

February 2026

Meetings at Highland Road Park Observatory and online through YouTube and Jitsi

<https://meet.jit.si/brasmeet>

Calendar:

- 31 January, 5PM: BREC's light up the night event at Zachary community park
- 9 February, 7PM: BRAS meeting at HRPO
- 11 February, 7PM: LSU's Astronomy on Tap at The Varsity
- 20 February, 9:30AM: Port Hudson STEAM event
- 21 February, 7:30PM: LSU's Star Party at Landolt Observatory
- 23 February, 6PM: Sidewalk Astronomy at Gonzalez Library, Main Branch
- 24 February, 6PM: Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe
- 6 March, 7:30PM: MOON at HRPO
- 7 March, 9AM: BREC's Rockin' at The Swamp
- 25 April: International Astronomy Day

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President's Message

Hi Everyone,

First of all, I was thrilled to see so many members make it out for our January meeting. I don't know if it was everybody's New Year's Resolution or what, but we love seeing you all out there and hope we can continue to have as much participation in the coming months.

As you'll see in my Outreach notes, we've been fairly busy this year already. But I wanted to mention here something I didn't mention in the Outreach notes that had to do with our outing to Westdale Heights Academic Middle [WHAM (ed.)] School.

Many of our members will remember Wally Pursell, one of our founding members, who passed several years ago. One of the items he left to the club was his homemade 10" Dobsonian telescope. It's a wonderful scope and he adorned the tube with constellations to add a bit of flair to it.

Wally was a huge advocate of educational outreach and he never missed a STEAM [Science Technology Engineering Arts and Mathematics (ed.)] night at WHAM. With that in mind, we were finally able to follow through with the idea to donate his scope to the school so he will always be there in spirit helping to bring astronomy to the students and their families. The telescope I was using in a picture from the event in the Outreach notes is the one he built and is now at its new home at WHAM. I'm looking forward to many more years being able to pull it out with them to see what we can see. I know Wally would be happy to know it's getting used again.

In other news, we had a great response for t-shirts to be ordered and we're working on getting that order filled. We'll let you know as soon as we have them!

Also, we're one step closer to improving our live-streaming for those that would like to attend our monthly meetings virtually. (We DO have some members out-of-state and also some members that just can't make the trek to the Observatory each month.) We've got approval from LSU [Louisiana State University (ed.)] to utilize their internet connections and they've made some space for us where we need it. Hopefully soon we'll get the hardware all put in the right places and we'll get it up and running.

A little more about that plan...when we have the updated system up and running, the plan is to discontinue the use of the Jitsi platform. We will instead live-stream only to our YouTube channel. The quality should be much better and any of our online audience still has the ability to send comments or questions via the "chat" function on YouTube. (This is similar to what we've been seeing Astronomy on Tap do with their live-streams and it seems to work very well.)

We'll let you know as soon as it is up and running!

Enough yacking from me! I hope you have a great month. Eat plenty of King Cake and read the rest of this newsletter to see what's coming up for the club.

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

President



Ben poses with WHAM's new home-made 10" scope.

Vice President's Word

Despite the weather deciding to take the weekends off, it looks like we got quite a bit done during January. And while three event had to be canceled, we made it work for four others, including, hands down, one of the best evenings for observation during January—and we were happy to share it with everyone who dropped by the WHAM STEAM event for 2026 (I heard the Raby's were there too, but I didn't manage to get over there before they finished pushing their rock and left). We even managed a pretty good turn out for our last meeting, and a number of people stuck around afterward to do some observing or imaging, which is something we'd definitely like to see more of. As a reminder, club members are welcome to bring their kit (or use some of ours) on the night of Baton Rouge Astronomical Society (BRAS) meeting. Weather permitting, we try to keep the observatory open until 10PM on those nights and, as much as we'd like to see you inside with the main program, if you'd rather spend that time observing, hey, have at.

