

Southern Illinois Expects Tourism Jump Ahead of Solar Eclipse on April 8

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ILLINOIS - Illinois Office of Tourism Deputy Director Daniel Thomas said Southern Illinois can likely expect around 200,000 visitors for the eclipse on Monday, April 8, 2024.

The Southern Illinois region near Carbondale will experience a total solar eclipse around 2 p.m. lasting for four minutes and nine seconds. The Riverbend region will see approximately 99% totality, and many people will be traveling south in order to see the full eclipse.

“We’re really spoiled for choice in Illinois because this year we’re going to have nearly double the time that we did in 2017,” Thomas said. “So we’re going to have, at maximum, four minutes and nine seconds of totality. And the visibility right across the state is going to be tremendous.”

Thomas said the eclipse will be visible across 128 miles in Illinois, including over 30 state parks. Many people are traveling to Southern Illinois University Carbondale to watch the eclipse at Saluki Stadium, which will house 15,000 viewers alone. Tickets are limited but still available.

There are many other eclipse viewing events happening across the state. Thomas encourages people to look up the events and festivals in their area, or consider traveling to the Carbondale and Shawnee National Forest region to partake in some of the activities there. He noted that Southern Illinois is an “outdoor-rich area of the state,” so there are a lot of unique options, whether you want to watch the eclipse from a winery or the Cache River.

During the last total solar eclipse in 2017, the thousands of visitors in Illinois generated \$15–18 million of economic impact, Thomas said. He hopes to see comparable numbers this year.

“That’s people dining in our cafes, people in our wineries, spending money in our communities,” he added. “It’s been really wonderful to see how creative people are getting, whether it’s a commemorative piece of food or whether it’s a specific branded type of distillery or wine or product that they’ve launched.”

So far, the Illinois Office of Tourism is seeing the same trends as in 2017. But this time, Thomas said, they’re asking visitors to stay a little longer. He suggests that people make a long weekend out of the eclipse and enjoy everything Southern Illinois has to offer.

“It’s a great opportunity for Southern Illinois, regional Illinois, to shine a light — excuse the pun — with the event, really just shine a light on small business and really just showcase the visitors and the reasons why they visit a state like Illinois,” he said. “It gives people an opportunity to change gears, stay in the region, stay a little bit longer, and maybe get outdoors and have a hike and enjoy the experience, but they also get to know Southern Illinois more than they have before.”

For more information about Southern Illinois and the eclipse viewing, Thomas encourages people to visit [EnjoyIllinois.com](https://enjoyillinois.com) and check out the [official 2024 Illinois Solar Eclipse Guide page](#)