

# Pacific Rim sky-gazers ready for lunar eclipse

April 4 2015

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Sky-gazers in part of the Pacific Rim will have the chance to observe an "unusually brief" total eclipse of the Moon on Saturday night.

Weather conditions permitting, the eclipse—which occurs when the Sun, Earth and Moon are lined up so that the Moon passes through the Earth's shadow—may be seen in Japan, Australia, and New Zealand as well as western North America.

In Sapporo, in northern Japan, some 400 people are expected to flock to an observatory to jointly observe "nature's great phenomenon" on Saturday night, an observatory official said.

Fine weather is forecast in northern Japan, while skies are likely to be overcast in other areas, including Tokyo, according to Japan's meteorological agency.

Shin Nihonkai Ferry said it would host an onboard event with more than 100 passengers and the captain would give them a brief lecture about the phenomenon on the deck during the regular ferry service from Hokkaido to Fukui in central Japan.

"The ocean is one of the perfect sites for lunar observation because lights are limited offshore," said Captain Shinya Naoi ahead of the departure.

"I hope many of our passengers will enjoy the rare spectacle," he told

AFP.

Sky and Telescope magazine described the eclipse as "unusually brief".

"The Moon's northeastern edge will remain much brighter than the deep red that is typically seen all across the eclipsed Moon's face," it said.

The [partial eclipse](#) begins at 7:15 pm (1015 GMT) and once the [moon](#) is fully covered by the Earth's umbral shadow, by about 8:54 pm, the eclipse is expected to last for 12 minutes, according to Japan's National Astronomical Observatory.

In Australia, the Sydney Observatory will host a special event with more than 100 guests, live streaming the eclipse direct from its 16-inch north-dome telescope, although sky-watchers could miss out with cloud and increasing rain forecast.

"With totality only being around five minutes long (in Australia), this particular lunar [eclipse](#) will be amongst one of the shortest total lunar eclipses." said Andrew Jacob, the Observatory's curator of astronomy.

"During this time the eclipsed Moon usually takes on a dark reddish colour from the light bent or refracted onto the Moon by the Earth's atmosphere.

"The light is red as other colours such as blue are scattered in all directions leaving red, just as at sunset," he added.

Last month a [solar eclipse](#) was visible to varying degrees across northern Africa, most of Europe, northwest Asia and the Middle East.

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