As mentioned last time, we're bringing the (Members Only Observing Night) MOON back to Highland Road Park Observatory) HRPO: we have the observatory reserved for a members only night on Friday, 6 March after the conclusion of the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) programing, which ends at dark. From dusk on until at least ten, we'll keep the observatory open for members to bring out their gear (or use some club gear) to do some imaging or observing from the comfort of the observatory grounds.

One thing we never got around to last month was talking about ideas to get groups together in a darker space to do some observing: this is a tough task, but it is doable. We'll try to get some discussions of what we should do started at this meeting. For now, we know there will be a club trip to a dark sky site in March, and Don will start taking names at the February meeting to reserve spots.



Members gather at HRPO on 12 January 2026 and remember the outreach efforts of Dr. Guzik.



Scott and Ben use the best weather night of January to show Jupiter and Saturn to the students, families, and faculty of WHAM.



From BREC's Highland Road Park community event: Chad tries to find a planet, Trey, Coy and David hope for the best, and Coy shows images of what they might have seen if the weather had been better.

Outreach Report

Hi Everyone,

We're off to a (mostly) great start! (I say "mostly" because as of my writing this, our two Sidewalk Astronomy events on the 26th and 27th of January are facing some icy weather so they may or may not have happened.)

Back to the point, we're off to a great start with our outreach for 2026. We've already logged 4 events and if all goes well, we'll have logged 7 in total for January. Included in those events were Chris R. doing some Solar Observing outreach at Moncus Park in Lafayette; Trey and Erin A. doing some outreach assisting a Girl Scout troop with their astronomy badges; Chad, Coy, Trey and David doing their best to show off some cool stuff through cloud cover at BREC's Light Up The Night Fest; and Scott and Ben being mobbed by middle schoolers at the WHAM STEAM night.

As always, thank you so much to our volunteers. It really does make a big impact in the community and also helps to get the name of our club out there attached to a nice reputation.

Coming up, we've got plenty more opportunities for you to join in on the fun! In addition to our regular Sidewalk Astronomy endeavors, we have another Light Up The Night Fest event at the end of January and we've also been invited back to Port Hudson, the Bluebonnet Swamp and Nature Center and the Baton Rouge Zoo. (We're also in talks with the Louisiana Art and Science Museum and LIGO [Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (ed.)] about more outreach opportunities with them.)

I hope you'll take a look at the list below and say, "You know? I'm going to volunteer for one of these events and see if he's telling the truth about them being fun." We'd love to see you out there and I'm certain you'd find it a fulfilling way to spend time with your love of astronomy.

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

Outreach Chairperson



Trey and Erin speak teaching Astronomy to local Girl Scouts.

Upcoming Events

Saturday, January 31st

5pm-9pm

Zachary Community Park

Light Up The Night Fest

(Sidewalk Astronomy type viewing)



Friday, February 20th

9:30am-12pm

Port Hudson Historic Site School Days

(Multiple people needed for demos and Solar Observing)



Monday, February 23rd

6pm-7:30pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Ascension Parish Library-Gonzales



Tuesday, February 24th

6pm-9pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe



Saturday, March 7th

9am-4pm

Rockin' At The Swamp

Bluebonnet Swamp and Nature Center

(Multiple people needed for demos and Solar Observing. Shifts are welcome.)

From the December Perkin's Rowe: Top, Jim, Chad, and Chris (Jim's son) prepare for the night and Rory, Ben, and Scott talk shop. Row2: First timer Jaden thrills the children with stellar delights and Chad shows Jupiter to a young Catholic High student who thought we were on the news (big thumbs up to you too, my guy), Row3: Chad talks with some astronomy enthusiasts and Coy breaks out his new toy for the crowds. Bottom, Scott takes the Seestar to another galaxy and Don gets absolutely overrun by every last child awake and out at that hour, apparently.

Secretary's Summary

There were 38 people in attendance at the January meeting.

Melanie Templet and Merrill Hess shared memories of Dr. Greg Guzik, one of the founders of the High Road Park Observatory. Dr. Guzik passed away in August 2025. Ben Toman showed photos depicting Dr. Guzik at the observatory and on one of his trips to Antarctica where he conducted cosmic ray detection experiments. Dr. Guzik was praised for his leadership, vision, and passion for teaching others to teach astronomy.

