

SOLAR ECLIPSE: This Thursday, Feb. 7th

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Space Weather News for Feb. 5, 2008
<http://spaceweather.com>

SOLAR ECLIPSE: This Thursday, Feb. 7th, the Moon will pass in front of the Sun, producing a solar eclipse over New Zealand, most of Antarctica and parts of Australia. It is not a total eclipse; the Moon will only partially cover the solar disk. Nevertheless, the event promises some beautiful moments.

For instance, the partially-eclipsed Sun will dapple the ground with crescent-shaped sunbeams. Observers in New Zealand and Australia should look in the shadows of leafy trees for this lovely phenomenon. On the barren slopes of Antarctica, scientists and explorers can produce the same effect by letting the sun shine through a spaghetti colander or a sheet of paper poked with holes.

It is dangerous to stare directly at a partial eclipse because the exposed portion of the Sun is as blindingly bright as usual. Backyard astronomers with safely-filtered solar telescopes may, however, point their optics at the Sun and watch the mountainous lunar limb glide across the sun's fiery surface. (For solar telescopes, see: <http://spaceweather.com/ccount.php?linkURL=http://coronadofilters.com/>)

The best views of all are reserved for an remote stretch of the Antarctic where the Moon will pass dead-center in front of the Sun without fully covering it. A thin layer of star will poke out all around the Moon producing a vivid "ring of fire" or annular eclipse.

Visit <http://Spaceweather.com> for eclipse maps and timetables and, later this week, photos of the eclipse itself.

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