

**Eclipse Report – “Ring of Fire” Group D
Patricia Reiff, group leader**

(<http://www.eclipsetours.com>)

Group D consisted of:

Patricia Reiff (leader) and Penny Morris-Smith

Thomas Cave

Darrell and Brylan Droddy

Dee Holisky and Bob Hammarberg

Inger Nennesmo

David and Justin Rousso

Paul and Peggy Scherbina

Jim and Sybil Wilson

Spencer Young

Our local guide was Robin (Su-Ming, which means Sun-Moon which was very appropriate!)

Group photo at caves:

(from left: Justin, David, Thomas, Penny, Sybil, Brylan, Jim, Dee, Paul, Bob, Darrell, Peggy, Inger, Spencer, Pat, Robin).



Our site was selected to be one of the two northern-most sites (Site “A”). This required the most driving... up to 12 hour each way if we went to the primary sites east of Yiwu. At that point each of the groups were asked whether they wanted better weather forecasts (in the northern groups B and D) or shorter bus rides of groups A and C. At that point we lost Inger but gained 8 more people, making it 22 in all (plus Robin, two bus drivers and the tour manager). Additional people: Charles and Beverly Heebner, Juan Carbajo, Phil Plante, and Don and Marilyn Kredel.

Knowing that the travel might be slow, Group D chose to leave very early in the morning (05:30, compared to Claude’s 0600). That gave us a sit-down lunch after our box breakfast. As we left Hami, given the slowness of the travel, multiple checkpoints, etc, we looked at sites in the valley just between the two mountain ranges, with a good view of the West, with sites east of the first range (closer to Hami) as fall-back choices. (Darrell assured us that the clouds would build over the mountains but the valleys should stay clearer). There were police stationed every few km along the road east of Hami toward Yiwu.

Accordingly, as we traveled eastward we marked several potential sites. We had just decided to try to go back west on the south side of the second ridge when we hit a checkpoint. Despite having



paid the payment for the eclipse permits for all, we were stopped. Claude and his bus turned back at that point but we prevailed on the local police to let us go forward two km to the intersection to the road that headed back to the northwest, where there was a small town (Na Lin Ku). (N 43° 25.985', E 99° 55.836'). We had at that point 1.5 hours before first contact so we picked out our viewing sites, set up the toilet tent, and then interacted with the locals, giving them eclipse glasses and UV beads, and generally making friends. Paul got a motorcycle ride with a local. Several headed off for hikes before first contact.

However, after about an hour the police with an army officer came by and told us that we were in a "sensitive border area" and we needed to head back west. Reluctantly we packed up and headed back towards the Sand Dune where Claude's group was. (We had to gather up folks who had wandered before we could leave).

We arrived back at the Dunes (43°N 25.273' 93°E44.427') about 6 minutes before first contact. We hurriedly set up and watched the clouds build over the ridge and then partially cover the sky.

After some discussion about clouds, etc., a decision was made for Claude to take anyone who was mobile and head south down the road to look for clearer skies. The rest of us were rather scattered, so I'm not 100% sure which of my group stayed at the Dunes. I am sure of:

Pat and Penny, Dee and Bob, Phil, the Wilsons, the Droddy's, Spencer Young, and the English's.

Went with Claude: Thomas, Paul and Peggy, Ruben, David and Justin, and quite a few of the additional folks. (Tom Cave photo of "decision time)

Penny photo of Spencer and some locals watching clouds...





Diamond ring from Spencer Young

Bob impressed the locals with the Sunspotter (once he figured out how to use it)

The sky was partly cloudy but we got views of the Sun throughout the partial phases (occasionally obscured by clouds), but by second contact the Sun was in a hole in the clouds which actually looked like a hand holding the Sun. Made some of the pictures very interesting. (Hammarberg "Hand of God" photo). The cloud at the top of the corona made the sun look very much like an eye.



After third contact we got word from Claude that they wanted us to come to them (bringing the stuff they left behind) and we'd sort out people and equipment at their site.

We then did so, had a sit down dinner at the same hotel in Hami, and made it back to the hotel in Dun Huang at 05:30 the next morning, totally exhausted but happy that we had a good view.

Websites for more photos: http://space.rice.edu/eclipse/solar_eclipse_2008/ (Reiff)
<http://picasa.web.google.com/bobhberg/EclipseDay02?authkey=zD5fYadHdcl> (Bob H'berg)