Members showed off some of their new gadgets during "Show and Tell." Coy Wagoner displayed his new Sky-Watcher Flextube 300P SynScan GoTo Collapsible Dobsonian telescope. John Nagle showed off his new optical spanner wrench used for adjusting optics for binoculars and telescopes. Trey Anding got a Seestar S30 for Christmas and the book, "13 Journeys Through Space and Time," featuring classic Christmas Lectures from the Royal Institution. Scott Cadwallader showed off an AstroHopper phone mount which secures a smartphone to a telescope, turning it into a smart finderscope using the phone's sensors [go to <https://artyom-beilis.github.io/astrohopper.html> on your smartphone's browser to try it for yourself]

Steven Tilley talked about theasteroidnews.com, a webpage (and Facebook page) he developed to provide calm, factual information regarding asteroids as an alternative to the sensational clickbait often seen regarding near Earth approaches.

Ben talked about some of the upcoming outreach events (outlined in the January newsletter and other emails). LIGO has expressed interest in having us back after our successful outing last November. BREC's Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center also wants us back for "Rockin' at the Swamp" on March 7th. Louisiana Art & Science Museum's new Director of Education & Aerospace, Krystal Swain, also looks forward to having us back at LASM.

Ben put out a sign-up sheet for ordering club T-shirts. Prices vary depending on the type of shirt selected. Ben also talked about two online astronomy courses and a trip to Spain in 2027 to view the next total solar eclipse. For more info, see Ben's email dated January 12th. Ben reminded everyone to pay their 2026 dues.

Don Weinell talked about the Star Party at Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge scheduled for 13-March. The cost is \$10 per night/per person. There are 3-4 beds in each room, and each room has its own adjoining bathroom. Each attendee must have a Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries license or permit to attend. The site is also excellent for birding and there is an alligator farm nearby. Don will have a sign-up sheet available at our February meeting.

Three Hot Springs National Park 2024 Solar Eclipse posters were raffled off and won by Troy Brown, Karen DesRoches and Hayley Franklin. Hayley also won a book, "A Beginner's Guide to Amateur Astronomy."

Several members took advantage of clear skies to do some stargazing with telescopes after the meeting. Scott opened up the 20-inch telescope at the top of the observatory.

Observatory Notes

ARTEMIS II LAUNCH PARTY

Friday 6 February from 6:30pm to 10:30pm

for all ages / no admission fee

This test flight will be the first of the Artemis Program to have human beings on board: NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch; and Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen. These four brave souls will travel over 7000 kilometers *beyond the Moon!*

This trip is expected to last about ten days. Celebration is in order, and HRPO will provide it!

SCIENCE ACADEMY

Saturdays from 10am to 12pm.

for Cadets aged eight to twelve / \$5 per Cadet per week (\$6 if out-of-parish)

advanced registration via [WebTrac](#) strongly recommended

[activity #431320] / parents may stay with or leave Cadet

Four Cadet minimum and sixteen Cadets maximum per session.

7 February = “ISS Expedition 13”

14 February = “The Mercury Program”

21 February = “Hello, Operator!”

EVENING SKY VIEWING

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Saturdays (7, 21 and 28 February) from 7:30pm to 10pm

Fridays (13 and 27 February) from 8:30pm to 10pm

HRPO houses a 50-cm reflector, a 40-cm reflector and several smaller telescopes to bring the majesty of the night sky to the public. Trained operators, sharing duties via a rotating roster, work throughout the year in shifts. Each operator has a pre-planned list of objects to highlight. However, requests will be taken if there is time and if all present have viewed the previous target.

BATON ROUGE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY MEETING

Monday 9 February from 7pm to 9pm

for ages fourteen and older / no admission fee

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

7:30pm / for ages twelve and older / no admission fee

13 February = “2025—The Space Year in Review” Tradition continues, with HRPO’s cornerstone program looking back at the discoveries, advances and celestial events of the previous year.

