



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UPDATE: [Video](#) from Friday's eclipse news conference at Giant City State Park is [available for download](#).

Make Illinois your home for the 2024 total solar eclipse

Thousands expected to view the eclipse from southern Illinois for the second time since 2017

SPRINGFIELD – Preparations are underway to host thousands of visitors in Illinois for the April 8, 2024, total solar eclipse that will pass over much of the southern third of the state.

Staff from multiple state agencies – including the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Department of Natural Resources, Illinois State Police, Illinois Conservation Police, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and Office of Homeland Security, the Illinois Office of Tourism, and the Illinois Department of Public Health – have worked together for more than a year to ensure a safe and successful experience for the influx of eclipse watchers.

“For those who want to experience the magic of a total solar eclipse, come to Illinois,” said **Governor JB Pritzker**. “My administration is diligently working to ensure that spectators safely experience this celestial event, while supporting southern Illinois’ local economy.”

Southern Illinois is in the path of totality for the second time since Aug. 21, 2017, making it the eclipse crossroads of America. Carbondale and Southern Illinois University are on the centerline of the path of totality and will see 4 minutes and 9 seconds of totality in 2024 – nearly double what was seen in 2017.

[SIU is hosting](#) numerous educational and enrichment events during the four days of the eclipse weekend, culminating with a public viewing at the football stadium on April 8 and other activities. The weekend is expected to attract thousands of visitors to the region.

“We are glad to offer four days of festivities, education and research leading up to the eclipse, and we are proud to partner with NASA EDGE and Adler Planetarium on Eclipse Day for an unforgettable experience at Saluki Stadium,” **SIU Carbondale Chancellor Austin A. Lane** said. “This is an exciting time for SIU Carbondale and the community.”

Daniel Thomas, deputy director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism, said that in 2017, nearly 200,000 people witnessed the solar eclipse in southern Illinois, generating a visitor spending impact estimated between \$15 million and \$18 million.

“The solar eclipse is an incredible opportunity for Illinois to welcome visitors from across the Midwest and beyond, allowing them to discover the natural beauty of southern Illinois,” **Thomas** said. “We recommend visitors arrive early to enjoy the weekend leading up to the eclipse and experience the many new hotel options in the area

including the many outdoor activities, including hiking, biking, rock climbing, horseback riding, ziplining and embrace a real change of pace during this rare event.”

Build in extra time for travel

The [Illinois Department of Transportation](#) is reminding residents and visitors to be prepared for heavy traffic on rural roads and highways in the hours after the eclipse, in southern Illinois and on interstates and major highways leading to and from Chicago, St. Louis and other cities.

“Illinois is once again proud to lay out the welcome mat for some of the best viewing in the world for the upcoming eclipse, but we need your help if you are making special plans and traveling,” **said Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman.** “Traffic will be congested, with more much more activity in areas where people are congregating. Give yourself plenty of extra time and exercise special caution if you’re behind the wheel. We are proud to do our part at IDOT in creating another safe, memorable event.”

Some other important reminders:

- If you’re in a vehicle, don’t stop along roads or bridges.
- Avoid parking on the side of the road or on the entrance and exit ramps to roadside safety rest areas.
- Be cautious. There will be a large number of pedestrians near roads.
- Don’t take photos or wear eclipse glasses while driving.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times.
- Make sure you have a charged cell phone, a full tank of gas and bottled water.
- Plan to arrive early, stay put and leave late. That way everyone won’t leave at the same time.

“The Illinois State Police, working with our local law enforcement partners and other state agencies, is ready to assist the public during this unique phenomenon,” **said ISP Director Brendan F. Kelly.** “We encourage people traveling to the area to plan ahead, be prepared for traffic congestion, and be patient when driving.”

Eclipse viewing, camping available at state parks

More than 30 Illinois state parks, recreation areas and wildlife areas are in the path of totality, and dozens more sites lie just outside the path and will offer equally stunning though slightly shorter views of the natural phenomenon.

“Illinois state parks are among the premier public spaces to view the eclipse in Illinois. There is no better place than a state park to be at one with nature and enjoy this rare celestial event,” **said Natalie Phelps Finnie, director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.** “I want to invite visitors to camp at our beautiful parks, view the eclipse, and make plans to stay an extra day or two to explore the many outstanding restaurants, attractions, and scenic views southern Illinois has to offer.”

State park camping reservations are still available for the eclipse, though several parks have been booked in advance for months, including Giant City, Ferne Clyffe, and Fort Massac state parks. First-come, first-served camping spots will be available at some parks the day of the eclipse. Visit exploremoreil.com or call 866-716-6550 for to check availability and make reservations. Camping fees are nominal, and admission is free at Illinois state parks.

One option for those who wish to camp in the path of totality is the World Shooting and Recreational Complex (WSRC) in Sparta, which offers hundreds of campsites and unobstructed views of the sky.

