ALASKA AIRLINES IS ADJUSTING A PLANE'S FLIGHT PLAN SO PASSENGERS CAN SEE SOLAR ECLIPSE

News / Airlines

Lucky passengers on Alaska Airlines Flight 870 will get a special sight when they look out the window: a total solar eclipse. The flight from Anchorage to Honolulu purposefully adjusted its departure time so that the plane's passengers could see the eclipse's totality — the period when the entire solar disc is covered and only the outer edges are visible.

The plot to change the flight's course happened over a year ago, according to Alaska Airlines. Joe Rao, an associate astronomer at the Hayden Planetarium in New York City, figured out that Flight 870 would be in the perfect spot to see the total eclipse. But the flight's scheduled departure time would mean the plane would miss totality by 25 minutes. Rao then called Alaska Airlines, convincing the company to delay the flight to 2PM local time.

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Now, Rao and other eclipse lovers are slated to fill Flight 870's seats tomorrow, so they can get a great view of the event from 37,000 feet. The plane's passengers will be able to see totality at 5:35PM local time, nearly 700 miles north of Honolulu. And those who just want to get to Hawaii will only arrive about half an hour later than expected.

Solar eclipses occur when the Moon passes between the Sun and the Earth, casting a shadow on the planet's surface. This phenomenon makes it seem like the Sun goes black for a brief period of time. Total solar eclipses occur about once a year, but they often appear over water or unpopulated areas, making them rare events to witness personally. NASA maps show that only a few populated islands in Southeast Asia will be able to see tomorrow's total eclipse — but now 163 people aboard Flight 870 will get a glimpse, too.

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