27 February = “150 Years of the Telephone” Although many learned personages had truly crummy predictions regarding the invention’s future in society, the telephone revolutionized the possibilities of long-distance communication.

PLUS NIGHT: “Love in the Ether”

Saturday 14 February from 7pm to 10pm

for ages six and older / no admission fee / binocular recommended

During Plus Nights and extra features are available to the public...

- *The well-known marshmallow roast takes place at the campfire ring (weather-dependng).
- *Seven to ten of HRPO’s collection of over sixty physical science demonstrations will be on hand to perplex and amaze. Which demos will it be?
- *An unaided eye sky tour takes place, showing the public major features of the sky for that month.
- *Filters are inserted into the viewing mechanisms, to show patrons “hidden” details of the Moon, Mars and Jupiter (when they are available).
- *Reveal your age, and be shown any “birth stars” in the sky at that time.

MERCURIAN ELONGATION

Thursday 19 February from 5:30pm to 7pm

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Periodically, Mercury reaches its greatest angular separation in the sky (elongation) from the Sun. This is the safest way for amateurs to view Mercury. Come join us at the Burbank Soccer Complex! The planet will appear as a “half-Mercury”. A waxing crescent Moon, Jupiter and Saturn will also be seen!

AMERICAN STEM: A QUARTER-MILLENNIAL CELEBRATION

Fridays from 5:45pm to 9:45pm

for ages twelve and older / no admission fee

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>20 February [1776-1826]</i> | <i>1 May [1926-1976]</i> |
| <i>13 March [1826-1876]</i> | <i>22 May [1976-2026]</i> |
| <i>3 April [1876-1926]</i> | <i>12 June [2026-2076]</i> |

The great Constitutional Republic experiment has been going strong for 250 years. In addition to incalculable gifts in the areas of human rights and the arts, the United States educational and capitalist and social systems (and our international partnerships) have generated enormous accomplishments in STEM fields.

[This series will follow the Community Discussion format rather than the Lecture format.]

SOLAR VIEWING

Saturday 28 February from 12pm to 2pm

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Weather permitting, viewing of the Sun's image in four different manners—transferred onto a white surface, directly with optical light, directly in hydrogen-alpha wavelength and directly via Calcium K wavelength—will take place. Protective clothing and sunscreen are recommended.

STEM EXPANSION: “Astronomy for Personalized Advancement”

Saturday 28 February from 2:30pm to 6:30pm

for ages twelve to sixteen / \$15 each per in-parish registrant; \$18 each per out-of-parish registrant. Advanced registration via [WebTrac](#) required [activity #431321].

This program offers advanced topics, topic extensions and all-new games and activities to an older crowd. Certificates will be earned, and a section of archived experiments, some *never* performed on site, take place. There are also giveaways and door prizes.

SPRING SPACE EXPLORATION CAMP

Tuesday 7 April and Wednesday 8 April (8am to 5pm daily)

for ages nine to thirteen / \$55 per EBR-Parish child; \$66 per other-Parish child)

[activity #531880] / limit thirty Explorers / Registration begins 7 February.

All materials are supplied; Explorers will need a sack lunch and drink that does not require refrigeration. Explorers will also need to bring a hat and sunscreen.

INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMY DAY

Saturday 25 April from 3pm to 11pm

for age six and older / no admission fee

The greatest IAD event in the region returns! Once again, expect visitors and interactions involving amateur radio, gems and minerals, Earth nature, the latest in popular STEM publications, and non-visible light investigations of the Universe. A deep-sky tour, a lunar tour, solar viewing and a chemistry demonstration will also take place. Don't forget the Renaissance Sundial! Mark your calendar and don't miss it!

