

# Moon phase and libration, from the other side

February 9 2015, by Ernie Wright

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A number of people who've seen the [annual lunar phase and libration](#) videos have asked what the other side of the Moon looks like, the side that can't be seen from the Earth. This video answers that question.

Just like the near side, the far side goes through a complete cycle of phases. But the terrain of the far side is quite different. It lacks the large dark spots, called maria, that make up the familiar Man in the Moon on the near side. Instead, craters of all sizes crowd together over the entire far side. The far side is also home to one of the largest and oldest impact features in the solar system, the South Pole-Aitken basin, visible here as a slightly darker bruise covering the bottom third of the disk.

The far side was first seen in a handful of grainy images returned by the Soviet Luna 3 probe, which swung around the Moon in October, 1959. Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter was launched fifty years later, and since then it has returned hundreds of terabytes of data, allowing LRO scientists to create extremely detailed and accurate maps of the far side. Those maps were used to create the imagery seen here.

Provided by NASA

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