

TRAVEL QUEST

Autumn 2011

Cruising to Totality

Celebrity's *Millennium* is carrying TQ travelers to totality in 2012, and well-known author/stargazer Stephen James O'Meara is traveling with us. p. 4

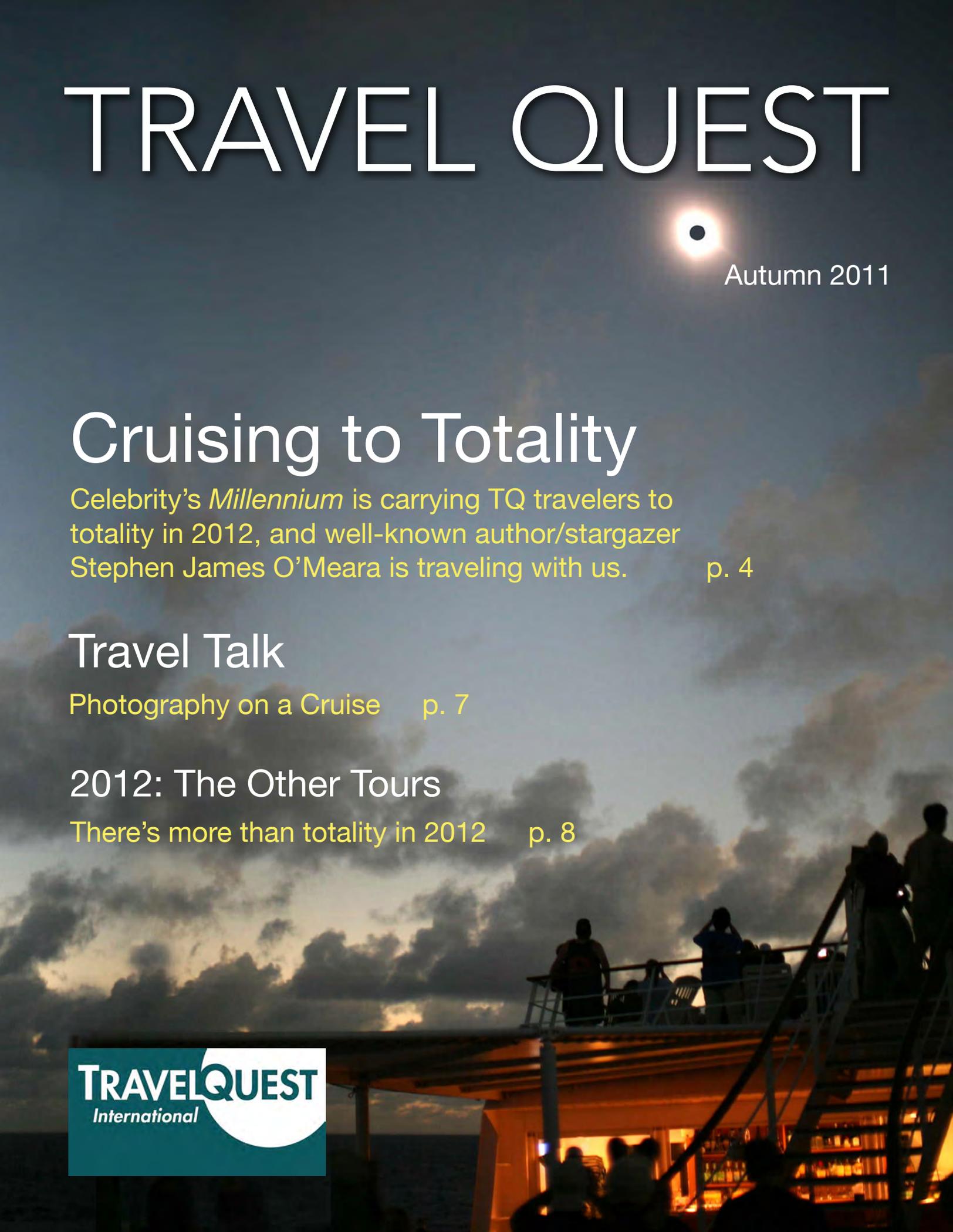
Travel Talk

Photography on a Cruise p. 7

2012: The Other Tours

There's more than totality in 2012 p. 8

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Feature

Cruising to Totality

by the TravelQuest Staff

In 2012 TravelQuest is offering three cruises to totality. But only one — on Celebrity's *Millennium* — still has plenty of space for anyone keen on taking advantage of a ship's mobility on eclipse day.

page 4

2012: The Other Tours

The first three tours of 2012 feature stargazing in Costa Rica, an annular eclipse, and the Venus transit.

page 8

In Every Issue

3 Reflections

The most important matter for our travel business remains service and attention to detail.

