



## **Following the Path of Totality: How Cruise Is Benefiting from the 2026 Solar Eclipse**

By Zachary Laks

In 2026, cruise ships will carry passengers into the path of a rare astronomical event. The total solar eclipse on August 12, 2026, will be one of the longest of the century, lasting 6 minutes and 14 seconds at its peak. Its path of totality will stretch from the Arctic and Iceland's west coast down the Atlantic and through Spain, which hasn't seen a total eclipse in more than 120 years.

With cruises being one of the best ways to see the phenomenon, several Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) member lines have ships focused on the 2026 eclipse with specialty sailings that feature captivating lectures, lively deck parties, and inspired culinary delights. And demand for these sailings is surging.

Travelers are also setting their sights on 2027 eclipse sailings with strong numbers of bookings, says Robert de Bruin, Director of Itinerary Planning & Deployment for Holland America Line. That event, with the path of totality crossing southern Spain, North Africa, and Egypt, will happen August 2, 2027.

### **Why eclipse cruises?**

Cruises provide an ideal vantage point for a solar eclipse. At sea, ships have the flexibility to align directly beneath the path of totality. When paired with the Perseid meteor shower, which peaks on the same night as the total solar eclipse in 2026, the timing is perfect for a night of astronomical wonder.

"At sea, there are no city lights, no obstructions, and the horizon is endless, which makes the spectacle that much more phenomenal," says Brennan Quesnele, Senior Vice President of Sales and Trade Marketing for North America for Oceania Cruises. "Beyond the vantage point itself, there's also the energy onboard: Hundreds of guests together in anticipation, celebrating with deck parties, live music, and celestial-inspired cuisine. It's a shared experience of wonder and awe that is simply unparalleled."

### **Who's sailing?**

CLIA member cruise lines planning specialty eclipse sailings include Azamara Cruises, Carnival Cruise Line, Cunard, Holland America Line, HX Expeditions, Oceania Cruises, Princess Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Royal Caribbean and Virgin Voyages. Many of the first round of eclipse-specific cruises now have limited availability or are waitlist-only, and some sold out more than a year in advance. Cruise lines are finding ways to meet demand by adding more sailings.

In response to the way the celestial alignment has energized travelers, Oceania has five 2026 eclipse sailings, while Princess has three eclipse sailings in 2026, and Azamara has dedicated three of its four ships to the cosmic spectacle.

### **Immersive experiences**

In addition to the magical experience of seeing an eclipse while at sea, cruise lines are enhancing the educational aspect of the events with immersive and educational programming.

Azamara has partnered with the Lowell Observatory and its astronomers for lectures, stargazing sessions, and live eclipse narration. Holland America will have dedicated astronomy experts on board delivering live commentary and running Q&A sessions. Oceania is featuring NASA ambassadors – along with deck parties, and solar-themed treats (from star-shaped finger foods to “cosmic” macarons).

### **Eyes towards the skies**

Holland America’s de Bruin says stay tuned for more spaced-focused cruises, affording a front row seat to the wonders of the universe. “Astrotourism is gaining serious momentum, with more travelers planning their vacations around celestial events like eclipses, the Northern Lights, and stargazing,” he says.

CLIA member William Kingston, ECC, of Finest Travel Agency, who has sold specialty sailings for years, says travel advisors should also focus attention skyward. “Travel advisors should anticipate special events such as eclipses to secure the best options and experiences for their clients,” he says.

With skyrocketing demand for the upcoming cruises, the 2026 solar eclipse event previews a bright future for astrotourism at sea.

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