



<https://www.pretoria-astronomy.co.za>



<https://assa.saa.ac.za/>

Prepared by Michael Poll pollmnj@icon.co.za

EVENTS: *All are welcome to join these events.*

Next Observing Evening : September 18th 2026

From sunset onwards at Christian Brothers College. Turn left immediately after entering the main gate. Carry straight on through the car park and proceed straight down the tarred road. About 50 to 100 metres after the last row of studs there is a cricket sightscreen on the right. Observing will be on the cricket pitch just past the sight screen.

Please do not drive onto the grass.

Monthly Meeting : September 23rd 2026

The meeting is held on-line. The web link to join the meeting is:

<https://meet.jit.si/ASSAPretoriaMonthlyMeeting>

If you are on our invitation list you will receive an e-mail from Johan Smit on the day of the meeting, which has the link included. If you are not on the Invitation list please and wish to be included, send your mail address to johanchsmit@gmail.com

Danie Barnardo will be Chairman for the evening and will present What's Up

Summary of Main Topic for September

The speaker and subject will be advised before the Meeting.

OBSERVING EVENING REPORT August 21st 2026 Michael Poll & Johan Smit

We were eight persons at this evening's observing, including Mahomed and Dirie who are students from Somalia and who are studying at the University of Pretoria. They had found out about us on our website. They were most interested in what we were doing, and we gave each of them a Skymap to take away.

However the "clear" sky was awful caused by high wispy cirrus, the first quarter Moon, the seasonal dust and the ever present light pollution.

We started the evening with a good look at the Moon, followed by a look at Venus. They were both showing phases and that were explained to our visitors in detail.

Venus was high and bright in the west, and it was now showing a fat crescent having gone past its greatest eastern elongation on August 15th. From superior conjunction it takes about 8 months for Venus to reach greatest elongation, but it only takes 10 weeks from then until inferior conjunction, so it will lose altitude quickly during September and into October. Inferior conjunction is on October 24th. Thereafter it will be rising before sunrise in the morning sky.

We could only see a handful of stars – including Arcturus, Vega, Altair, Alpha and Beta Centauri, the stars of the Southern Cross and Spica directly above Venus.

Through the telescope we looked at Alpha Centauri, Alpha Crucis and Albireo (Beta Cygni) which are respectively double, triple and double stars. As well as these stars we had a look at a very faint Jewel Box, which attracted the usual admiration but was nowhere as good as on a clearer night.

In spite of the poor sky quality, all things considered, the evening was quite pleasant.

CENTRE MEETING REPORT August 26th 2026 Summaries by Michael Poll

“What’s Up” for September 2026 was presented by Johan Jordaan

Johan listed the dates on which the Moon would be near bright objects in a series of close encounters. Within the space of a few days the Moon was near Mars and Jupiter in the morning sky, and Venus and Mercury in the evening sky, and passed near Antares in mid-month. There was an occultation of Beta Tauri in the early hours of September 5th. Seeing the Moon next to a bright object enables one to identify the object if one did not know it previously.

The Moon was near the Beehive Cluster in Cancer on September 8th. The Greeks and the Romans saw the cluster as a hay manger where two Asses were eating, the Asses were represented by the stars Gamma and Delta Cancrī which were named Asellus Borealis and Asellus Australis respectively.

Deep sky objects in the early spring sky include M57, the Ring Nebula in Lyra; the globular clusters M13 in Hercules (the brightest globular north of the celestial equator), 47 Tucanae and Omega Centauri. Galaxies that can be seen include the Magellanic Clouds, the Sculptor Galaxy (NGC 253) and Centaurus A (NGC 5128) a.k.a. the Hamburger Galaxy.

Finder charts for these were presented, objects were all illustrated and details of their structure and distances were given. Johan also highlighted the double star Albireo (Beta Cygni)



The Main Topic for the evening was a video presented by Johan Smit and was hosted by Professor Brian Cox and entitled: “The Fermi Paradox”

The first part of the video is summarised here and it discussed the possibility of Extra Terrestrial Life with which we could communicate.

The premise was that **We Have Not Detected Any Sort of Extraterrestrial Life:** And the question that Enrico Fermi posed in 1950 was *Where Are They?*

We have no evidence of other civilisations Why is This?

In our experience of one example of life (us!) the following was noted:

1 Life may start easily

Life evolved on Earth as soon as possible after the Earth had cooled sufficiently, which was 3.8 billion years ago.

