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Total eclipse over the desert

By John Dearing

A partial eclipse of the sun is an interesting distraction, but a total eclipse is another matter... the sun's disc is completely covered, the sky darkens, the temperature drops and the spectacle of the corona and the prominences can be seen, ending with the glorious diamond ring effect. However, to see it, one must be in exactly the right place at the right time, with a clear sky.



Totality ends with the glorious diamond ring effect. Photo by John Dearing

My partner and I had the unique opportunity to go on a trip into the heart of the Libyan desert to view the total eclipse of 29 March 2006, as part of a tour which included visits to ancient monuments and excavations in Greece and Libya.

We flew to Crete, where we went to the Minoan city of Knossos, then joined the cruise ship MV Perla and sailed to Benghazi in Libya. We visited the Grecian temples at Cyrene, and the following day travelled 300 miles into the desert for the eclipse.

The whole tour party, some 800-plus people, had to board a fleet of coaches which travelled in convoy with a large escort of Libyan police vehicles. Libya is a heavily-controlled country, with numerous roadblocks stopping traffic for checks, but our escort was our

passport. In all, the journey took about seven hours each way; it was a very long day, but we had a wonderful view of the eclipse.

As fellow East Finchley resident David Stewart said: "No sensible person would normally stand around for a couple of hours under the midday sun in the middle of the Sahara desert, but this year's eclipse provided the perfect excuse."

Afterwards we sailed to Tripoli and visited the well-preserved Roman town of Leptis Magna, thence to Thira for the Santorini volcano crater, and finally to Athens for a visit to the Acropolis.

This exciting trip was organised by Explorers Tours, whose expeditions over the past 25 years have travelled all over the world to witness astronomical events such as total eclipses.

Pocket parks given spring clean

The corner parks of Midhurst Green, Eastern Green and Twyford Green, all along Fortis Green, have been rejuvenated by the efforts of Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association.

John Hajdu, Chair of MHFGA, told us: "I have lived in Muswell Hill for over 30 years, and as far as I can remember there has never been any work done on any of these greens, apart from cutting grass, cutting back rose bushes, and taking away rubbish.

"During our work, new trees

and bushes have been planted, new bark put down, and accumulated rubbish (including a dog kennel, television set, and other bulky items) have been taken away. Two new benches have been installed at Twyford Green. We have three lovely pocket parks, brought back to life for residents to enjoy."



John Hajdu enjoying the bench at Twyford Green. Photo by John Dearing

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