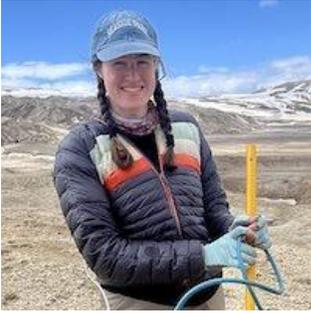
Quick Picks—Events for February

- Sun 1 Beehive 1.3°S of [Moon](#)
- Sun 1 [Full Moon](#)
- Mon 2 Regulus 0.4°S of [Moon](#)
- Sat 7 Spica 1.8°N of [Moon](#)
- Mon 9 [Last Quarter Moon](#)
- Tue 10 [Moon](#) Apogee at 404,577 km.
- Tue 10 Antares 0.7°N of [Moon](#)
- Tue 17 [New Moon](#)
- Tue 17 Annular Solar Eclipse - Mag: 0.963
- Wed 18 Occultation of [Mercury](#) by the Moon
- Thu 19 [Mercury](#) at Perihelion
- Thu 19 [Mercury](#) at Greatest Eastern Elongation - 18.10°
- Thu 19 [Saturn](#) 4.6°S of [Moon](#)
- Mon 23 Pleiades 1.2°S of [Moon](#)
- Tue 24 [First Quarter Moon](#)
- Tue 24 [Moon](#) Perigee at 370,132 km.
- Fri 27 [Jupiter](#) 4.0°S of [Moon](#)
- Fri 27 Pollux 3.0°N of [Moon](#)
- Fri 27 [Mercury](#) 4.5° of [Venus](#)
- Sat 28 Beehive 1.3°S of [Moon](#)

Events courtesy of Telescopius.com. All events are from Greenwich, check Stellarium.com for local times.

Looking up

March 2026 Total Lunar Eclipse: Your Questions Answered



Caela Barry

JAN 29, 2026

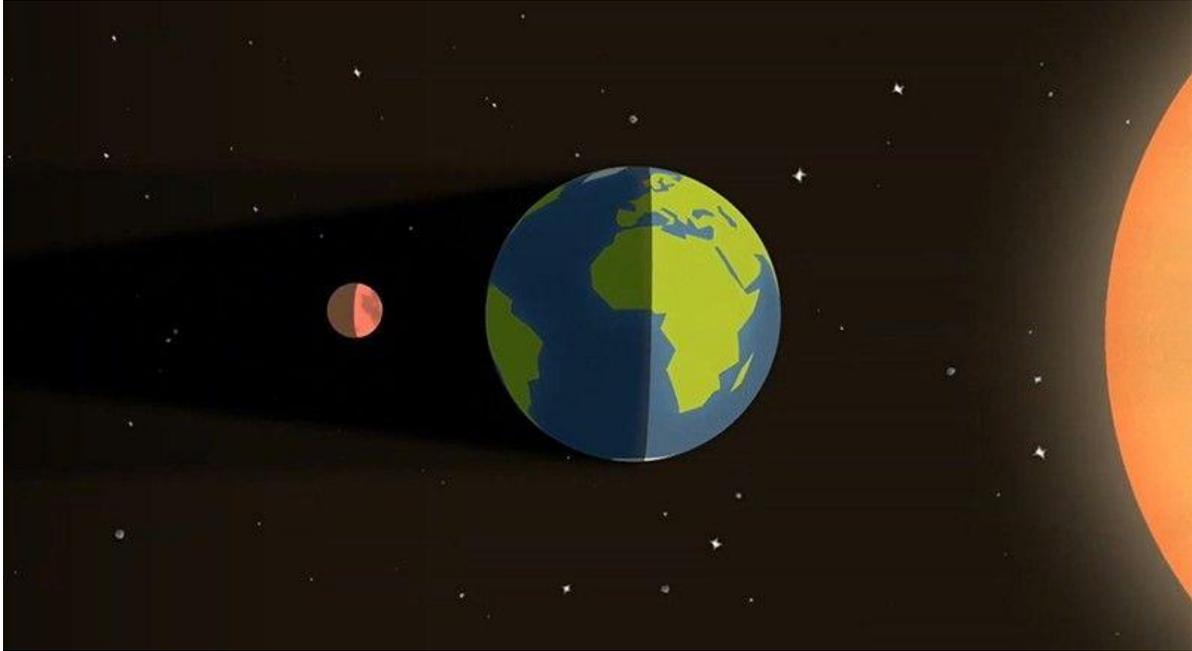
[HTTPS://SCIENCE.NASA.GOV/SOLAR-SYSTEM/MOON/MARCH-2026-TOTAL-LUNAR-ECLIPSE-YOUR-QUESTIONS-ANSWERED/](https://science.nasa.gov/solar-system/moon/march-2026-total-lunar-eclipse-your-questions-answered/)