2 Life Needs Time to Evolve

The Earth may be unique in the Milky Way – it has been stable enough throughout its history and the Sun has also been stable and not changed much. The Universe is violent but there have been no nearby supernovae to erase life on Earth, and there have been no impacts big enough to destroy all of life. There may be lots of planets with water but they have not been stable for long enough.

3 Intelligence

It could be that there are aliens all around us – maybe we cannot detect them because their and our technology is different

4 Size of the galaxy

Galaxy is so big we would not detect civilizations that are too far away, any signal would be too weak

5 The space travel argument

A civilization could build self-replicating machines that jump from one solar system to another. If they replicate exponentially they could cover the milky way in, say, 100 000 000 years. After tens of millions of years there could be plenty of aliens around but none have been detected : *Perhaps there are none.*

We Have Not Detected Any Sort of Extraterrestrial Life:

Is it Because

- There Are No Others Except Us
- They choose to remain hidden – they do not want to be known. However, not wanting to be known is not typical *human* behaviour. We have not tried to stop making ourselves known.
- Other civilisations may live and die in a limited time scale with no overlap between them and us.
- We may find evidence of dead civilisations, which could be us in 10 000 years' time

The Great Filter

Civilisations arise and get to our state of development and technology but cannot proceed further. Our filter can occur where the laws of nature do not apply – our knowledge will exceed our wisdom and our civilisation may destroy itself:

e.g the Cold War including the Cuban Missile Crisis, Biological Weapons, Artificial Intelligence.

Why is there no evidence? – the Great Silence

There is no evidence because of biology: for the first 3 billion years of its history there were only single cells on Earth. In our experience, intelligence requires multicellular life to develop but multicellular life has only evolved once on Earth, so it could be an unusual event. Also we do not know if life on Earth developed more quickly than “normal” or whether the development was slower than it might have been. There may be microbes all over but only one civilization per galaxy.

A reference given in the video was:

Barrow and Tipler : “*The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*”

EDITORIAL I recently found this in the Athlone News which is a free weekly community newspaper published in Cape Town. Date of publication : December 2025

Researchers from Stellenbosch University’s CoCREATE Health and the International Astronomical Union Office of Astronomy for Development (IAU OAD) are uncovering how stargazing experiences can reduce stress, improve mood, and strengthen social connection. The project is turning to the night sky to address rising mental health challenges, with early findings showing that stargazing can reduce depression and anxiety while strengthening social connections.

The project, Astronomy for Mental Health, explores how structured stargazing sessions, from community gatherings to overnight retreats, can support mental health. The research builds on Stephen Kaplan’s *Attention Restoration Theory*, which suggests that gentle, sensory environments help the brain recover from mental fatigue. The night sky, researchers say, offers “soft fascination” - a calming, restorative form of attention that requires no effort.

The team is also exploring how stargazing induces a version of the “Overview Effect,” the profound emotional shift astronauts report when viewing Earth from space. By encouraging people to look up and reflect on their place in the universe, researchers hope to inspire similar feelings of perspective, calm, and connectedness.

Fourteen families attended a guided astronomy weekend in Sutherland, a home to some of the world’s darkest night skies and the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT). Participants viewed Saturn’s rings, lunar craters, and the Milky Way and took part in reflective discussions around a fire.

Within 24 hours, participants reported reduced anxiety, lower depressive symptoms, and improved mood, measured through self-report questionnaires, journaling, interviews, and focus groups.

One of the lead researchers, Professor Lynn Hendricks, said the effect goes beyond rest or escape. “If the effect was only about escape or rest, we would expect a similar response after any weekend break. What we are finding, though, is that the cosmic element, the vastness, the awe, creates a shift that’s distinct. It does not just calm people; it changes how they think about themselves and their place in the world.”

Participants also described:

- A sense of “mental spaciousness”
- A calmer, clearer mind.
- Stronger family connection.
- Greater perspective on life’s challenges.

Dr Therese Fish, Stellenbosch University’s vice-dean of clinical services and social impact, said the project offers a vital alternative in communities with limited mental-health services. “Through this collaboration, we are creating new ways for people to find healing outside of clinical settings. Families are reconnecting not just to each other, but to the environment and to a shared sense of humanity,” she said.

IAU OAD director Kevin Govender added that astronomy has always promoted deep reflection. “Now we are learning it can also help us sit with the big questions, quietly, together, under the same sky.”

The project will run until 2029 and will expand to include youth programmes, urban stargazing circles, and both psychological and physiological measurements. Researchers aim to compare experiences across different environments to understand which conditions most benefit mental health. A paper on the preliminary findings is expected by the end of 2025.