“The World Shooting Complex is a popular year-round destination for RV camping enthusiasts. It’s a flat, open area, making it an ideal location for viewing a total solar eclipse and the 360-degree sunset effect,” **said WSRC**

executive director Skip Klinger. “We invite visitors to make the WSRC their eclipse viewing headquarters, and we hope they’ll stay to enjoy the restaurant and explore all the site has to offer.”

In addition, the Illinois Department of Agriculture is offering eclipse weekend camping packages at the Du Quoin State Fairgrounds for \$100 for a four-night stay, April 5 through April 9. Campsites are 50 feet by 20 feet, and online registration is available at <https://dsf.illinois.gov>.

Stay an extra day

Both the [Illinois Office of Tourism](#) and the [Illinois Department of Natural Resources](#) have published websites to provide helpful information for eclipse viewers. The sites include frequently asked questions, a map of the path of totality, viewing times for the eclipse at state parks, and other sites and activities to take in during a visit to southern Illinois.

Carol Hoffman with the Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau is urging visitors to stay an extra day or more to ease congestion on roadways but also to give them more time to explore sites, activities and dining options in southern Illinois. Anyone needing assistance finding lodging or planning their visit can [contact the bureau](#) for help.

“Visitors are welcome across Shawnee Forest country and the southern Illinois region for this awesome event. There won’t be another chance quite like this in the United States for 20 years, so people should take advantage of this rare opportunity,” **Hoffman said.** “In addition to fun activities in Carbondale, there are watch parties and opportunities for quiet viewing across the region.”

Emergency preparedness and public health

Coordination and planning for worst-case scenarios are key components of any large-scale event.

“While we hope you won’t need us, the [Illinois Emergency Management Agency and Office of Homeland Security](#) has spent the last full year working with state and local partners to develop plans and hold exercises to test our capabilities for response,” **said IEMA-OHS Operations Chief Mike McPeek.** “Our staff is prepared to assist and provide support for any emergencies or incidents during the event.”

While encouraging people to enjoy the unique experience of the solar eclipse, the [Illinois Department of Public Health \(IDPH\)](#) is also reminding residents and visitors to take proper precautions to protect their health and safety during the event.

One of the main areas of concern is eye safety. IDPH reminds people that looking directly at a solar eclipse can cause serious or permanent eye damage. Standard sunglasses do not offer protection, no matter how dark, and are not safe for viewing the sun. To directly view the eclipse, people must use special [safe eclipse viewers](#) which meet the [ISO 12312-2](#) international standard. Check the link to see if your eclipse viewers meet this standard.

Another way to safely view the eclipse is indirectly via [pinhole projection](#). With your back to the sun, you can look at the shadow from the eclipse on the ground through a hole punched in an index card, an object with small holes like a pasta colander, or your fingers crossed over each other.

IDPH also advises people to make sure they have food and water with them in their vehicles in case they face long waits in the heavy traffic anticipated in the area. You should also have a supply of needed medications with you. If you become ill or injured during the eclipse event, IDPH will provide a map of hospitals, urgent care facilities, and other medical providers in the eclipse area. That map will be available at the IDPH website by mid-March.

“It is important that Illinoisans experience the unique experience of this solar eclipse safely and carefully,” **said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra.** “Planning ahead and knowing where to turn for help in an emergency can ensure an enjoyable experience for everyone involved.”

Be good stewards of the outdoors

The spring turkey season begins in southern Illinois on April 8, 2024, coinciding with the total solar eclipse. Public land turkey hunters and eclipse watchers should be aware of other uses on the day of the eclipse. The eclipse will be visible around 2 p.m. Legal hunting hours are a half hour before sunrise until 1 p.m. Please note:

- Public land turkey hunters should be aware that there may be more people than usual out and about in state parks on the day of the eclipse. Scout and hunt in remote, designated areas of the park if needed.
- Mushroom hunting is only allowed after 1 p.m. on Illinois Department of Natural Resources sites that are open to turkey hunting.

Eclipse watchers should plan to pack out anything they pack in to state parks and other outdoor areas, use designated garbage cans, or bring garbage bags for carrying out trash. Campers should plan to tidy up their campsites and pick up any litter they created before leaving the park. A little extra effort helps keep the parks clean and creates less work for limited volunteers and park staff.

Campers should only camp at designated campsites. They should not set up tents and makeshift campsites in areas that are not designated camping areas. Similarly, drivers should park only in designated parking areas to avoid getting stuck in mud.

IDNR invites eclipse visitors to enjoy the many wonderful hiking trails that can be found at Illinois state parks, but please stay on designated trails and pathways.

Finally, visitors should remember that some state parks in or near the path of totality have limited or no Wi-Fi connection or cell service. Plan accordingly and consider bringing printed maps and driving directions.

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