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Moai on Easter Island.

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Reflections

For most people, the experience of travel offers many benefits. If you're stressed or overworked, sometimes something as simple as a change of scenery, even for a short period of time, can provide a lasting benefit. When our travels take us to exotic far-away places, the fine food, different culture, and unfamiliar natural and urban scenery can really add spice to life.



When I'm not out exploring new destinations or leading a TravelQuest group, I often find myself browsing travel magazines or watching travelogues on television. When I tune in to a travel program, a longing often builds within me to "get away" to see and experience the wonders and marvels of our world. For many of us, the saying, "so many places and so little time" really applies. Still, if you're like me, the end of the journey — coming home — is one of the best parts of traveling!

During difficult times like these, it's easy to lose sight of the things that feed our souls. I firmly believe travel is one of those things. But whatever does it for you, don't forget to feed your soul.

Regards . . .



A handwritten signature in white ink, which appears to read "Aram Kaprielian".

[Aram Kaprielian](#)

A Cruise and Totality in the Desert



Story and images by Bill Hetzel

In 2006, my wife, our youngest daughter, and I were privileged to cruise with TravelQuest on their Voyage to Totality to see the total eclipse of the Sun in Libyan Desert. We sailed on the MSC *Sinfonia* from Genoa, Italy. Our first stop was at Naples so we could visit Pompeii. Pompeii was high on my list of places that I've always wanted to explore. I've seen many things from the Roman period, but few were so informative.

One of my favorite things in Pompeii was a sundial. It seemed somehow appropriate, since we were on our way to an eclipse. In the time since the cruise, I've read books on sundials, and when I travel, I look at and take pictures of sundials. I've built my own sundial, and it's rather creative if I do say so.

Another stop was in Alexandria, Egypt, so of course we had to take a side trip to the Great Pyramids of Egypt. The Great Pyramids and the Sphinx were on my absolutely must-see list. We were so impressed that my wife and I have since returned to Giza and spent a day just walking around them and venturing into two of them.

The highlight of the trip was the total eclipse of the Sun. The eclipse was the culmination of much planning



The Hetzels: all in our places with eclipse viewers on our faces.

and anticipation. I built the filters that I would need for our three cameras to photograph the Sun from first contact, through totality, and on until last contact. We have digital, film, and video images of the eclipse. At home prior to the trip, my wife and I practiced putting the filters on the cameras and taking them off, so in the moments on either side of totality we could quickly perform this critical function.



Bring a pinhole-punched sign to your next eclipse and spell out your message in crescent suns — it works marvelously!

The eclipse itself fell on March 29, 2006, the date of our youngest daughter's 30th birthday. Could there be a much better way to commemorate such an event? I think our two older children were quite jealous.

I had never seen a total eclipse before. I'd seen a 90% eclipse when I was quite young, but never a total eclipse — and now I truly understand the difference. I don't know how to describe my feelings when totality was achieved. The best way is to listen to my daughter say, "Wow! Oh, Wow!" on the video we took during totality. It's a fabulous feeling — that sense of being in the right place at the right time and seeing a wonder of God.

Shortly after the cruise ended, we journeyed to Rome and visited St. Peter's Square for the Pope's Palm Sunday Mass. Ah, but that's another story.

Bill Hetzel spent his career in engineering with the General Electric Company and retired in 2001. He hopes to view the 2010 annular eclipse of the Sun from Kenya.

Eclipse 2009 Memory Book

The July 2009 eclipse will take many of us to one of two fabulous destinations. Amazing China — home of the Great Wall, the Forbidden City and the panda — is a land of mystery and amazement. The world has been enriched by its ancient astronomy, unique cuisine, medicine and philosophies. To the east, there are few islands in the world that conjure images of paradise more than those found in the South Pacific. These islands inspired a mutiny on the infamous *Bounty*; captured the imagination of Paul Gauguin, and have been immortalized by some of the world's great writers including Herman Melville, Robert Louis Stevenson, and James Michener.