<https://athlonenews.co.za/news/2025-12-08-stargazing-study-shows-promise-for-improving-mental-health-in-south-africa/>

ARTICLE : Some sources to get started with Naked Eye Observing Michael Poll.

1 Evening sky map

There is a website called **Skymaps.com** where you can download a free two-page star chart for the evening sky for the current month. You have to get the Southern Hemisphere map, which is good for the whole of South Africa. The instructions for using it are printed around the outside of the circle, but basically what you have to do is orientate the map to match the sky you are looking at, which means that you hold the map so that the direction you are facing is at the bottom of the page. The bottom half of the page is what you will be looking at, the top half will be behind you, so fold it back. Note that the map is only for the evening sky, the stars you see before sunrise will be in the evening sky in six months’ time.

2 Satellites

If you want to identify the satellites you see from your location there is a free website called **Heavens-Above**. The two satellites you may be most interested in are the International Space Station (which can get as bright as Venus) and the Hubble Space Telescope. Satellite views are very location specific, so to avoid entering your GPS co-ordinates every time, you can register for free, and put in your co-ordinates, so that every time you log in it will be for your location. Amongst other things there are 10-day predictions for satellites of special interest: this example is for the International Space Station for my location and you get the table shown. (Note that there is only one prediction for the next 10 days!) The negative magnitudes mean that it is very bright.

Date	Brightness	Start			Highest point			End			Pass type
	(mag)	Time	Alt.	Az.	Time	Alt.	Az.	Time	Alt.	Az.	
17 Sep	-0.7	04:05:32	12°	SSE	04:05:32	12°	SSE	04:05:49	10°	SSE	visible

There is wealth of other information on this website as well -enough to keep you busy for a long time!

3 Planetarium Programme

You can get a Planetarium Programme onto your computer -it is called **Stellarium** – it is a free download. You can use it to see what is in your sky at present, or at any time of night or on any date, past or future. The menu slides in from the left side and bottom left. If you do download it the first thing you must do is to tell it where you are (“location”).

It gives a view to the south when you first open it, but you can scroll around. One window one would use a lot is the “date / time window”, where you can choose a date and time of interest. You will also find that if you click on any object a whole list of information about it drops down. Some of this information will be of more immediate interest e.g. its brightness (= magnitude) the rise and set times of the object, and its altitude in degrees (i.e height above the horizon) and its azimuth (the angular distance around the horizon in degrees, starting in the north and going through east, then south and west). Knowing the altitude and azimuth enables one to locate an object. (A hand span at arm’s length is about 20° on the sky).

How bright is it?

One important word you will see, hear and use a lot of is “**magnitude**” (abbreviated to “mag”). Magnitude is an indication of how bright an object is. It started with the ancient Greeks who had no optical aid. They classified the brightness of stars by calling the brightest ones “first magnitude” and the faintest ones they could see as “sixth magnitude” and estimated all the brightnesses in between. It is a bit of an odd scale but the brighter an object is the smaller its magnitude number. Some things are brighter than 1st magnitude, so they have negative magnitude numbers e.g. the magnitude of Venus is minus 4.4 (“- 4.4”). With a truly dark sky you will probably be able to see magnitude 6 stars, but in the city magnitude 4 could be the limit. The satellites you may be most interested in are the ones brighter than about magnitude 2

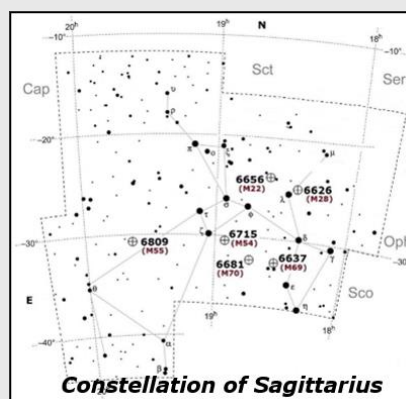
On an academic note!

There are co-ordinate grids on star maps, the one we use most is the equivalent of latitude and longitude on Earth – the latitude equivalent on the sky is called Declination (“Dec”) and is measured in degrees north and south, and the longitude equivalent is called Right Ascension (“RA”) and is measured in hours and minutes. If you think about it longitude is really an equivalent of time – for example, if one is east of Greenwich we would say we are “ahead of Greenwich”. In Pretoria we say we are “two hours ahead of Greenwich” (If it is 10.00 am here, it is 8.00 am at Greenwich), or we may say we are 8 hours behind Sydney, which is further east than we are. The lines of declination on the sky are the Earth’s latitude lines projected upwards, and if you stand on the terrestrial equator, the celestial equator (the one on the sky) will be exactly overhead, and in Pretoria at 26 degrees south the 26° south line of declination will (always) be exactly overhead here.

