

The planet Venus will pass across the face of the Sun on the morning of 6th June 2012. This will be the last such transit visible this century. The last transit occurred in 2004, and the one before occurred in 1882. The next will not be until 2117. Although transits of Venus, and of Mercury, now have no real scientific value, they are very rare occurrences, and are well worth seeing.

The transit will already be in progress by the time the Sun rises at 4.50am on the morning of 6th June. In fact, most of the transit will already have occurred, and therefore there will only be about 40 minutes when the planet will be visible in front of the Sun. If you want to see the transit in full, you will need to book a trip to an island in the Pacific ocean as soon as possible.

Venus will not be visible as a naked-eye object, and will therefore need optical aid to be seen. A small telescope, or one lens on a pair of binoculars, will be adequate. The image of the sun should be projected on to a piece of white paper or card. Alternatively, a proper solar filter can be used. Make sure the solar filter covers the lens at the front of the binoculars or telescope, NOT the eyepiece.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD YOU LOOK DIRECTLY AT THE SUN USING OPTICAL EQUIPMENT. BLINDNESS OR SERIOUS IRREVERSIBLE EYE DAMAGE WILL BE THE RESULT.

The best sites will be as far north and east as possible, so somewhere on the Co. Antrim coast road, or near Millisle on Co Down will be best for the longest possible view. In reality, some part of the transit will be visible from most places in Ireland, but on the south and west coasts, it may only last for a matter of minutes.

We have decided to hold our Venus transit event at a carpark on the Fayestown Road, 2.8 miles outside Ballygally. We will be meeting up around 0415, everyone is welcome to join us!

Directions:

From Belfast, go along the main A8 Larne road and onto the dual carriageway leading towards the harbour. Follow the signs for the Causeway coast road. Pass through Drains Bay and on to Ballygalley.

At the Ballygalley Castle Hotel, turn left off the Coast road onto the Carncastle road. At the top of this road, in the village, turn right and then left on to the Ballycoose road, which eventually becomes the Feystown road. Carry on up this road until you come to the car park, which will be on the left. I'm not exactly sure at which point the Ballycoose road becomes the Feystown road, and if the car park is before or after this point, but there's not much up this way, and the car park is pretty obvious.

If coming from Ballymena, go down the A36, past Killylane, and straight on until you meet the A8, and then proceed as above. Or, you can turn left at Kilwaughter onto the Deerpark Road, and then onwards to the Ballymullock road. This leads straight to Carncastle, and will save a few miles. If you go this way, keep your speed down, there are a couple of sharp bends on the road.

Of course, those travelling from the Belfast direction can also go via Kilwaughter, if you take the Kilwaughter turn-off on the A8. Travel on to the village, and then straight on to the Deerpark road and proceed onwards to Carncastle as above.

At this point, as always, all we can do is hope for good weather and a clear horizon on the day.

For more information about Venus transits in general, and this one in particular, either google "Transit of Venus", or use this link

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transit_of_Venus