

**THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA  
1991 SOLAR ECLIPSE EXPEDITION**

**14 MARCH 1991 REPORT TO EXPEDITION PARTICIPANTS**

Dear Registrant(s) No. 110:

We are writing to provide an update on the status of the 1991 RASC Solar Eclipse Expedition for which you are registered. We are delighted to advise that, since our last report, we have received confirmation of a commitment from La Tur Airlines of Mexico, through our travel agent, Sunquest Incentive Travel of Toronto, to provide a new MD-83 aircraft for the Expedition. Our planning is proceeding smoothly, and we are all looking forward to a highly successful Expedition.

The aircraft has a capacity of 165 passengers. As a result, we now have a waiting list of about 30 people. Do not worry if your registration number is higher than no. 165. Because several registrants have dropped out over the past two years (and we have not reassigned registration numbers, in order to avoid confusion), at present the 165th participant has a registration number of 182.

Unfortunately, due to general air travel cost increases over the past two years, the cost of our Expedition has increased to a currently estimated \$1,200 per person. We are currently negotiating the terms of the contract with La Tur, including particularly any increases or decreases in the Expedition cost as a result of fluctuations in the price of fuel.

As a result, we are unable at this point to provide a firm, final cost for the Expedition. We expect the final cost to be between \$1,100 and a maximum of \$1,350 per person. If you are not prepared, if necessary, to pay up to \$1,350 per person, please advise immediately, so that we may fill your place from the waiting list. If you drop out and your place is filled, you will receive a complete refund of your deposit.

We must make a 25% non-refundable deposit to La Tur Airlines on 1 April 1991. We have therefore decided to adopt the following financial arrangements:

1. The second payment of \$600 per person MUST BE RECEIVED by 31 March 1991.
2. The third payment, representing the balance of the currently estimated cost of \$1,200 per person, is due by 15 May 1991. For registrants no. 1 - 98 (who registered before 11 July 1989 and are therefore entitled to a 10% discount) the third payment will be \$380. For all others, the third payment will be \$500.
3. If you do not make either of these payments, we will assume that you no longer wish to participate in the Expedition, and your name will be deleted from the registration list. We will attempt to replace you from the waiting list, and if you are replaced, you will receive a complete refund.

4. By forwarding your second payment of \$600 per person, you will be signifying that you are prepared, IF COST INCREASES SO REQUIRE, to pay up to a total of \$1,350 per person for the Expedition.
5. For those who have registered since the end of December 1990, your \$100 deposit remains fully refundable UNTIL THE END OF MARCH 1991 ONLY.

While we regret the uncertainty regarding the final cost of the Expedition, all of the members of the Solar Eclipse Committee remain confident that the intense planning for this Expedition will result in a highly successful and memorable experience for all, and that the morning of 11 July 1991 will find us all within the moon's shadow in Mexico for this greatest of all solar eclipses.

Yours very truly,

Michael S.F. Watson  
Expedition Leader  
RASC 1991 Solar Eclipse  
Expedition

████████████████████  
Toronto, Ontario ██████████  
Canada

(416) ██████████ (Business)  
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P.S. BY INADVERTENCE, YOUR \$100 DEPOSIT CHEQUE PER REGISTRANT WAS NOT DEPOSITED, FOR WHICH WE APOLOGIZE. THIS IN NO WAY AFFECTS THE VALIDITY OF YOUR REGISTRATION. PLEASE THEREFORE ADD \$100 PER PERSON (FOR A TOTAL OF \$700) FOR YOUR SECOND PAYMENT.

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**INFORMATION CIRCULAR**

The RASC 1991 Solar Eclipse Expedition is a project of the National Council of The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, which is the largest national astronomical organization in the world. The Expedition, which has now been more than two years in the planning, is being coordinated by the Solar Eclipse Committee, consisting of the undersigned as Expedition Leader, and members J. Randy Attwood of Toronto and Steve Dodson, both of whom are experienced astronomers and have organized astronomical expeditions in the past.

