1)

Transits of Venus occur in close pairs which take place over one hundred years apart. The most recent two were in 2004 and 2012. The next two are due in 2117 and 2125. Observations of the transits used to be very important scientifically as they helped estimate the Earth’s distance from the Sun. In fact, one of the tasks assigned Captain James Cook during his first voyage was to observe the phenomenon in 1769.&nbsp;&#x2666;&nbsp;One potentially fatal difficulty in any astronomical observations is a cloudy sky. A few famous (and costly) expeditions in the past failed for that prosaic reason. Here is the weather forecast map on the day before the transit of 06/05/2012. If you are on the East coast, as I was, and want to see the event over water (for unobstructed views), where do you think would you want to be?

2)

What's a man to do? Heading 350 miles south to Virginia Beach, VA.

3)

It took exactly 200 miles and essentially a different country, but the Sun did show up!

4)

Alas! On the morning of the transit, I am testing the equipment in my hotel room in Virginia Beach to a mostly cloudy sky. I am worried ...

5)

It's 2pm. My heart is sinking. Not only it is cloudy - it is drizzling. According to the forecast, it was supposed to be partly cloudy at 12pm. Venus will enter the Sun's disk in 4hrs. The clouds don't seem to be moving. I am heading north. It looks a little brighter there ...

6)

Yes!!! The clouds parted 30 miles north!

7)

According to my Android, there is a recreational park a few miles north of Cape Charles, VA. On the way there I see a strange vehicle - a combine harvester completely unaware of the rare celestial commotion ...

8)

I am in the Indiantown Recreational Park which the Providence mercifully exposed to the Sun by pulling the cloud carpet. Very few people here; nobody bothers me. I set up my gear and wait for 1.5 hour. Things look good, finally! Note that observations of the Sun can only be done with the help of special filters. I purchased those a month before the transit. I was lucky—three weeks before the event, telescope filters were impossible to buy anywhere. Direct observation would result in blindness.

9)

It's 5:51pm, 12 minutes before the transit - no Venus yet; just the Sun spots. I am still in Indiantown Park. It was the last image I was able to take there. The clouds shut the view just about when Venus appeared. My heart sinking again, I headed back south asking my "ghetto cruiser" for help once more ...

10)

I had to work very hard to get this cloud free view. I drove south chasing the northern edge of a 20 mile opening in the clouds. As the opening moved south, I managed to outpace it, and stopped on a roadside. I took out the equipment and shot a few pictures. Soon, the cloud blanket arrived forcing me to head south again. Overall, I took pictures from three places. This particular one was taken in Cape Charles, VA at 6:45pm. I used only my camera and a special filter (as opposed to a telescope); the result is comparable to pictures I took during the previous transit in 2004.

11)

This picture was taken 10 minutes later (6:55pm) through my telescope in Cape Charles, VA. I learned how to operate the setup only in the morning that day and applied the knowledge in the early evening. One can see here the majestic Venus and several Sun spots partially obscured by the clouds. I don't think there were too many places in the Eastern United States where such pictures could be taken - rain and clouds dominated.

12)

No clouds this time. The gears of the Universe are working flawlessly. This picture was taken at 7:40pm from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in Virginia (an amazing structure in itself – a bridge which is 18 miles long!)

13)

This picture was taken 8:10pm form the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Because the Sun is setting the atmospheric distortions are amplified and, as a result, the shape of Venus is irregular. Notice the silhouette of an airliner under the planet. I am not sure if my telescope was able to resolve such a small detail – perhaps a special adjustment could have been made that I was not aware of. In the end, I did not manage to obtain a clearer picture of the plane.

14)

Sunset. Europeans will now see their share of the transit ...

15)

My wish was mercifully granted on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge ...

16)

On the way back, but not quite in New York yet ... Somewhere up route 13 in Virginia. My "ghetto cruiser" (Lincoln Towncar 1991) has served me with distinction putting 815 miles in total expedition driving.