

# Radar

DISCOVERY

## Star Search

Travelers are turning their eyes skyward in search of cosmic spectacles that are, in some cases, quite literally once in a lifetime. By Diana Hubbell

### Take a Cruise

This year's astronomical showstopper is undeniably the hybrid solar eclipse that will occur on November 3. Cruises such as those run by the following two lines bring budding astronomers to eastern Africa—the best place for viewing—in style. On the open sea, far from city lights, is the perfect spot to take in the event, with plenty of room on deck to set up private telescopes. **TravelQuest International** combines eclipse viewing with land tours and safaris, if you're feeling even more adventurous. *Travelquesttours.com; 2013 West Africa Total Solar Eclipse Cruise: Spain to Sierra Leone, October 22 through November 5, 2013, doubles from US\$9,980.*

**Ring of Fire Expeditions** offers other astronomical expeditions, as well, including cruises to Alaska to view the aurora borealis. *Eclipssetours.com; Solar Eclipse Cruise October 28 to November 9, 2013, from US\$4,469 per person.*

### Cosmic Calendar

Celestial happenings are always on the horizon. Here, three you should get a clear shot of from Asia.

**Comet ISON** Keep your eyes peeled this winter for what some astronomers are already calling the comet of the century. If it survives as it hurtles close to the sun, the five-kilometer-wide comet will develop a tail so brilliant that it may well be visible to the naked eye during daylight. *The comet will be brightest on November 28, 2013, but should still be visible through mid-January 2014.*



Top: Solar eclipse. Below: A laser tour of the New Zealand sky.

**Geminid Meteor Shower** With as many as 120 meteors an hour, this is your best chance during the year to see shooting stars—just wait until after the bright moon sets, around 4:30 a.m. *December 13 and 14, 2013.*

**Total Solar Eclipse, Indonesia** Sure, it's almost three years away, but there's no harm in planning ahead—especially with the number of tourist angling for hotel reservations and tours in the area. The best viewing will actually be in the Pacific Ocean just east of Indonesia, but the event will still be visible from land. *March 9, 2016.*

### Bright Nights

If all you're after is a particularly beautiful patch of night sky, these are a few superlative spots for stargazing.

**Lake Tekapo, New Zealand** Astronomy guides at Mt. John Observatory give nightly tours of the southern sky using lasers to point out

notable constellations. Through the lens of one of their powerful telescopes you can get a closer look at familiar planets and far-off clusters of stars. *earthandsky.co.nz; adults NZ\$135.*

**Pisco Elqui, Chile** At Elqui Domos, about a two-hour drive from La Serena, there is an observatory with two electronic Schmidt-Cassegrain type telescopes. Stay in one of the facility's dome rooms, which have removable roofs, for an unimpeded view of the vast night sky. *elquidomos.cl; doubles from US\$125.*

**Emil Valley, Turkey** This trip through Turkey is led by astronomy expert Dr. John Mason, who conducts evening lessons on nights spent camping out under the stars, well clear of the light pollution of neighboring cities. *astronomytours.co.uk/tours/active-cappadocia-astronomy-kids; eight-day trip from £1,489 per person including flights within the itinerary. +*