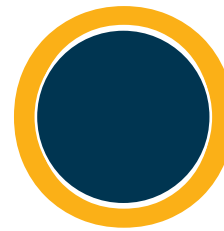


# IN THE PATH OF TOTALITY

## Jonesboro Prepares for The Celestial Event of a Lifetime

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 On April 8, the City of Jonesboro will experience a total solar eclipse, known as the “Great North American Eclipse,” with about 2 minutes and 21 seconds of totality. City officials and volunteers have spent more than a year planning for the awe-inspiring occasion, which will also be an opportunity to showcase Jonesboro itself to the thousands of visitors who plan to travel to the city.

A total solar eclipse is an astrological event that occurs when the moon comes in between the earth and the sun, blocking the sun entirely. The 2024 eclipse will have a wider, more populated path of totality than the previous eclipse in 2017, Jonesboro included, as well as a longer time of totality.

### PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

Though celebrating the eclipse is what many locals are looking forward to, city officials and volunteers have taken great measures to keep residents and visitors safe during the influx of what is estimated to be as many as 75,000 people.

“For over a year, we have been meeting to discuss all of the best- and worst-case scenarios for eclipse day,” said Cari White, chair of the City of Jonesboro’s official eclipse committee. “So many people and city departments have contributed their expertise as we prepared for the unknown; it has been a great learning experience for all of us. I am happy to say that we have done our due diligence in getting information on radio, TV and in print to inform our citizens about what to expect while identifying public viewing sites. Chief (Rick) Elliott and his staff, emergency services, CWL and health care have collaborated to lay out the best safety plan possible.”

Mayor Harold Copenhaver echoed White’s sentiment, saying that the Jonesboro Eclipse Committee has put great time and care into preparing the city for the event.

“The Jonesboro Eclipse Committee has been meeting for over a year to coordinate facets of the city,” said Copenhaver. “Safety is of utmost concern, as always, especially considering the influx of visitors anticipated to be in our region. We want all to enjoy Jonesboro during this historical event.”

Danny Kapales, director of the City of Jonesboro’s Parks and Recreation Department, says they have been working to support other entities and prepare the city’s parks for eclipse viewers.

“We are making sure all our facilities are accessible, clean and safe,” said Kapales. “(We are) also working to gather info on what others in our community are planning so that we as a city can be prepared to help. ... We are really just helping everyone else with their events.”

White wants to remind residents and visitors that there are many resources available for both information and protective eclipse glasses, 75,000 of which are available to the public for free.

“Up-to-date safety information and activities can be found at [tourjonesboro.com](http://tourjonesboro.com), [downtownjonesboro.com](http://downtownjonesboro.com), [jonesboro.org](http://jonesboro.org) and all social media,” she said. “Protective eyewear is important and will be available at the Chamber of Commerce, City Hall, Jonesboro Public Library, Craighead County Courthouse, Chamber Business Expo and Oasis Arts and Eats Festival.”

### WELCOME TO JONESBORO

As thousands flock to Jonesboro to experience totality, many will be visiting the city for the first time, and officials are looking to make a lasting impression that makes those visitors want to return.

“The potential for 1.5 million visitors to Arkansas with





### ECLIPSE EVENTS

Eclipse-related events will begin prior to the eclipse itself, starting with the Eclipse Video Production Contest, in which 40 area youth from numerous school districts turned in 18 completed videos to promote the solar eclipse. Valley View Junior High School's Eli Hunt and Catherine Terrell took home first place with their entry, "The Dark Side of the Sun."

"Thanks to sponsors Art Advertising, The Solutions Group, the Jonesboro Fraternal Order of Police and Jonesboro A&P, the members of the top five videos chosen will receive their own eclipse T-shirts and will be featured in the Oasis Media Festival April 26 and 27," said Copenhaver. "The top video chosen will receive a Canon EOS mirrorless vlogging kit to continue creating content. These partnerships engage our youth utilizing their talents and allow them ownership into historical events with the city."

Also taking place prior to the April 8 event is a highly anticipated concert and one of Jonesboro's biggest festivals.

"Leading up to the eclipse, there is a lot happening," said Rickert. "The Delta Symphony Orchestra is performing a concert on Saturday night, April 6; the Out of This World concert begins at 7:30 at the Fowler Center. On Sunday, April 7, you can't miss the Oasis Arts and Eats Fest in Downtown Jonesboro. There's going to be over 100 vendors. It's the biggest Oasis yet."