3 Notebook

We're in the middle of a totality drought, but the end is in sight.

6 Focus On: Stargazing in Oz

The stargazing add-ons for the Australia and Papua New Guinea tours are now ready for booking.

7 Travel Talk: Cruise Photography

Some thoughts on photography while on board the three 2012 eclipse cruises available from TQ.

8 Upcoming Adventures

Chasing the 2012 total solar eclipse on land and sea.

On the cover:

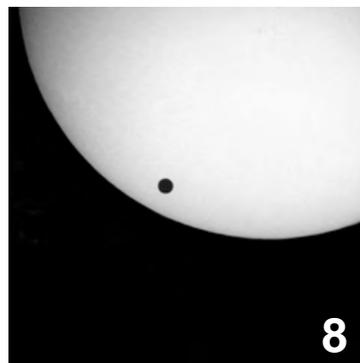
Totality at sea in 2010. Courtesy David Buchla.



4



7



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305 Double D Drive
 Prescott, Arizona 86303 USA
 1-800-830-1998 (US only)
 1-928-445-7754 (International)
 Fax: 1-928-445-8771
travel@TravelQuestTours.com

Navigation: Click on a title or page number (on this page) to jump to a story. Click on an **underlined bold** word/phrase in an article to go to an external webpage.

Reflections

I recently attended an adventure travel conference where leaders in our industry spoke on a host of current topics pertinent to businesses like TravelQuest. While we are not technically an “adventure” tour company, there is no doubt that if you had joined some of our past eclipse trips — including 2010 on the tiny Cook Island of Mangaia, 2008 in Western China and the North Pole, Libya in 2006, or 1999 in Turkey — you would agree that we have led some very “adventurous” trips!

At this gathering there were talks on social media, social responsibility, web design and marketing. But for all these discussions about the current communication landscape we live in, the most important matter for our business remains service and attention to detail.

During the last 18 months, some of you may have noticed the new faces in our office, or perhaps talked to new voices. And you may have wondered what these changes might mean to TravelQuest and its ability to deliver a high-quality travel experience to its clients.

Well, I am here to report that TravelQuest has never been better, and those new faces, Kari Hull, Christine Broiles, and Trish Bustria, are doing an incredible job making sure that we



From left: Christine, Aram, Trish, and Kari — the TravelQuest home office team.

cross the ‘t’s and dot the ‘i’s like we never have before! And they are also committed to delivering great service leading up to, and following, your TravelQuest tour.

We invite you to email or call us, and discover our commitment for yourself.

Aram Kaprielian

Notebook



We were spoiled. In 2008, 2009, and 2010, we saw total solar eclipses on an annual basis. And now we’re in the midst of a 28-month long dry spell of totality. I know some of you are suffering from corona withdrawal (and quaffing a beer of the same name just doesn’t cut it).

But fear not. In slightly more than a year, we’ll be out of the doldrums and entering an eclipse period containing five totalities in less than five years. The first — **November 14, 2012** — you’ve definitely heard of thanks to the multiple excursions offered by TravelQuest.

Almost exactly one year later — **November 3, 2013** — a hybrid eclipse (one that’s total and annular) sweeps across the Atlantic, with totality falling on the African continent.

Work on these tours is well underway, as you’ll see if you scroll to the 2013 tour list on TravelQuest’s **home page**.

After a 16 month hiatus, the Moon’s shadow sweeps across the north Atlantic and up into the Arctic Ocean on **March 20, 2015**. This path of totality is challenging to reach, but TravelQuest is already securing viewing options.

Again almost exactly a year later, but in a warm part of the world (Indonesia and the Pacific), comes the eclipse of **March 9, 2016**. Finally, the one many folks have been waiting for — **August 21, 2017** — because totality crosses the continental United States.

So make your plans to end this drought and once again stand in the shadow of the Moon.

