

Book flight ticket for Rs 81k to watch total solar eclipse

Deepthi Sharma & Ayesha Nigam | TNN

New Delhi: With a series of eclipses within a span of 30 days, it surely is a period of astronomical significance. After the lunar eclipse on July 7, it's an eager wait to witness the longest total solar eclipse of this century on July 22. And organizations associated with science and astronomy are leaving no stone unturned in making the event special.

It's an opportunity of a lifetime. A total solar eclipse of this duration — 6 minutes and 39 seconds (at a point in the Pacific Ocean) — will not happen again till June 13, 2132. Various associations are coming up with interesting programmes to make it a fascinating affair. "We have arranged a series of expeditions. An online competition called 'Helio-Odyssey' was held in May and the 10 children who won are being sponsored for an expedition to China (the maximum visibility time in China is 5 minutes and 30 seconds) for the major eclipse," said Sunita Mukherjee, assistant manager, Science Popularisation Association of Communicators & Educators (S.P.A.C.E).

In India, 13 states would witness the eclipse that would last the longest — 3 minutes and 30 seconds — in Patna. For enthusiasts, the association has also arranged for a chartered passenger plane, which will fly from Delhi to Patna via Gaya, for a perfect view of the spectacle. "The fliers would get an ideal view of the eclipse from the plane at a height of 41,000ft during the three-hour-thirty-minute-long flight. While the cost of a window seat is Rs 81,000, other seats are priced at Rs 29,000. Till now, 21 seats have been taken and we hope to sell many more," added Mukherjee.

On the day of this celestial event, Nehru Planetarium will also host sky-watching early morning with the provision of special sunglasses, telescopes and binoculars. "We are trying to disseminate as much information as possible about the eclipse through the internet and workshops. Eclipeswiki is an online collaboration that informs about its visibility in India," said Rathnashree, director, Nehru Planetarium.

Three teams from the planetarium are visiting Bhopal, Varanasi and Saharsa to take unique photographs from which relevant data will be extracted. "We are also sending some of our educators to dif-

SOLAR ECLIPSE



Date	In India	Duration	Next on
July 22 '09	13 states to watch	6 min & 39 sec, the longest of the century	June 13, 2132

- S.P.A.C.E has arranged a chartered plane from Delhi to Patna on July 22 from which one can get an ideal view of the total eclipse
- 3 children are being sent on an expedition to China for the event
- Nehru Planetarium will hold sky-watching using special sunglasses, binoculars & telescopes
- 3 teams from the planetarium will visit Bhopal, Varanasi and Saharsa to study the eclipse
- Eclipeswiki is an online collaboration that gives information about the visibility of the eclipse

ferent parts of the country so that people can observe the sky properly on July 22," added Rathnashree.

The time is also ripe for some astrologers and media people who make easy money on such occasions. Many astrologers have already come up with myriad predictions. "This solar eclipse is grounded in astrology. The effect it will have on a person will depend on his or her Zodiac Sign. It appears that people having Gemini and Taurus as their sun sign will benefit, while those who are Leo and Cancer will be negatively affected for six months. The eclipse will have a positive effect on Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar, Sikkim and Meghalaya," said GN Sharma, an astrologer. Another astrologer, Karunah, said, "Though some people make up stories, an eclipse is just a course of nature, the way day and night are."