Many will choose to watch the eclipse from the 2024 Solar Eclipse Festival at the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home. Attendees can purchase a camping package for the festival, which will run from April 5-9. The Arkansas Roots Ride on April 6 will connect the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home in Dyess and the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum in Tyronza. Later that day will be the Arkansas Roots Music Festival that will feature live music from Arkansas artists and a tour of Cash's boyhood home. On April 7, there will be a Lunch and Learn with NASA scientist Dr. Les Johnson, who will share the science of solar eclipses. On the day of the eclipse, Dyess will experience 2 hours and 37 minutes of a partial eclipse.

Other day-of events include Total Eclipse of the Park from noon until 2 p.m. at Gamble Event Center; East Arkansas Broadcasters' Eclipse Viewing Party at Joe Mack Campbell Park, complete with a \$2,024 cash giveaway; the Eclipse Hangout at Central Baptist Church with live music and food trucks; and Howl at the Sun on the Arkansas State University Campus, which will allow preregistered educators and students to enjoy STEM hands-on activities, music, viewing stations and more. Nettleton Baptist Church's parking lot and all city parks will also be open for viewing.

For those making a week-long celebration of the celestial event, the Delta Crawfish Festival will take place on April 13 from noon to 10 p.m. at Gamble Home Furnishings' Courtyard. Tickets are available for \$25.

Rickert says that residents should be prepared for the thousands of visitors to affect their plans for the day. "Be prepared for a lot of traffic, that's for sure," he said. "If you want to attend one of the events on eclipse day, be prepared to wait around before leaving. There are a lot of people that will rush out once the eclipse ends; resist the temptation to try to leave right away. Let's give our guests a head start heading home. Also, you can see the eclipse anywhere you can see the sky. If you want to stay at home or the office, do it. There's no need to get caught up in the anticipated traffic snarls if you don't need to."

For more information about the Great Jonesboro Eclipse or to purchase an official T-shirt, visit [jonesboroeclipse.com](http://jonesboroeclipse.com).

200,000 to 400,000 within our region can mean our local tourism and the city itself will be highly impacted," said Copenhaver. "We look forward to an opportunity to showcase Jonesboro and host many visitors, hoping they'll return in the future. This also means preparing for the larger crowds while continuing to serve the residents of the city. ... Folks can stay an entire week and enjoy what Jonesboro has to offer, including our many parks and trails.

"Of course, I'm looking forward to sporting those stylish eclipse-safe viewing glasses made available at no cost to residents, but being a part of this historic celestial event is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Jonesboro Advertising and Promotion Commission Executive Director Craig Rickert, who says he is looking forward to sharing the celestial event with both his parents and children, is eager for others to experience Jonesboro on the occasion.

"The Great Jonesboro Eclipse represents a chance for Jonesboro to introduce ourselves to thousands of people who have never been here before," said Rickert. "You can't miss out on an opportunity like this. It's a chance for people to know what we've known all along; this is a special place worth exploring.

"The short-term impact will be immense. Restaurants, hotels and retail will have a huge weekend. More importantly, we want this to be a path for people to experience Jonesboro and come back again. That's where we can build."

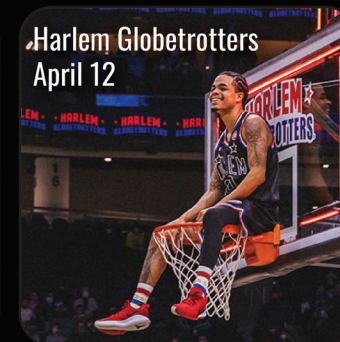
In addition to Jonesboro's hotels and other lodging opportunities such as VRBO rentals, Kapales says the city's Parks and Recreation Department has worked to make other overnight options available.

"One of the things we did add was the opportunity for RV/camper trailers to park and stay overnight at Joe Mack Campbell Park the weekend before the eclipse," said Kapales. "All of our parks will be open to the public to enjoy the eclipse, so find the park closest to you and plan your outing.

"... I am excited for the eclipse itself. I was at Joe Mack with my family for the 2017 eclipse, and this one will be so much more impressive. I am also excited for the opportunity to showcase our great town."

# THE ECLIPSE IS JUST THE BEGINNING...

## April is *Totality* Awesome in Jonesboro!



Visit [tourjonesboro.com/events-today](http://tourjonesboro.com/events-today) or scan the code for our full event calendar!