OBSERVERS CORNER by Magda Streicher

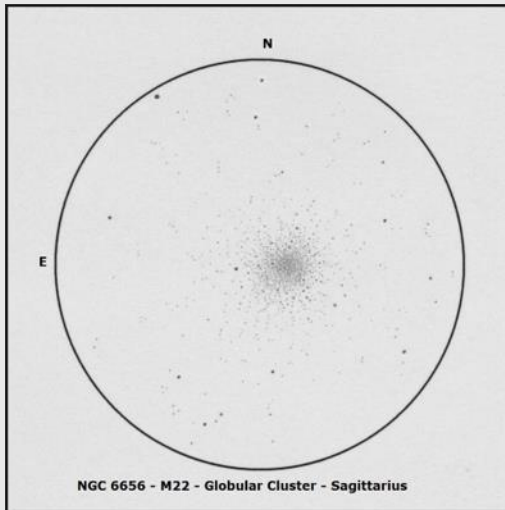
Globular Clusters in Sagittarius : *The Majestic Giants*

The constellation Sagittarius is known not only for its splendid nebulae and star clusters, but also for some of the most impressive dense globular clusters. The gigantic composition of stars so densely packed together sometimes defies the mind’s ability to grasp the reality of it. Take time to allow these outstanding objects to sink in and look at them with new eyes.

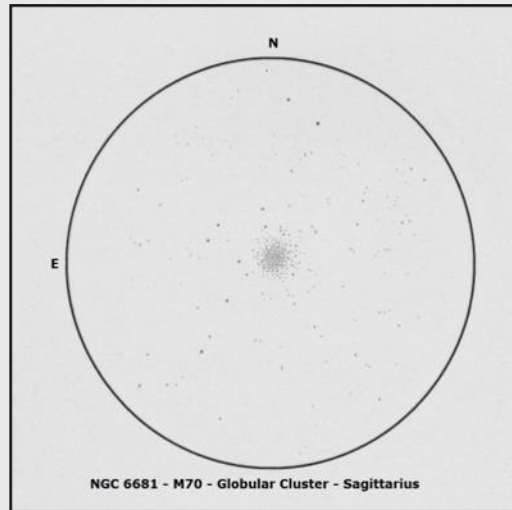


In very dark conditions, NGC 6656 (Messier 22), one of the brightest and largest, can be seen even with the naked eye and was discovered as far back as 1665. Planetary nebula PK 009.8-07.5 lies in the southern part of this globular cluster.

NGC 6681 (Messier 70) situated midway between zeta and epsilon Sagittarii, is not at all difficult to find and is truly pleasing the eye. The globular cluster displays a reasonably bright core, several knots of faint stars and strings that truly show its beauty.



NGC 6656 – Messier 22



NGC 6681 – Messier 70

Pencil Sketches Credit: Magda

NGC 6626 (Messier 28) is situated only a degree north-west of Lambda Sagittarii, which, according to the notes of Charles Messier, it is fairly round in shape and about twice as far away as Messier 22.

NGC 6715 (Messier 54) was discovered in 1778 and was probably part of the Sagittarius dwarf galaxy, which our Milky Way is now cannibalizing. It is very large, reasonably bright, and is an outstanding globe of stars situated 1.7 degrees south-west of Zeta Sagittarii.

NGC 6637 (Messier 69) is only a degree further north-east and similar to Messier 70 as regards appearance and brightness, but that is where the similarity ends. Look closely as the globular cluster boasts an exceptionally dense core. Dark patches can be seen between the stars with a dark rift through the southern half.

A favourite is NGC 6809 (Messier 55), which is slightly different in appearance from most globular clusters. The reason is that it does not possess a bright core, but contains a large mass of condensed stars, which creates a striking appearance. This lovely globular cluster is situated in the far eastern part of the constellation. These objects are thousands of light years removed from our sight, a fast impression of their indescribably massive sizes. Become a part of the night skies and allow the majestic clusters to enchant your field of vision, bringing the gloriousness of the starry skies to the fore and making the reality of them sink in.

If only I could discuss the impression of the Messier globular clusters with Mr. Messier, I would say, "Charles, don't you think these are the diamonds in the starry crown?".

