

4 Supermoon Spectacles Follow This Year's Rare Solar Eclipse

Get ready for four bright celestial events in the coming months as the season of the supermoons kicks off next week. It's a quartet of supermoons that includes a partial lunar eclipse, coming during a year where the U.S. already paused to mark a rare solar eclipse.

Earth's constant companion will put on a show, growing brighter and brighter starting Monday as it draws closer to our planet than normal.

According to NASA, the August full moon is a supermoon – and in this case, it's a "Blue Moon". It happens on August 19 at 2:26 PM EDT. At that point, the Moon will be 224,917 miles away from us.

The Moon will appear full for three days, from Sunday morning through early Wednesday morning.

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"The first recorded use of 'Blue Moon' in English dates from 1528. Speculations on the origin of the term include an old English phrase that means 'betrayal Moon' (because it led to mistakes in setting the dates for Lent and Easter). Or it may be a comparison to rare events such as when dust in the atmosphere makes the Moon actually appear blue," NASA explains.

Then the string of lunar spectacles extends to September when a supermoon will coincide with a partial lunar eclipse. The Moon will be nearly 3,000 miles closer to Earth the night of

September 17.

During that September supermoon, you'll be able to see the mini-eclipse in much of the Americas, Africa, and Europe. Earth's shadow will cover part of the Moon, looking like someone took a small bite from a round cookie.

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Then, in October, the Moon will appear to be bigger and brighter than at any other time this year. It will be 222,055 miles from Earth.

The supermoon spectacle concludes with one more appearance in November, shortly after the presidential election.

These events occur on schedule due to the Moon's shifting, oval-shaped orbit. For some skywatchers, you might only see the moon as an ordinary-sized full moon. But it will be closer than normal.

It's actually more about the brightness of the moon than a major increase in the visible size – a supermoon can be 30% brighter than average.

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