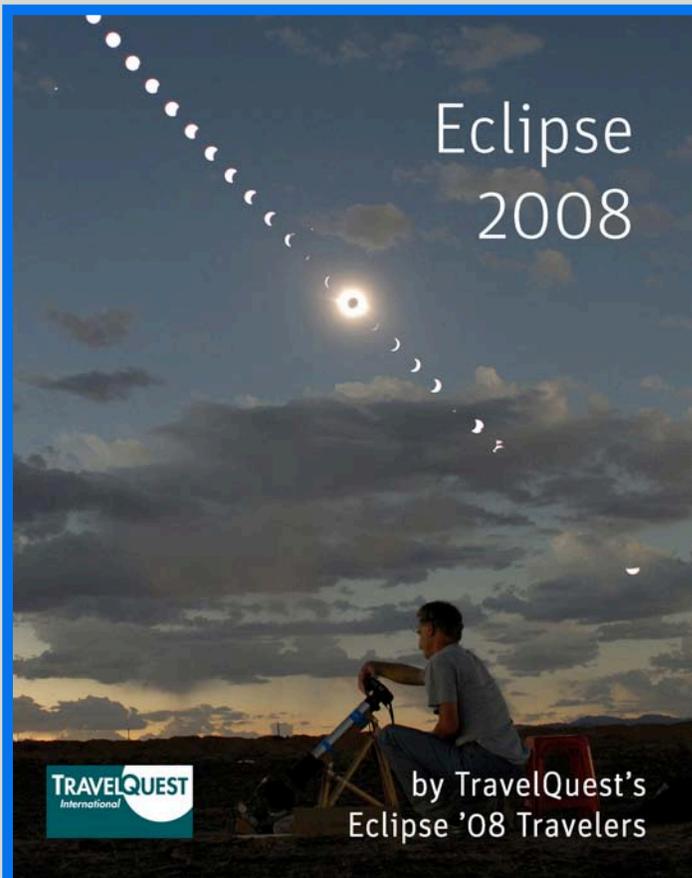
Help Us Tell the Story

To celebrate these unique journeys, TravelQuest is planning to create a special keepsake. We want to publish a four-color book of your experiences — tales and images that describe the solar eclipse and our travels through China and the South Pacific. It'll be similar to the well-received *Eclipse 2008* book we prepared after last year's journey.

But to do this we need your help, because this will not be a book written by the staff of TravelQuest. Rather, your contributions will create this book; we'll simply put it together. During the trip, think of how you'll describe your travels to family and friends. When you return, write it down and e-mail your commentary to TravelQuest.

Your story can take many forms, and it doesn't have to focus on the eclipse itself. Your tale could be about an interesting sight, site, or event that captured the spirit and flavor of your particular tour. Or it might take the form of a photo essay (with captions) that highlights a specific portion of the trip. Your story can be long or short, but it should be accompanied by two or more images to help others visualize your experience.

Remember, we can't create this memento without you. Once your eclipse trip is complete, e-mail your story and photos to us at editor@TQ-International.com. Please send your material to us NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 30, 2009. We hope to have the *Eclipse 2009 Memory Book* available for sale before the Christmas holiday, but it all depends on your timely contributions. Thank you!



Relive the journey and the August 1, 2008, total solar eclipse through the words and photos contributed by TravelQuest travelers who:

- Flew over the Arctic above the clouds,
- Voyaged to the North Pole on a Russian nuclear icebreaker,
- Traveled China's Silk Road on the China Oriental Express,
- Or journeyed through Russia by train, plane, and motorcoach, to witness this grand spectacle.

Eclipse 2008 is a unique, 100-page, soft-cover commemorative book containing more than 150 beautiful color images and 28 fascinating traveler's tales.

Preview the first 15 pages and order your copy by clicking [here for Blurb Publishing](#). \$39.99 plus shipping.

Countdown to Totality, 2010

If you miss Eclipse '09, you have one more opportunity for totality before a 28-month drought.



From left to right: a beach on the Cook Islands, moai on Easter Island, and French Polynesia (aboard the m/s *Paul Gauguin*) beckon eclipse chasers in 2010.

On Sunday, July 11, 2010, a total eclipse of the Sun will be visible along a narrow corridor that passes exclusively through Earth's Southern Hemisphere. The path of totality crosses the South Pacific Ocean, where it makes no landfall except for the remote, seldom-visited island of Mangaia in the Cook Islands, Easter Island (Rapa Nui), and the extreme southern end of Chile and Argentina.

