



ECLIPSE CHASER

Mandie Adams Southend-on-Sea, Essex

Mandie belongs to a unique band of eclipse chasers — also known as “umbraphiles” — who travel far and wide to watch solar eclipses.

Mandie does not travel solo. Her little teddy bear Dinky Doo always accompanies her. They have seen 13 eclipses.

Their first visit was to Lizard Point in Cornwall in 1999. “I was drawn in by the beauty, amazed by each of the various stages of the eclipse”, Mandie said. “I wanted to learn more about these rare and spectacular events”. So they went on to watch eclipses in 12 more locations: Zimbabwe 2001, Turkey 2006, China 2009, Easter Island 2010, Australia 2012, Uganda 2013, Norway 2015, Indonesia 2016, America 2017, Chile 2019, Antarctica 2021, Australia 2023.

For the visit to Antarctica in 2021, they flew to Ushuaia in Argentina, the southernmost city in the world. Its nickname is the End of the World. They boarded a 15-day eclipse expedition that sailed through the dangerous Drake Passage to South Georgia — past thousands of seals and penguins — then on to Antarctica. At this point, they had travelled to all seven continents.

Like Mandie's Dinky Doo, other eclipse chasers also have rituals. Superstition is generally the reason. It's hoped the rituals will ward off clouds — the death knell for an eclipse viewing.

Mandie's friend Kara Forsyth from Australia always wears the same silver-colored dress. Clint Werner, author in San Francisco, 18 eclipses, always wears the same shirt decorated with stars and moons. Craig Small, retired professor of astronomy at the Hayden Planetarium in New York, 35 eclipses, always has a four-by-six-foot flag he designed of a total eclipse.

Jay Pasachoff, professor of astronomy at Williams College in Massachusetts, 36 eclipses, always wears orange pants. He went a step further for the 2021 eclipse in Antarctica: he chartered an airplane to view the eclipse from above the clouds.

“Each eclipse is unique, each trip has been an adventure: the amazing sights, the people I meet, the challenges, even the mishaps, have been interesting, exciting, and funny. Friends and family, hearing the humorous stories, said I should write a book, which I did. Two years ago, I wrote *Chasing the Eclipse & Other Adventures: Memories of World Travels*”.