Paul Deans

Cruising to Totality

by the TravelQuest Staff

All too quickly, totality ended. And just as quickly, the clouds swallowed the Sun. This was a classic eclipse chase. The captain had steered us into the perfect position to see the eclipse by anticipating where the clouds would break for a view. It was brilliant.

Bill and Denise Kramer

The above quote, from TravelQuest's **Eclipse 2009** memory book, perfectly sums up the beauty of a seaborne eclipse trip. A rendezvous with totality is planned, clouds threaten to interrupt the party, the ship maneuvers to avoid them, and the spectacle is revealed to thunderous applause.

Perhaps that's why — beginning with the February 1998 Caribbean eclipse tours aboard the *Seaward* and *Dawn Princess* — TravelQuest travelers have embraced the opportunity to witness an eclipse on the high seas. And why not? After the sensational experiences in the Caribbean, success on the sea continued in 2002 on the *Marco Polo* in the Indian Ocean, during 2005's short totality in the Pacific on the *Discovery* and the *Paul Gauguin*, in the Arctic in 2008 onboard the *50 Years of Victory*, and again in the Pacific in 2009 and 2010 on the *Paul Gauguin*.

So, in 2012 TravelQuest is doing it once more, with three options for a cruise to totality. But as of the end of October,



the *Orion* (out of Papua New Guinea) is nearly sold out and the *Paul Gauguin* (out of Tahiti) is wait listed. So if you'd like an eclipse cruise, the best option still available is a trans-Pacific trip from Hawaii to Australia onboard Celebrity's *Millennium*.

Onboard the Millennium

The **South Pacific Voyage to Totality** is a 20-day cruise that features numerous highlights along the way. For those who like variety in their Pacific ports of call, there are stops (after departure from Honolulu) in Hilo, American Samoa, Fiji, and three in New Zealand before ending in Sydney (with an overnight in the harbor onboard the *Millennium*). Not to be missed are the ceremonies surrounding the crossing of the equator on November 8th. And, of course, there's eclipse day — November 14, 2012, with an approximate 3 minutes 28 seconds of totality (based on the ship's estimated position).

As for the ship itself, here's a delightful surprise.

According to Celebrity's website, the *Millennium* is getting luxurious, new accommodations. She will undergo an extensive refit and revitalization in the spring of 2012, just before she sets sail to Asia. Although specifics are sketchy, it seems that each stateroom will be restyled with new bedding, upholstery, LCD televisions, and carpeting, while the suites will also acquire new furnishings and amenities.

In addition, the public areas will be refreshed with new color schemes, carpeting, and upholstery. And there will be new restaurants and bars, with design

Views of Celebrity's Millennium. After its refurbishment in 2012, the interior spaces will look even more spectacular.





The late **William B. Whiddon's** fisheye view of totality (in April 2005, from the m/s *Paul Gauguin*) seconds after an obnoxious cloud (left of the Sun) cleared away.

concepts taken from Celebrity's newer Solstice-class ships. While none of this is "official" information, it does seem that TQ eclipse travelers will enjoy their cruise on a significantly refurbished ship.

Totality at Sea: Weather Prospects

According to Jay Anderson (TravelQuest's eclipse meteorologist), the chosen eclipse-viewing location near 32°S 176°E lies beneath the South Pacific subtropical high, a region of the globe noted for low levels of cloudiness and generous sunshine. Satellite observations show that the average cloudiness in the region is slightly above 50%, a low value for an oceanic observing site.

More sophisticated space-based measurements are even more encouraging,

revealing that nearly half of that cloudiness is semi-transparent, raising the probability of seeing the eclipse to nearly 70%. Jay adds that the mobility of the *Millennium*, which will allow it to seek out a gap in the clouds on eclipse



Join well-known astronomer, author, and observer extraordinaire **Stephen James O'Meara** on *Millennium's* 2012 South Pacific Voyage to Totality.

O'Meara was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and began looking at the sky at the age of six. He learned the constellations on his own from a star wheel that he cut out from the back of a Corn Flakes box, and he discovered how a telescope focuses by accident. At the age of 14, Stephen knew the sky so well that he was given the keys to Harvard College Observatory, where he began to use the observatory's 9-inch and 15-inch refractors. With these scopes he discovered the spokes in Saturn's B ring and became the first person to accurately determine (visually) the rotation period of Uranus.

