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Historic lunar eclipse overnight: Here's what you need to know



The Moon during a lunar eclipse in 2000 (NASA)
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(WHSV) - A historic event in the sky will occur in the wee hours of the morning on Friday. We will be witnessing an almost total lunar eclipse. This lunar eclipse will be the longest it almost 700 years, with the partial lunar eclipse lasting 3.5 hours! This event is once in a millennium, the next eclipse of this length will be in just over 550 years!

What is a lunar eclipse?

A lunar eclipse occurs when the Sun, the Earth, and the Moon are aligned up in space. The light that the Moon shines on Earth is from the Sun. In this situation, the Earth gets in the way of the Sun, blocking sunlight to the moon. If this alignment is perfect, a lunar eclipse occurs. If the Earth is close enough to blocking some sunlight that the Moon receives, a partial lunar eclipse occurs.

How often does this happen?

Lunar eclipses are much more common than solar eclipses. On average, there is at least a partial lunar eclipse about three times a year. Lunar eclipses also can be seen by anyone, as long as it is dark out versus a solar eclipse which is very location dependent.



The Moon will be 97% covered at the peak of the eclipse (WHSV)

When is this going to happen?

The upcoming lunar eclipse will almost be a total one with 97% of the Moon being covered by the Earth. If you want to witness it, you'll have to be up very late or wake up very early. The partial eclipse begins at 2:18 am with the peak of the eclipse occurring at 4:03 am. The partial eclipse will end at 5:47 am.

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Where in the sky will I find the moon?

At the time of the partial eclipse, the Moon will be in the western sky. As the eclipse occurs, the Moon will turn a reddish color, much like the sky does during sunrise and sunset. There will be some cloud obstruction that could impact viewing. The Valley has the best chance to see the lunar eclipse, but as you head west through our viewing area towards the Allegheny Mountains those chances decrease.

Aubrey Urbanowicz

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There likely will be some cloud obstructions Friday morning for the eclipse.
I expect the better chance in the Valley
I'm going to say: 30% chance for Alleghenies
50/50 for Potomac Highlands
60% chance for the Valley since the view will be west

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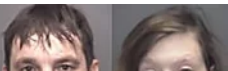
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