On Tuesday, March 3, 2026, a total lunar eclipse will take place across several time zones. In this data visualization, the Moon moves from right to left, passing through Earth's shadow and leaving in its wake an eclipse diagram with the times (in UTC) at various stages of the eclipse. Credit: [NASA's Scientific Visualization Studio](#)

A total lunar eclipse will redden the Moon on March 3, 2026. Here's what you need to know.

How does a lunar eclipse work?

A lunar eclipse occurs when Earth passes directly between the Sun and Moon, casting a gigantic shadow across the lunar surface and turning the Moon a deep reddish-orange. This alignment can only occur during a full Moon phase.

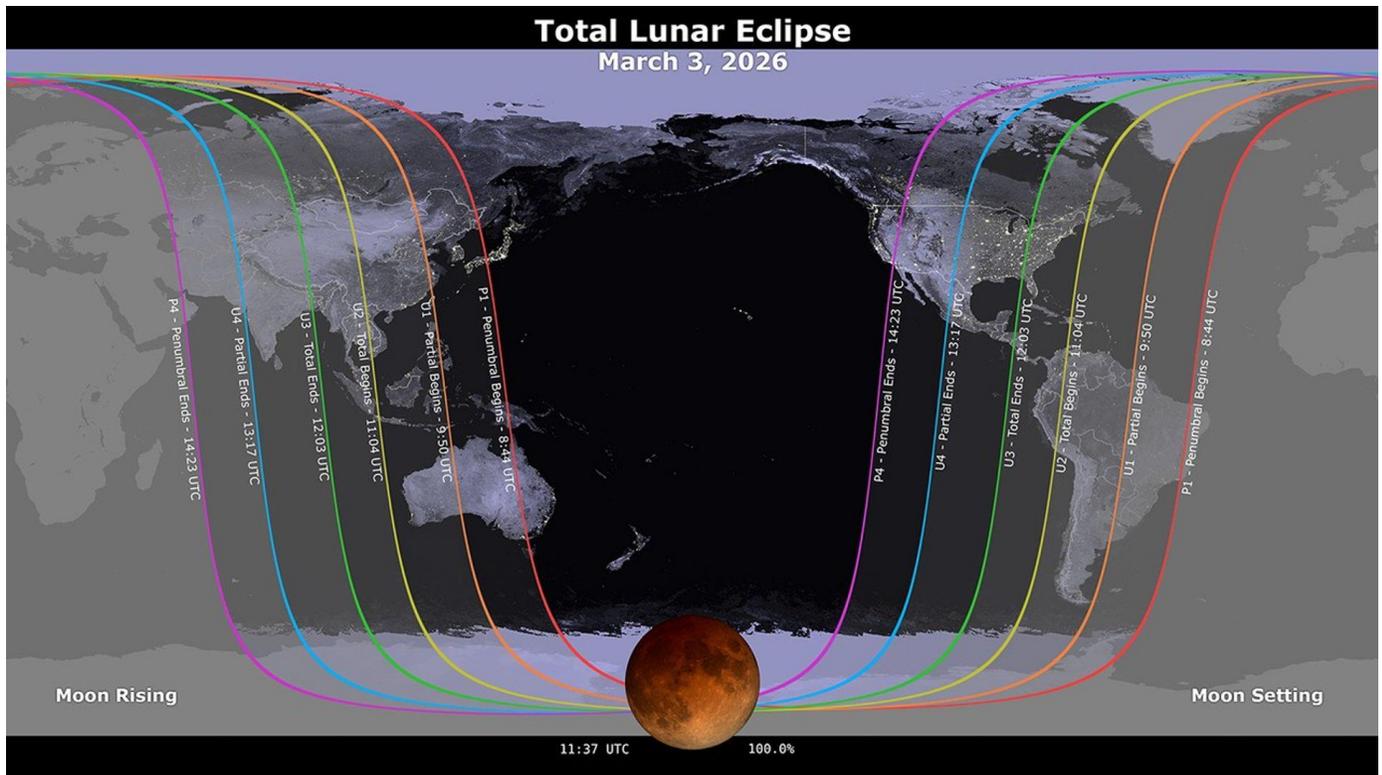


Alignment of the Moon, Earth, and Sun during a lunar eclipse (not to scale).
NASA's Scientific Visualization Studio

How can I observe the eclipse?

You can observe a lunar eclipse without any special equipment. All you need is a line of sight to the Moon! For a more dramatic observing experience, seek a dark environment away from bright lights. Binoculars or a telescope can also enhance your view.

On March 3, totality will be visible in the evening from eastern Asia and Australia, throughout the night in the Pacific, and in the early morning in North and Central America and far western South America. The eclipse is partial in central Asia and much of South America. No eclipse is visible in Africa or Europe.



Map showing where the March 3, 2026 lunar eclipse is visible. Contours mark the edge of the visibility region at eclipse contact times, labeled in UTC.

NASA's [Scientific Visualization Studio](#)

What can I expect to see?

Milestone:	What's happening:
<p>Penumbral eclipse begins (12:44 a.m. PST, 3:44 a.m. EST, 8:44 UTC)</p>	<p>The Moon enters the Earth's penumbra, the outer part of the shadow. The Moon begins to dim, but the effect is quite subtle.</p>
<p>Partial eclipse begins (1:50 a.m. PST, 4:50 a.m. EST, 9:50 UTC)</p>	<p>The Moon begins to enter Earth's umbra and the partial eclipse begins. To the naked eye, as the Moon moves into the umbra, it looks like a bite is being taken out of the lunar disk. The part of the Moon inside the umbra appears very dark.</p>