O'Meara earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Northeastern University in Boston. He spent much of his early career on the editorial staff of *Sky & Telescope* before joining *Astronomy*

magazine as the "Secret Sky" columnist and as a contributing editor. The Texas Star Party (TSP) gave Stephen its highest honor, the Lone Stargazer Award, "for setting the standard of excellence in visual observing." The TSP also gave him its Omega Centauri Award for "advancing astronomy through observation, writing, and promotion, and for sharing his love of the sky."

O'Meara is the author of about a dozen books, including the *Deep-Sky Companions* series of deep-sky observing guides and *Observing the Night Sky with Binoculars* (a good book to have if you're contemplating ship-board stargazing with binoculars). He is a dynamic lecturer on astronomy and volcano topics. He is also a contract videographer for National Geographic Digital Motion and a contract photographer for the National Geographic Image Collection.



day, will elevate the chances of a successful eclipse sighting to greater than 75%, among the best odds along the track.

Don't Delay

If you're concerned that a 20-day cruise might be too long, you can elect to embark and/or disembark at various ports along the way, thus shortening your itinerary. So the "bottom line" is simple. If you're interested in cruising to totality, don't wait to book a cabin on the *Millennium*, because the other two 2012 TQ eclipse cruises have few (if any) cabins still available.

For more information about the *Millennium Voyage to Totality*, call TravelQuest at 800-830-1998 (928-445-7754).

Focus On: Stargazing in Oz



The core of the Milky Way low in the west from San Pedro de Atacama, Chile. San Pedro is at roughly the same southern latitude as Ayers Rock. Courtesy Paul Deans.

Those of you heading Down Under for the 2012 total eclipse in November 2012 — take note. The stargazing add-ons at Ayers Rock are now available for booking.

There are two slightly different post-eclipse add-on programs for the Australia Total Solar Eclipse Tour (the land trip). One is a four-day [Ayers Rock excursion](#), while the other is a five-day [Ayers Rock and Kangaroo Island excursion](#). (Coming soon for the Aussie land tour: the pre-eclipse add-on program that will take you to New Zealand.)

Also coming soon is the pre-cruise add-on trip to the [Great Barrier Reef](#) for the Papua New Guinea Total Solar Eclipse Expedition Cruise.

If you have not yet booked your 2012 eclipse trip and want a southern stars night sky experience, look into [Program 2](#) of the Australia Total Solar Eclipse Tour. There are still plenty of rooms available on this particular trip (Nov. 11 to 19, 2012), and you can include one of the two post-eclipse excursions that features stargazing at Ayers Rock.

Travel Talk: Cruise Photography

With three of TravelQuest's five 2012 eclipse trips set to view totality from the ocean, I thought it appropriate to devote a column to on-board photography. However, this is not about imaging totality from a ship. That discussion is best left to the various on-board experts who will accompany each TravelQuest tour.

Don't Leave "Home" Without It

You'd never step out of your hotel room in Venice or London or Beijing without your camera in hand, would you? So why would you step out of your stateroom and leave your camera behind? I can think of at least one camera-unfriendly situation on a cruise (the Las Vegas type of shows don't usually allow photography), but most of the time nobody will mind you snapping away.

Many of your on-board photos will be of people.

While there's nothing wrong with using your high-end DSLR to shoot people pictures, often a point-and-shoot camera works best for quick shots during all the social events and interactions you'll have on board. (And it's a lot easier to tuck into the pocket of your dinner jacket.) Don't forget to shoot before you eat — some of the buffets and main courses are displays of art in their own right!

Daily activities, the cruise staff, theme dinners, and special events are all fodder for photos. Yes, there will likely be ship's photographers working all these occasions, but their prints are pricey. So carry a camera at all times — if you don't, you're sure to regret it.

Ship Shots

Some people love "the look" of a cruise ship — be it the clean, curving lines found throughout most vessels, the attention-grabbing interior décor, or the colorful evening lighting. But it's often hard to get shots *on* the ship without some of the thousands of other passengers getting in the way. So here are a few ideas to help you avoid the crowds.