OBJECT	TYPE	RA	DEC	MAG	SIZE
NGC 6626 – M28	Globular Cluster	18h24m.5	-24°52'.2	6.8	11.2'
NGC 6637 – M69	Globular Cluster	18h31m.4	-32°20'.8	7.6	7'
NGC 6656 – M22	Globular Cluster	18h36m.4	-23°54'.2	5.1	24'
NGC 6681 – M70	Globular Cluster	18h43m.2	-32°17'.3	8	7.8'
NGC 6715 – M54	Globular Cluster	18h55m.1	-30°28'.7	7.6	9'
NGC 6809 – M55	Globular Cluster	19h39m.8	-30°57'.7	6.4	19'

Editor's note – perhaps an enterprising astrophotographer in the Centre could submit images of the objects that Magda discusses!!

GALLERY: ECLIPSE IN THE UK (AND EUROPE) AUGUST 12TH 2026

See supplement below



© Nick Edwards

Britons across the country are queuing up by the hundreds in a last-minute bid to get their hands on eclipse glasses. Pictured: Queues outside the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, one of the few places still stocking eclipse glasses



© Getty Images

It is not safe to watch the eclipse without specialised glasses, but supplies of these protective lenses are running extremely low. Pictured: People queue around the corner from 06:00 to buy eclipse glasses in Weymouth

AN ECLIPSE SEEN IN EUROPE August 12th 2026

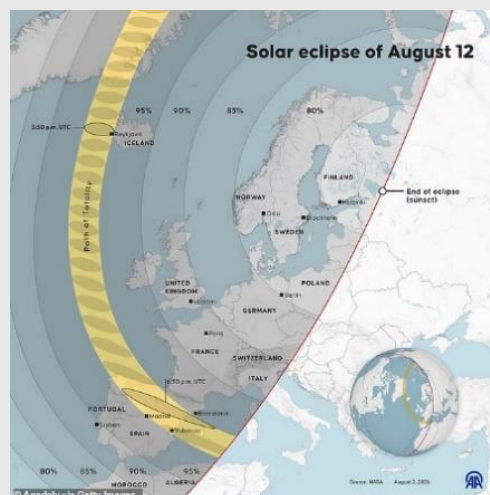
Michael Poll

Considering that the total solar eclipse of November 25th 2030, which crosses South Africa, is just around the corner, I was interested in the way that the media in the UK would present this recent August eclipse. There was a lot of hype – one comment was that there was more hype than there was about the 1999 eclipse, which was total in parts of the UK.

In the press, the extent of the eclipse was always given as % of the Sun covered (presumably the % obscuration). The proportion of the Sun's disc covered is usually expressed as the magnitude of the eclipse (the *fraction* of the Sun's diameter that is covered), but in the press reports I saw, the difference was not acknowledged. For example, it was stated “From Bishop Rock Lighthouse within the Western Rocks of the Isles of Scilly in southwest England, the Moon covers 96.5% of the Sun's disc by area” – which is presumably extent obscuration

In the UK this *was* a large partial eclipse, and a lot of fuss was made about how dark it would get. And, yes, 90+ % is quite big, and it will affect the light, but not for long – maybe for minutes each side of maximum. In fact many of the comments I saw indicated that people thought the event was underwhelming. Perhaps people had the impression that it would be dark for the whole event.

Also, the impression I got from the press was that with an eclipse this big, who needs to go to totality? Well with the path of a total solar eclipse nearby even magnitude 0.99 is not good enough – it is totality or nothing. *PS I have not yet seen anything in the local media about the eclipse here in 2030.*



*The following news reports, extracts and comments were taken from the UK Daily Mail.
Some of the readers comments were appreciative, but most of them were cynical.
[My comments are in bold italic. Michael.]*

HOW TO SEE THE SOLAR ECLIPSE FROM THE UK: DAILY MAIL'S STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE REVEALS THE BEST TIME AND LOCATIONS FOR VIEWING THE RARE EVENT.

8 August 2026 | **Updated:** 12:00 BST, 12 August 2026

On Wednesday, August 12, the UK will be treated to the most spectacular solar eclipse in a generation – and you will not want to miss it. Although Britain won't witness totality, up to 96 per cent of the Sun will be obscured as the Moon drifts in front of its celestial neighbour.

[The Earth is the Moon's celestial neighbour, the Sun is a long way off in comparison].

The next time an eclipse this deep will be visible from the UK won't be until 2050.

[November 14th 2050, maximum magnitude 0.83 in the UK]. Meanwhile, any keen astronomers wanting to see a total eclipse from Britain will need to wait until September 23, 2090.

However, since you can't look at the Sun directly without risking severe eye damage, you'll need to come prepared to get the best view.