<p>Totality begins (3:04 a.m. PST, 6:04 a.m. EST, 11:04 UTC)</p>	<p>The entire Moon is now in the Earth's umbra. The Moon is tinted a coppery red. Try binoculars or a telescope for a better view. If you want to take a photo, use a camera on a tripod with exposures of at least several seconds.</p>

Totality ends (4:03 a.m. PST, 7:03 a.m. EST, 12:03 UTC)

As the Moon exits Earth's umbra, the red color fades. It looks as if a bite is being taken out of the opposite side of the lunar disk from before.

Partial eclipse ends (5:17 a.m. PST, 8:17 a.m. EST, 13:17 UTC)

The whole Moon is in Earth's penumbra, but again, the dimming is subtle.

Penumbral eclipse ends (6:23 a.m. PST, 9:23 a.m. EST, 14:23 UTC)

The eclipse is over.

Why is a lunar eclipse sometimes called a “blood Moon”?

During a total lunar eclipse, the Moon appears dark red or orange. This is because our planet blocks most of the Sun's light from reaching the Moon, and the light that does reach the lunar surface is filtered through a thick slice of Earth's atmosphere. It's as if all of the world's sunrises and sunsets are projected onto the Moon.

Learn more: [Why does the Moon turn red during a solar eclipse?](#)

Data visualization showing a telescopic view of the Moon as the March 2026 total lunar eclipse unfolds. Credit: [NASA's Scientific Visualization Studio](#)

What else can I observe on the night of the eclipse?

As Earth's shadow dims the lunar surface, constellations may be easier to spot than they usually are during a full Moon. At the time of the eclipse, the Moon will be in the constellation Leo, under the lion's hind paws.

Several days later, on March 8, look for a “conjunction” of Venus and Saturn: from our perspective on Earth, these two planets will appear close to each other in the sky (though they'll still be very distant from each other in space).

Visit our [What's Up guide](#) for more skywatching tips, and find lunar observing recommendations for each day of the year in our [Daily Moon Guide](#).

Caela Barry / Ernie Wright

NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

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