TravelQuest is delighted to offer three options for viewing totality from this isolated region of Earth: French Polynesia, the Cook Islands, and Easter island.

French Polynesia

Polynesia is a large group of more than 1,000 islands scattered over the central and southern Pacific Ocean. French Polynesia is made up of



several groups of islands in the southeastern Pacific, the most famous being Tahiti in the Society Islands. Aboard the luxurious m/s *Paul Gauguin*, a ship designed specifically to sail the shallow seas of Tahiti and

French Polynesia, we'll spend seven days exploring some of these marvelous islands, including Raiatea, Taha'a, Bora Bora, Moorea, and of course Tahiti.

Since the path of totality does not cross land in this region, we'll take a day at sea on the Pacific Ocean to reach our ideal viewing location, southeast of Tahiti, where we

will be in position to experience four minutes of magnificent totality. While weather prospects for eclipse viewing are good, our ship's mobility at sea will increase our chances of seeing this rare, awe-inspiring celestial event.



Cook Islands

The 15 small islands that comprise the Cook Islands lie in the South Pacific Ocean, northeast of New Zealand, between French Polynesia and Fiji. Our eclipse tour will highlight the beauty of the island of Rarotonga.

Our eclipse site is the island of Mangaia, so off the beaten path that there are fewer than 600 inhabitants on the entire island. We'll spend two nights on Mangaia. On the night before the eclipse, we'll be treated to a cultural evening with food, dance, crafts, and entertainment. In the early morning hours of eclipse day, our group will assemble at the Mangaia airstrip to observe more than three minutes of totality. After the eclipse concludes, we'll join residents for a traditional Cook Islands church service, and then gather for a special meal prepared by the islanders.





A moai in Rano Raraku, a volcanic crater located on the lower slopes of Terevaka in Easter Island's Rapa Nui National Park.

Easter Island

Some 2,375 miles west of the coast of Chile, Easter Island is at the southeastern-most point of the Oceanic triangle of Polynesian islands. There is disagreement over when the island was first settled by the Polynesians: some scholars say 700 to 800 AD, while others maintain 1200 AD. The island's name comes from its first known European visitor — the Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen who encountered it on Easter Sunday, 1722. The famous statues (moai) of Easter Island (Rapa Nui) are iconic images that have intrigued people around the world for hundreds of years.

Our Easter Island solar eclipse tour is your opportunity to explore the mysteries that add to the magic and allure of this island, one of the most isolated places on the face of the Earth. We will watch totality from Easter Island. Remarkably, the path of Moon's shadow — with totality lasting an impressive 4 minutes 39 seconds — passes directly over this tiny island. This is definitely the trip of a lifetime.

On The Road

To bring or not to bring a guidebook — that is the question. After all, if you're on a TravelQuest tour, you can be assured that an English-speaking local guide will be with the group at all times. They'll describe the sights, explain the monuments and museums, and provide a running commentary about the country, its people, and the various places you're visiting.

So do you *really* need a guidebook, and if you buy one, do you *really* need to bring it along? I say yes to both questions, and here's why.

Anticipation. Perusing a guidebook before departure is a great way to learn about the different sites and sights you'll be seeing.

Know where you're going. Every evening (once you're finally on the road), look up everything that's on the next day's itinerary. This will provide you with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the places you'll be visiting.

Free time. Most tours have a little bit of freedom built into the schedule. A guidebook will help you decide where to go during your free time — and how to get there.

Remember where you've been. Long after returning home, the guidebook's details will help jog your memory about the places and events you experienced.

So having bought a guidebook, I bring it...well, part of it. Most guidebooks are bulky and hefty — some are 1,000 pages thick — which presents a challenge since I prefer

traveling with carry-on and every ounce counts. As a writer and book lover, I loathe ripping apart books, but as a light-packing traveler, I make an exception for travel books. Take just the pages you need for the places you're visiting, bring them back, stuff them into the guidebook, and keep it with your other trip memorabilia.