Dr Shyam Balaji, an astrophysicist at King's College London, told the Daily Mail: “During a total solar eclipse, the Moon's orbit puts it directly in front of the Sun Although the Moon is between Earth and the Sun every New Moon, solar eclipses are much rarer, only occurring once every 18 months or so. This means that it is quite rare for all three bodies to be precisely lined up in such a way that the Moon perfectly blocks the Sun”.

[There are always at least two solar eclipses every year, but they are not necessarily total.

It is total solar eclipses that occur every 18 months or so.]

Selected Readers Comments

BossHoss, UK, We literally had 4 or 5 eclipses every year back in the 70s, I genuinely don't understand why anyone finds them remotely interesting any more - even if they do only happen about once a decade now.

FoxyNana, UK,

I'll be watching it from home in Plymouth - my bedroom window faces due west. I have the eclipse glasses I used for the 2024 eclipse in Texas. Hubby will be using the ones I got in 1999 in Cornwall. Both have been in a keepsake box so they work fine.

Touchit please., UK, WOW, how exciting....I take it you don't get out much!

[I was also in Plymouth in 1999 – totally clouded out].

Inge140, 7d ago Can we stop to consider the strange coincidence that the Moon appears to be the same size as the Sun despite the fact that the Sun is about 400 times wider. A further coincidence is that the Sun is about 400 times the distance of the Moon. The distance to the Sun is 93 million miles but the Moon at its furthest point is about 250,000 miles away. It is almost as though this has been planned by some celestial creator. It does make you wonder.

ThePatternJuggler, Christmas Island, The point is that we are lucky enough to live in a time when the factors line up to allow these amazing eclipses to be viewed. Future humans won't have it so good, as the Moon is slowly moving away from Earth. So, nothing was "planned".

morpethian, Poland, 5d ago

There are 2 to 5 every year have seen over 100 in my lifetime I am 80, and I have not gone out of my way to see them

Concerned for Change, UK, 4d ago

I think you *must* have gone out of your way to see so many

Sylvana, UK, 7d ago Where can you buy the special glasses?

Concerned for Change, UK, Amazon. Better order them soon.

Sylvana, UK, Ridiculous that you can't buy them in a shop! Too late for me to order from Amazon now as fastest delivery is for Thursday! ***[The eclipse was on Wednesday.]***

[CorkTurnipKnot](#), UK, 7d ago

Just to warn people. My portly husband is going sky diving on Wednesday at 5pm. If it goes dark all of a sudden, don't worry, it's not the eclipse.

12/8/2026 **EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TONIGHT'S TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE AS HUGE QUEUES FORM IN LAST-MINUTE SCRAMBLE FOR GLASSES.** *[It was not total in Britain]*

Britons across the country are queuing up by the hundreds in a last-minute bid to get their hands on eclipse glasses ahead of the best solar eclipse in a generation. At the point of greatest coverage, observers will see only a tiny, inverted crescent of fire hanging in the sky.

Desperate Britons have queued for hours throughout the night in a bid to get their hands on solar eclipse glasses. Due to immense demand, many people have been left without a pair of eclipse glasses to use tonight. Viewers, taking the appropriate safety precautions, will see a small 'bite' disappear from the Sun's right-hand corner before slowly spreading to cover most of the disc. ...

[Reader's Comment] The Sun is circular, it doesn't have corners.

At the moment of maximum eclipse, your surroundings won't be plunged into a darkness like it would during totality. However, you might notice that the evening light seems subdued, colours look flatter, shadows appear sharper, and the temperature may even slightly dip.

Dr Megan Argo, an astrophysicist from the University of Lancaster, told the Daily Mail: "From the UK we'll see a deep partial eclipse rather than a total eclipse, with just over 90 per cent of the Sun covered in many locations. However, it cannot be stressed enough that you absolutely must not look directly at the Sun with your bare eyes at any point during the eclipse or after. If you want to see the eclipse safely, be sure to use proper eclipse glasses that will protect you from the harmful brightness of the Sun".

Dr Argo says: 'The safest way for the public to enjoy the eclipse is to view it indirectly. Standing beneath a leafy tree creates hundreds of tiny images of the Sun on the ground, which gradually change into crescents as the eclipse progresses. The same effect works with a kitchen colander or a simple homemade pinhole camera"

[You can stand below a leafy tree on any sunny non-eclipse day and see round images of the Sun]

13/8/2026

THE DAY BRITAIN STOOD STILL TO MARVEL AT THE HEAVENS AS ONCE-IN-A-GENERATION ECLIPSE STUNS THE COUNTRY... AND IF YOU MISSED IT, THE NEXT ONE ISN'T UNTIL 2050

Star-gazing mania gripped the nation on Wednesday night as millions marvelled at the once-in-a-generation solar eclipse. As Britain sweltered in the fifth heatwave of the year, an eerie yet welcome chill descended as the Moon blocked out the unrelenting 30°C Sunshine.

