



Lodging, Camping, and Venue Preparedness and Lessons Learned

The April 8, 2024, total solar eclipse will attract thousands of visitors to the region and several million will travel to cities along the entire 120+ mile-wide path of totality stretching from Mexico to Canada across the U.S.

- Eclipse visitors are eager to secure their travel plans. They will start calling over a year in advance of the April 8, 2024 date. Prepare your staff with information about when the guests will be able to make reservations.
- Be thoughtful of how your website shows your room, space, or camping space availability. If the page shows "Sold Out" prior to the day reservations will be available, you may lose guests due to the assumption there are no rooms or spaces remaining. For parks and camping, make it clear on your webpage that only a percentage of spaces may be reserved in advance and the rest are first come, first served. In 2017, camping spaces throughout Southern Illinois were vacant.
- Many eclipse visitors will scout out the location prior to their visit. Be prepared for their visit and questions by having local information on hand about the 2024 Total Solar Eclipse.
- Eclipse chasers are known to make multiple reservations across the path of totality and cancel the day before the eclipse based upon the weather forecast. This is important to keep in mind as you establish your cancellation policies. Remember to allow yourself enough time to resell the room or space.
- It is common for properties to require a multi-night reservation.
- As with any large event, there are individuals who will try to make a quick buck by reserving rooms and reselling them at a much higher rate. Be cautious of individuals booking large blocks of rooms, especially if your property maintains a 24-hour cancellation policy.
- Eclipse visitors expect slightly higher prices but are sensitive to what they believe is price gouging. They are not afraid to look at other types of lodging and camping options and in other communities.
- Promoters and event planners may contact you wanting to reserve your space during the eclipse. Be cautious of these calls. Make sure the intent of the event aligns with the culture and capacity of your property.
- The Total Solar Eclipse attracts many international travelers. As international travelers or tour groups book, be thoughtful of how their needs may be different than other guests--language barriers, different dietary needs, diverse cultural expectations, etc.
- Some guests will expect to have transportation available and not aware of the limits of our public transportation systems. Be thoughtful of what options are available in your community or what your property might want to provide during this weekend.
- Establish policies on overnight parking and sleeping in vehicles. Many people will travel to the eclipse without a lodging plan.
- Most importantly, enjoy this opportunity to host people from around the globe. Hopefully, they will have an exceptional experience and plan future visits.

For additional information, contact the 2024 SIU Total Solar Eclipse, Regional Outreach Committee at 618-453-3427 or at vsneed@siu.edu.