Other Options

In some cases there are alternatives to ripping and rending a thick guidebook. If the tour is sticking to major cities, you can often find small, city-specific guides that cost less, weigh less, and are thin enough to slide into your pocket. One guidebook-producing company now takes some of their country guides and digitally chops them for you — into PDF book chapters that are for sale online. You can take the chapters with you on your laptop or print them to create your own guide booklet.

Still, I wonder if the future of guidebooks is digital. So far I've found only one company that offers travel guides you can download to your iPod, or e-books you can send to your PDA or laptop. Their selection is fairly limited — but I suspect this will improve and other guidebook-creating companies may soon follow. I've also noticed that some cities are launching their own free interactive city guides specifically designed for mobile devices. As the capabilities of smart phones, e-book readers, iPods and other portable digital devices continue to improve, I suspect non-print travel guides will rapidly come into their own.

— P.D.

Making Memories

TravelQuest's July eclipse tours are rapidly approaching (as is summer vacation), and the cameras will be out in full force. So after describing (in the previous issue) how to safely store your digital images, let's look at a few tips that'll help you take some great shots worth saving.

Story Time

Tell a story. If you're going to be showing your images to others (and who doesn't love doing that), you'll be narrating. Help yourself remember where you've been by photographing signs showing the names of cities, streets, and even buildings such as museums. If there's a descriptive plaque in front of a building or town square, shoot it so you remember why the tour stopped there.

You're part of the story, so even if you hate being in front of the lens (and I'm guilty of this), get the occasional shot with you in it. Otherwise, these could be anybody's photos!

Try shooting scenes from big to small. By that I mean start with a wide-angle view. Then quickly move to medium details and finally look for close-ups of interesting sights. This works well on tours, when you don't have much time at any given stop.

Don't just stand there — shoot high (when you can) and low. Find an elevated perch — a rock, balcony, walkway, or a second-floor window — that'll let you look down on a scene. Also try kneeling to see what the scene looks like from a lower angle. This is often good for shooting landscapes or children.

If something catches your eye, just point and shoot. Then try again from a different angle. Often the best shots are, quite literally, "snap" shots.

Finally, do not edit your shots in-camera. Remove only the obvious bad ones (the accidental shot of your foot or the sky, or the one that's completely blurry). The camera's tiny screen is no place to check for detailed quality. And do this limited amount of editing at the end of the day, not while on the move from site to site.

— P.D.

Write to Us

If you have a memorable travel tale to tell, we'd love to hear about it. Write it as a Word document (try to keep it to between 600 and 700 words in length), include one or more photos, and send the story and images to me as e-mail attachments. Travel tips for "On the Road" and photo hints for "Making Memories" are easy to submit. Just jot them down and fire them off to me.

If you're traveling with us to China or the South Pacific for the 2009 total eclipse, I hope you'll contribute to the *Eclipse 2009 Memory Book*. You can send your stories and photos to me at the e-mail address below.

Your tips, hints, travel tales, and any comments you have about *Travel Quest* will reach me at: editor@TQ-International.com.

Paul Deans, editor

TRAVELQUEST
International

Upcoming Adventures

[Botswana: Under African Skies](#)

Go on safari and experience outstanding game viewing in uncrowded wildlife areas and small, intimate camps. Departs *September 30, 2009*.

[Costa Rica: Southern Sky Fiesta](#)

Our arid coastal observing site at 10° north latitude is far from light pollution and offers spectacular views of the southern sky. *January 16 to 23, 2010*.

[Annular Eclipse & Kenya Safari](#)

Experience the annular eclipse of *January 15, 2010*, on safari in Kenya, with opportunities for southern-sky stargazing. **Details to be announced.**

[July 11, 2010, Total Eclipse](#)

[French Polynesia Eclipse Cruise.](#)

Cruise aboard the 6-star m/s *Paul Gauguin* on this eight-day voyage to totality. *July 6 to 13, 2010*.

[Cook Islands Eclipse.](#)

The Sun rising above the Pacific Ocean near first contact on eclipse day will be unforgettable! *July 5 to 13, 2010*.

[Easter Island Eclipse.](#)

Stand in the shadow of Easter Island's iconic stone statues. Then stand in the shadow of the Moon during the total solar eclipse. *July 5 to 12 or July 9 to 17, 2010*.