Get up and out early because the decks at dawn/sunrise tend to be emptier than at dusk/sunset. By the way, this also applies if you're trying for a colorful, low-Sun sky shot with a foreground that includes the ship's superstructure, rather than people.

Stay up and be out late. Many of the ship's venues remain well lit at night, even though nobody is using them. Be aware that vibrations from the ship's engines will cause long-exposure night shots to appear blurred. To avoid this problem, increase



Holland America's *Zuiderdam*. Courtesy Gary Seronik (filmadvance.com).

your ISO setting until you're shooting at a shutter speed of at least 1/60th second.

Forego what's likely to be the most popular shore excursion. While the ship won't empty out on that day, there will be fewer people around to get in the way of your shots.

Whatever you shoot, include your travel companions in at least a few of your pictures. Ten years from now, will you really care that one ship had a silver statue of Neptune in the reception area? On the other hand, a shot of that silver Neptune towering over your (then) 10-year-old niece will always be a keeper.

Two Final Thoughts

Not only are the "golden hours" (just after sunrise and just before sunset) the best time for photography, they're often when the cruise ship docks or departs. Lovely vistas of the port and its surroundings can often be captured at this time, though it may mean passing up breakfast or dinner. (But never mind. It's a cruise — there's always food available!)

After numerous stops in various ports (plus shore excursions and on-board activities), it's tough to remember exactly what you did when. Start each day by shooting the daily itinerary with its lists of shore excursions, special events, and on-board activities. Of course you can always scan the itinerary when you get home, but having even poor quality shots of the daily itinerary embedded with the rest of your cruise photos will help refresh your memory of that fabulous seaborne adventure.

2012: The Other Tours

It might seem that 2012 is all about trips to totality. Not so, as these three tours, set for the first half of the year, demonstrate.



Sunset from TravelQuest's Costa Rica observing site. Courtesy Gary Seronik.

TravelQuest's **Costa Rica Southern Sky Party** has turned into a star-filled annual event, with so many repeat visitors that it's challenging for newcomers to snag a spot. But as of the end of October, a couple of rooms are still available for this February 18-25, 2012, event. So if you'd like to join Gary Seronik (TQ's astronomer-host) and a bevy of enthusiastic stargazers who will be happy to help you begin your exploration of the southern sky, give TravelQuest a call.



Left: Annular eclipse, courtesy Jay Anderson. Right: The 2004 transit of Venus, courtesy Rick Fienberg.

It's now less than seven months until the 2012 annular eclipse (the first annular visible in the continental United States since 1994 and not to be seen again in the US until 2023). And it's less than eight months until the last transit of Venus in 105 years. Don't miss either one of these rare events!

Fortunately some spaces remain available on TQ's **Arizona & New Mexico Astronomy and Annular Solar Eclipse** tour (with eclipse viewing on May 20 from **Chaco Canyon**), as well as on the **Tahiti Transit of Venus** tour (with transit viewing on June 5 from Tahiti).

Time and space are running out on all three trips, so contact TravelQuest soon if you're interested.

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Upcoming Adventures

Arizona/New Mexico Annular Eclipse 2012

Marvel at scenic wonders, go behind the scenes at professional observatories, and watch the May 20th annular eclipse from historic Chaco Canyon.

May 14-25, 2012

2012 Transit of Venus — Tahiti

Join us in French Polynesia to see this historic celestial event, one that will not occur again for another 105 years. Don't miss it!

June 3-10, 2012.

Australia Total Eclipse 2012: Program 2

Sydney. The Australian Outback. Ayers Rock. The Great Barrier Reef. Don't miss out. This second tour has just been added. Come travel with us for totality Down Under.

November 11-18, 2012.

Papua New Guinea Total Eclipse

Join us for a 12-day cruise to discover the wonderful cultural diversity and breath-taking scenery of Papua New Guinea, and view totality from the Great Barrier Reef.

November 3-15, 2012.

South Pacific Voyage to Totality

See an amazing 3m 30s of totality on your voyage from Hawaii to Australia aboard Celebrity Cruises' *Millennium*.

November 2-22, 2012

2013 West Africa Total Solar Eclipse

Cruise the west coast of Africa and see the eclipse at sea in the vicinity of maximum totality!

Oct. 24 to Nov. 6, 2013

To learn more about our other tours, please visit:

TravelQuestTours.com

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