

Questions from Deep in the Heart of Texas

Q Dear Boots,
Is it true that Waco is in the path of the solar eclipse? What does that really mean?

— From, *Wondering in Waco*

A Dear *Wondering in Waco*,
One thousand bows of gratitude for your inquiry because until I began researching the answer to your question, I'll admit, I knew very little about "our" upcoming eclipse. Like many, I had been hearing for months that Waco would have a complete view of the total solar eclipse. Perhaps, like only a few, I hadn't looked into it any further than that. Incidentally this is also how I have treated every vacation I've ever been on in my life. Some would say this is a very laid-

back way to travel. Alternatively, it could end up being the root cause of my children's need to pre-plan life events by six months, so they don't end up eating exclusively at places like Stan's Spaghetti, where reservations are not required, and actually, have never even been suggested.

(Thanks for the manicotti and the memories, Stan!)

Now that I have invested seven minutes of my life in intense internet research, I see that on April 8, 2024, Waco will be part of a tiny sliver of North America where total darkness will descend midday. While that sliver stretches from Mexico to Maine, I didn't have to do any internet research to know we are the only place on that sliver where a person could watch a mega-astronomical occurrence and then, on that same day, buy fashionable

and inspirational home goods from converted grain Silos.

What does this really mean, *Wondering in Waco*? By the book, it means we can check a box of having seen a total eclipse without having to travel a lick. All of us should be able to stand in our front yards and catch a glimpse of this amazing happening.

Beyond that, you get to decide how much or little the event means to you. We live in a world where miracles happen every day, many that go without a single person noticing. Does that mean they don't matter? I once met a very wise man named Stan who vehemently asserted that what isn't noticed is actually most important.

"So much love and care," Stan said, "goes into making the pasta." And still, he has no Michelin stars by his name.

The crowds will come to us on April 8. Those of us who look up will see something cool. Those of us who keep our eyes open as we go back to our “normal” lives might even see something cooler. Meaning can be found in a delicious noodle or in a dark noon; it can be anywhere we choose.

— *Love, Boots*

Q Dear Boots,
I'll be in Waco for the eclipse and am wondering — can I even get a decent cup of coffee there?

— *From, Heidi from Houston*

A Dear Heidi,
So good to hear from you! We are so glad to have you and many of your big-city kind descending on us small town folk in just a few days' time! For the special occasion, us locals have tucked our old pickup trucks into the garage and will exclusively be driving our Teslas. You will be able to detect us by the Gucci emblems we have Sharpie-markered on top of our Target purses. Don't hesitate to say, “Hi”, just be careful not to rub up against our accessories — those darn markers are known to smudge!

Now. As to your very important question. Decent cups of coffee are so crucial to life, are they not? Just the other day my best friend was like, “Choose. Your Botox or your ‘spresso.” And I kid you not, Heidi, I told her just as serious as a game of drinking Scrabble, “Girl, I will snap off every one of your press-on nails if you talk to me like that again.”

So I understand your need, and I come bearing good tidings! I am told by the Waco experts who run this magazine that within this city we now have 20 (that's 2-0!) coffee shops! By coffee shops I mean buildings that employ makers of espresso! Servers of the caffeine! Angels of the bean!

If I might take a gander, Heidi, I'm betting your next question is whether the java slingers at these 20

shops know how to make coffee in just the way your favorite Houston barista does. I did not have to confer with experts to confirm no two baristas are going to make the exact same cup of coffee, and this is due to the fact that even though algorithms are working overtime to make it not so, humans are still distinct and unique creatures. What we make, even if by a 1/bazillionth degree, reflects this wonder within our nature.

Given this truth, I see two courses of action for you, Heidi. And I've got fingers crossed for which you'll choose. Option one: You remain in Houston and invest every last dollar you have in maintaining a controlled environment where you will not encounter change, risk disappointment, or — the opposite of the latter — encounter bigger and better. Once you've conquered keeping coffee in this zone of control, you might be able to move on and control every other aspect of your day as well.

Option two: You take a risk and come to Waco. You stay in a hotel the night before the eclipse, and when you wake the next morning, you walk to a coffee shop with mind open to what the day — and the coffee — might bring.

Heidi, I am not a predictor of the future. But I believe if you choose option two, the most incredible thing might occur that day: There might be a moment when your entire view of the world flips on its head. When the sky will darken, and the sun will be hidden. When all that you think gives you light falls into question. In that small window of time, in our little town of Waco, the question will be yours, mine, and all of our Goocee-markering, car-upgrading, is-this-town-too-small-for-me wondering souls to answer: Have we been spending time worrying about coffee when there are bigger issues passing right over our heads?

— *Love, Boots*