Throughout human history, eclipses have stirred wonder, fear and reverence. The uncanny sensation - as day briefly turned into a strange twilight - caused temperatures to drop, shadows to appear at odd angles and animals to behave unusually.

The spectacle of our Moon ringed by a fiery halo set pulses racing across the world. ***[There was no halo, it was not an annular eclipse].*** Millions watched the sky show in awe, starting when the Moon took its first bite out of the Sun's right-hand edge shortly after 6 pm in the UK.

Laura Stewart, a 35-year-old lawyer, was among 500 gathered on London's Primrose Hill. She told the Daily Mail: "It feels utterly enchanting". Aja Lilit, 24, of Uxbridge, west London, added: "I can see the Moon and the Sun. I am nothing - but also a part of this. This is just so amazing"

RECAP: MILLIONS WATCH AS ONCE-IN-A-GENERATION SOLAR ECLIPSE PEAKS IN THE SKIES OVER BRITAIN

Eclipse mania has gripped Britain, with beaches, parks and beauty spots packed with sky-watchers as millions turned out to witness the most spectacular solar eclipse visible from the UK in a generation. The Moon has now passed across the Sun, blocking up to 96 per cent of its disc at the peak and leaving just a sliver of sunlight visible across the deepest parts of the country.

[This should read "the parts of the country that had the deepest eclipse"]

The extraordinary event prompted huge crowds to gather at prime viewing spots across the country, with warnings over congestion and the dangers of distracted drivers as motorists attempted to catch a glimpse of the eclipse.

Britons were also urged to take care when watching, with experts warning that looking directly at the Sun without certified eclipse glasses can cause serious and permanent eye damage. And those who missed tonight's spectacle face a long wait for another like it, with the next comparably deep eclipse visible from the UK not until 2050 and the next total solar eclipse visible from Britain not until 2090. Gasps of “wow”, “oh my god” and “this is so cool” rang out at Greenwich Park in south-east London.

Selected Readers comments

[SapperJon](#), UK, 5d ago

Back in 1999 on the south coast, the eclipse started at about 11:15, and the Sun was 98% obscured. I'll not bother with this one as it's only 90% and at 20:00, so it won't have the same effect. In 1999, we were lucky as we had a break in the clouds.

[Uncle Buck](#), UK, 4m ago

That was a complete letdown.. overhyped as usual, not much happened at all.

[bagsafun](#), UK, 4m ago Biggest over hype ever.

[M M](#), UK, 5m ago Anyone know if I can get a refund for the eclipse glasses I bought?

[Hooameye](#), UK, 5m ago

Hard to believe it was 90%, only went slightly darker for a while, a dark cloud passing by would have had a bigger effect. Need to see a totality to be worthwhile.

[matt-1](#), UK, 5m ago 50 percent coverage at best

[Ptolemy Hanshaw](#), UK, 1m ago Yep, that's what I saw on my pinhole camera. Someone got their sums wrong.

[Fifty Five](#), UK, 5m ago

Cloudy evening here, nothing unusual happening at all. The only event of note is the profit made by makers of ‘eclipse glasses’ - talk about pulling the wool over our eyes!!

[I no speak English](#), UK, 5m ago Worst Eclipse Ever

[Everton 1](#), UK, 5m ago

Just file this non-event with all the other media hysterics.....millennium bug, hole in the ozone layer, global warming, net zero, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

[Now run along](#), Australia, 8m ago

Fgs. It's not even a total eclipse. No doubt many simpletons will stuff up their eyesight today though.

[Jobo the 4th](#), UK, 10m ago

Anyone wanna buy 400 eclipse glasses for £1

[TibiaRodentRaver](#), UK, 11m ago

FOR SALE one pair of eclipse glasses, only used once £1.99.

[Jack Mitchell 66](#), UK, 13m ago

Completely underwhelmed. Just glad I didn't queue up for glasses!

People queuing up round the block like a pack of penguins! To buy a pair of cardboard bloody spectacles from some clever bloke who's seen 'em coming a mile off! Two bits of cardboard and a bit of old sweet wrapper stuck in the middle! It's a continental scam, that's what it is. We've got a perfectly good Sun up there every single day of the week—not that you ever see it in this miserable country and nobody gives a monkeys! But the minute the Moon wanders in the way for five minutes, everyone loses their bleeding minds!

