the moon. Credit: Aaron Bunch/AAP Image via AP



A man uses a telescope to watch solar eclipse in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. A rare solar eclipse will cross over remote parts of Australia, Indonesia and East Timor on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana



People use protective glasses to watch solar eclipse in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. The lucky few in the path of the hybrid solar eclipse would either get plunged into the darkness of a total eclipse or see a “ring of fire” as the sun peeks out from behind the moon. Credit: AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana





A man uses special glasses to watch solar eclipse in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. A rare solar eclipse will cross over remote parts of Australia, Indonesia and East Timor on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana



People take turn to use a telescope to watch solar eclipse in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. A rare solar eclipse will cross over remote parts of Australia, Indonesia and East Timor on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana





A man uses a protective glasses to watch a hybrid solar eclipse in Lautem, East Timor, Thursday, April 20, 2023. The lucky few people in its path either saw the darkness of a total eclipse or a “ring of fire” as the sun peeked from behind the new moon. Credit: AP Photo/Lorenio L.Pereira



People lie on the ground as they use protective glasses to watch solar eclipse in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. A rare solar eclipse will cross over remote parts of Australia, Indonesia and East Timor on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana





Indonesian youths wear protective glasses to watch solar eclipse in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. A rare solar eclipse will cross over remote parts of Australia, Indonesia and East Timor on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana



A woman assists her daughter to see through a telescope to watch solar eclipse in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. A rare solar eclipse will cross over remote parts of Australia, Indonesia and East Timor on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana





People use protective glasses to watch solar eclipse in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, April 20, 2023. A rare solar eclipse will cross over remote parts of Australia, Indonesia and East Timor on Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana

"It's a crazy phenomenon," Kirk said. "You're actually watching the moon get larger in the sky."

Several other upcoming solar eclipses will be easier to catch. An [annular eclipse](#) in mid-October and a total eclipse in [April 2024](#) will both cross over millions of people in the Americas.

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