

## Time to Set Sail



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When reflecting on his transit of Venus experience in 1639, Jeremiah Horrocks wrote that he wanted to tell more people about the imminent celestial event but was hindered by two things. First, he wished he had had more time. Don't we all—a little more time to tell a few more people who might appreciate knowing about this rare Sun-Venus-Earth alignment. It was as if Horrocks sensed having privileged information about the workings of the firmament that he wanted to share.

Second, Horrocks lamented that he had to compete with sports. In *Venus in Sole Visa* he wrote, "I hope to be excused for not informing other of my friends of the expected phenomenon, but most of them care little for trifles of this kind, preferring rather their hawks and their hounds." As I have said in [my stump speech](#) in the past few months, we are still competing with those hawks and hounds. I sympathize with Horrocks and share his sentiment.

If we as a nation want to prosper through math and science, then we need to celebrate math and science in action. The 2012 transit of Venus is a celebration of our ability to understand our place in the cosmos. We say we want to have a nation of critical thinkers capable of making informed decisions. So let's take that first step of science and observe. Witness nothing less than the solar system in motion, and extrapolate the passing of a planet in front of our star to the distant points of light in our night sky.

As we on earth get ready to watch the 2012 transit of Venus, [astronaut Don Pettit has been preparing](#) to capture the experience from his perch on the International Space Station (ISS). With great zeal, Pettit has undertaken a personal mission to photograph the transit on his own time, apart from the official ISS timeline. Pettit's story is just one of the many that I wish I had time to convey, but I've run out of earthly rotations to do it full justice.

Even if I were given the time, I'd only find more items to overload my calendar. Consider a small sampling of recent others waiting to be told... Irvin Stanley was an assistant photographer to the Kerguelen Island and Patagonia expeditions of the US Naval Observatory who twice committed to the rigors and travails of shipboard travel, a huge tradition itself in the transit of Venus narrative. I wanted to write more about Stanley. I wish I'd had more time to promote the program celebrating the [transit of Venus in Timor-Leste](#). I just saw this [fabulous plate](#) from observations in Guadalajara, Mexico, courtesy of Durruty Jesús de Alba Martínez. I would like to learn about the [1769 Transit of Venus Observatory in Lewes, Delaware](#). I wish I could have delivered a sample of beer to the Transit of Venus Real Ale Competition coordinated by [David Henckel](#). These are just a handful of the stories told by and about people inspired by the transit of Venus.

We're on the cusp of the [last transit of Venus in the 21st century](#), a celestial happenstance that could be that singular event in a young person's life that inspires them to look deeper into some natural wonder. I hope our efforts have produced fertile ground to nurture such notions. I'd like to wax poetic about the transit of Venus and its implications for us who are fortunate enough to experience it, but time and the planets march on.

If you are in northern Indiana, I invite you to join the [TROVE celebration](#) with me. I'll be at Bittersweet School in Mishawaka, IN, through first and second contacts before heading to Warren Dunes State Park in Sawyer, Michigan. There I want to watch the sun set over Lake Michigan, reminiscent of the iconic Nitzschke image with sailing ships on the horizon, shown above. Afterward, we head to The Livery microbrewery in Benton Harbor, MI, to close out this subtle yet sublime spectacle. You can follow our celebration there at 11:00 p.m. EDT on the live [Slooh broadcast](#). Just before midnight, the ISS soars nearly overhead.

It's time for this ship to set sail. Thanks to all who have been so supportive, a tome unto itself. See you on the other side.

