

The Great American eclipse was sun-sational

Many Americans and Canadians took Monday, Aug. 21 off to get a rare view of a total solar eclipse.

For many under 50 years old, it was their first time.

The West ended up getting the best view with sky clarity and weather.

When I was down near Mann Creek Country Store and Café just north of Weiser, Idaho, on Highway 95, thousands gathered in the small community.

Camped out on a farm with many from out of state, spectators gathered in a field that usually has horses roaming.

With a couple from Maryland on my right and a multi-generational family from California on my left, I seemed to be the only Canadian, let alone Albertan. I got the usual “do you now so and so from Canada” and “what’s it like to live in an igloo?”

Some notable things happened during the



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The Sky's the Limit

eclipse. The temperature dropped for about half an hour down to about 20 C.

Birds got quite and dogs become sleepy during totality while many stars come out.

We could see Venus, Jupiter and Mars for two minutes. It actually looks like dusk but with a ring of daylight around the horizon.

The visitor next to me, Stephen Birch from Lake Tahoe, Calif., had planned the trip for weeks with his relatives from Long Beach.

“It was a real pleasure to have all of us together

for such a spectacular occasion; seeing one of the most magnificent sights of my entire life combined with seeing it with family made for a very enjoyable and worthwhile trip,” he said.

Sky watch

On Sept. 6, look east at 8:30 p.m. for a spectacular harvest moon, which will seem huge.

On Sept. 16, before sun up, look northeast-east at about 5:45 a.m. to catch Mars and Mercury with the naked eye.

On Sept. 22, the fall equinox is at 2:02 a.m. Summer will officially be over.

Starting Sept. 18, for 2 weeks in the east morning twilight, is the best time to see the zodiacal light, a faint, roughly triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extending up from the vicinity of the sun along the ecliptic or zodiac.

Public events

The monthly open house at the Rothney Observatory near Priddis takes place Sept. 15, from 8-11 p.m. There will be an array of scopes operated by University of Calgary astronomers and members of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC). There will be an indoor presentation, you will have the opportunity to look through the telescopes, and astronomers will be on hand to answer questions.

The entrance fee is \$30 per car. For further information, contact Jennifer Howse at jhowse@phas.ucalgary.ca or 403-931-2366. The website <https://www.ucalgary.ca/rao> is updated regularly.

Neel Roberts, a member of the Calgary chapter of RASC, welcomes your questions and comments at 403-560-6574 and Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com.