Let's be honest that was a damp squid */sic/* and far from a total eclipse. There was a partial eclipse a few years back that was far darker. Media hype.

[TheManintheStreet](#), UK, 27m ago

How come I have seen a “once in a lifetime event” twice now? 1999 and 2026

13/8/2026

'I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING TO GO BLIND': BRITONS COMPLAIN OF AGONISING EYE PAIN AFTER STARING DIRECTLY AT THE SOLAR ECLIPSE WITHOUT GLASSES

Published: 10:42 BST, 13 August 2026 | **Updated:** 09:50 BST, 14 August 2026

Last night, millions of Britons across the country watched in awe as the Sun vanished during the best solar eclipse in a generation. However, with [eclipse glasses in short supply](#), not everyone followed experts' advice to avoid looking at the Sun without glasses. Britons have now taken to social media to complain of agonising eye pain after staring directly at the solar eclipse.

Dozens of videos shared on [TikTok](#) show worried Britons reporting symptoms of eye damage after failing to watch the eclipse safely. In one clip, an anxious poster said: "I stared at it. My eyes are killing me. It's a feeling I've not felt before and I think I'm going to go blind".

Another user said that they only "took a quick peep thinking I'd be fine" but is now experiencing "headaches and blurred vision". While one commenter added: "They weren't lying I looked directly at the eclipse and now there's a big reddish hue in my centre vision". And doctors warn that the damage could be permanent.

Selected Readers comments

[Dave Sheffield](#), UK, 15m ago The Sun is very bright but unfortunately a lot of people are not.

[Urbanpete](#), 16m ago

How many times did you hear on the radio or TV "Do not look directly at the Sun"? How many times did you read in the paper "Do not look directly at the Sun" How many times when you were a kid did your parents tell you "do not look directly at the Sun"?

[My views matter too](#), UK, 1h ago

Wonder what it was about don't look at the eclipse without glasses that these people couldn't understand

[justacasualcomment](#), UK, 1h ago

Man complains of burning sensation in hands after grabbing chips out of deep fat fryer.

[jonnnnn](#), UK, 1h ago

Man complains of sore feet after paddling in a lava pool

[ordrebloke](#), UK, 1h ago

Shortage of eclipse glasses yesterday. Shortage of white walking sticks today

14/8/2026

ECLIPSE FEVER CONTINUES! CRUISES FOR NEXT YEAR'S COSMIC EVENT - ACROSS SPAIN, NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST - SELL OUT

On Wednesday night, millions across Europe gazed up at the sky – wearing protective glasses or using makeshift viewers – hoping to catch a glimpse of the partial solar eclipse.

And eclipse fever isn't quite over yet. While there won't be another total solar eclipse visible from Britain until 2090, next year's event offers an opportunity to see totality elsewhere.

The next total solar eclipse will take place on August 2, 2027, with the path of totality crossing parts of southern [Spain](#), North Africa and the Middle East.

Some cruises for next year's major solar event have already sold out. New Scientist, which offers eclipse sightseeing voyages, has created a waiting list for its [Egypt](#) cruise, while three of its Morocco tours are already fully booked.

[The 2027 total eclipse is one in Solar Saros 136 and is being touted in places as the eclipse of the century –maximum totality (in Egypt) lasts for 6 minutes 23 seconds.

However the maximum length of totality in the previous eclipse of this series on July 22nd 2009 lasted for 6 minutes 39 seconds, but the only piece of land where maximum was visible was an uninhabited remote island called North Iwo Jima in the Pacific Ocean, south east of Japan.

The path of the 2009 eclipse included China, where the city with the longest time of totality was Wuhan with 5 minutes 25 seconds. Some members of ASSA went to China in 2009 to see this eclipse]

If anyone wants to read the Daily Mail reports, here are the links:

<https://www.dailymail.com/sciencetech/article-16035971/solar-eclipse-UK-watch-guide.html>

<https://www.dailymail.com/sciencetech/article-16041805/solar-eclipse-UK-TONIGHT-guide.html>

<https://www.dailymail.com/sciencetech/article-16047315/solar-eclipse-glasses-live-updates.html>

<https://www.dailymail.com/sciencetech/article-16044207/Solar-eclipse-pictures.html>

<https://www.dailymail.com/sciencetech/article-16049293/Britain-eye-pain-solar-eclipse.html>