The RASC Expedition differs from most others in that it features a quick, two-day trip by chartered aircraft from Toronto to Mexico, rather than an extended, one or two-week vacation. This format allows us to offer the opportunity to observe the eclipse for the low price of approximately \$1,200, and makes observing the eclipse possible for families.

The itinerary, which of course is subject to change at any time, is as follows: We will leave Toronto International Airport at approximately 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, 10 July 1991. We have chartered an MD-83, 165-seat aircraft from La Tur Airlines of Mexico, through our travel agent, Sunquest Incentive Travel of Toronto. We have been working closely with Sunquest over the past two years. The approximately 5-hour flight will bring us to Puerto Vallarta (on the Mexican mainland) in early afternoon. Buses will transfer us to the Plaza Vallarta hotel, where the rest of the afternoon will be spent at leisure. Our present plans call for us to have a banquet-style dinner at the hotel, followed by an evening program about the eclipse. There is some prospect (details still to be worked out) that we may engage buses to take those who are interested outside the city for some evening stargazing.

On Thursday morning (Eclipse Day), we will get up early (between 3:00 and 4:00 a.m.), have breakfast at the hotel, and transfer by bus to the airport. The jet will depart Puerto Vallarta at 6:00 a.m., and arrive at Los Cabos airport in Baja California approximately 1 hour later. Because of the one-hour time difference, we will land at approximately 6:00 a.m. Baja California time. At the Los Cabos airport, we will clear Mexican customs with our astronomy equipment (which will have been left on board the aircraft overnight in Puerto Vallarta). We will then board reserved buses, which will drive us approximately 40 km north of the Los Cabos airport to the town of Santiago, where we have reserved the town soccer stadium as our observing site. Santiago is approximately 5 km south of the centre line of the eclipse, and is an excellent location. We estimate arrival time at approximately 9:00 a.m. The partial phase of the eclipse will begin shortly after 10:15 a.m.. The total phase will begin at

approximately 11:48 a.m. and last 6 minutes, 52 seconds. After the eclipse has ended (at approximately 13:30), we will pack up our equipment, board the buses, and drive south to Los Cabos, where the afternoon will be spent either at one of the excellent beaches in the area or in one of the towns. The buses will take us to the airport for a 23:00 departure for Toronto, where we will land at approximately 7:00 a.m. on the morning of Friday, 12 July 1991.

Members of the Solar Eclipse Committee have travelled twice to Baja California, and have held extensive discussions with Mexican Government officials, who are organizing the logistics of the eclipse for Baja California. We have received assurances of the necessary permits and approvals for our Expedition, and we have been very encouraged by the cooperation that we have received. Nonetheless, from past experience we recognize that plans can and do go awry. For example, it is possible that, on Eclipse Day, in spite of previous assurances, we may not receive permission to land at Los Cabos airport. We have therefore devised a back-up plan, which calls for us to observe the eclipse from near the centre line on the west coast of the Mexican mainland, north of Puerto Vallarta. Weather prospects at this location are still very good, and the duration of totality and the altitude of the sun during the eclipse are virtually identical to Baja California.

The currently estimated price of \$1,200 covers air transportation, hotel accommodation in Puerto Vallarta, bus transfers to and from the airports, ground bus transportation to the observing site, and most meals. You should count on approximately \$50-\$75 for incidentals, including non-group meals. Because of the uncertainty of certain costs, including aviation fuel, we estimate that the final cost of the trip will be between \$1,100 and \$1,350 per person.

As July approaches and our plans solidify further, Expedition members will be receiving full information concerning the eclipse, including observation and photography suggestions.

In order to facilitate the clearing of Mexican customs, we will be requiring each participant to send to us a complete list (together with serial numbers) of all photographic and telescopic equipment being taken on the Expedition. PERSONAL BELONGINGS AND LUGGAGE MUST BE KEPT TO A MINIMUM. IN GENERAL, ALL CLOTHES MUST BE PACKED IN A SMALL, CARRY-ON BAG. This restriction is to allow us to take as much astronomical equipment (cameras, telescopes and the like) as possible.

We look forward to seeing you in July!

Michael S. F. Watson  
Expedition Leader  
RASC 1991 Solar Eclipse  
Expedition