

Pacific Rim sky-gazers witness 'unusually brief' lunar eclipse

April 4 2015



A total lunar eclipse is seen in Utsunomiya in Tochigi prefecture, 100km north of Tokyo on April 4, 2015

Sky-gazers in parts of the Pacific Rim observed an "unusually brief" total eclipse of the Moon on Saturday night, with the rare red-tinged satellite glimpsed from Japan's far north to the Hollywood Hills.

The eclipse—which occurs when the Sun, Earth and Moon are lined up so that the Moon passes through the Earth's shadow—was seen in

northern Japan, parts of Australia, and parts of western North America.

The [partial eclipse](#) began at 7:15 pm (1015 GMT) in Japan and at around 8:54 pm, the moon was to be fully covered by the Earth's umbral shadow, according to the country's National Astronomical Observatory.

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

In the northern Japanese city of Sapporo, some 200 people flocked to an observatory to jointly observe "nature's great phenomenon" on Saturday night, observatory officials said.

"We were so thrilled to see the beautiful moon eclipsing and turning red," said Yuko Miura, an official at the city's observatory.

"We were worried that the sky was slightly filmy, but we were relieved to watch the totality from beginning to end."

Residents of the Japanese capital, however, missed out as a result of thick clouds, and many gave up on hopes of combining a traditional cherry blossom viewing against the backdrop of the rare phenomenon.

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 total eclipse on the deck during the regular ferry service from Hokkaido to Fukui in central Japan.



A partial lunar eclipse is seen behind fully bloomed cherry blossoms in Utsunomiya in Tochigi prefecture, 100km north of Tokyo on April 4, 2015

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

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

In Australia, rain and clouds affecting much of the east coast meant the eclipse could not be seen at the Sydney Observatory, but sky-watchers further south in Melbourne had a clear night.

"It looked like it should look, quite spectacular if you haven't seen one before," said Perry Vlahos from the Astronomical Society of Victoria.

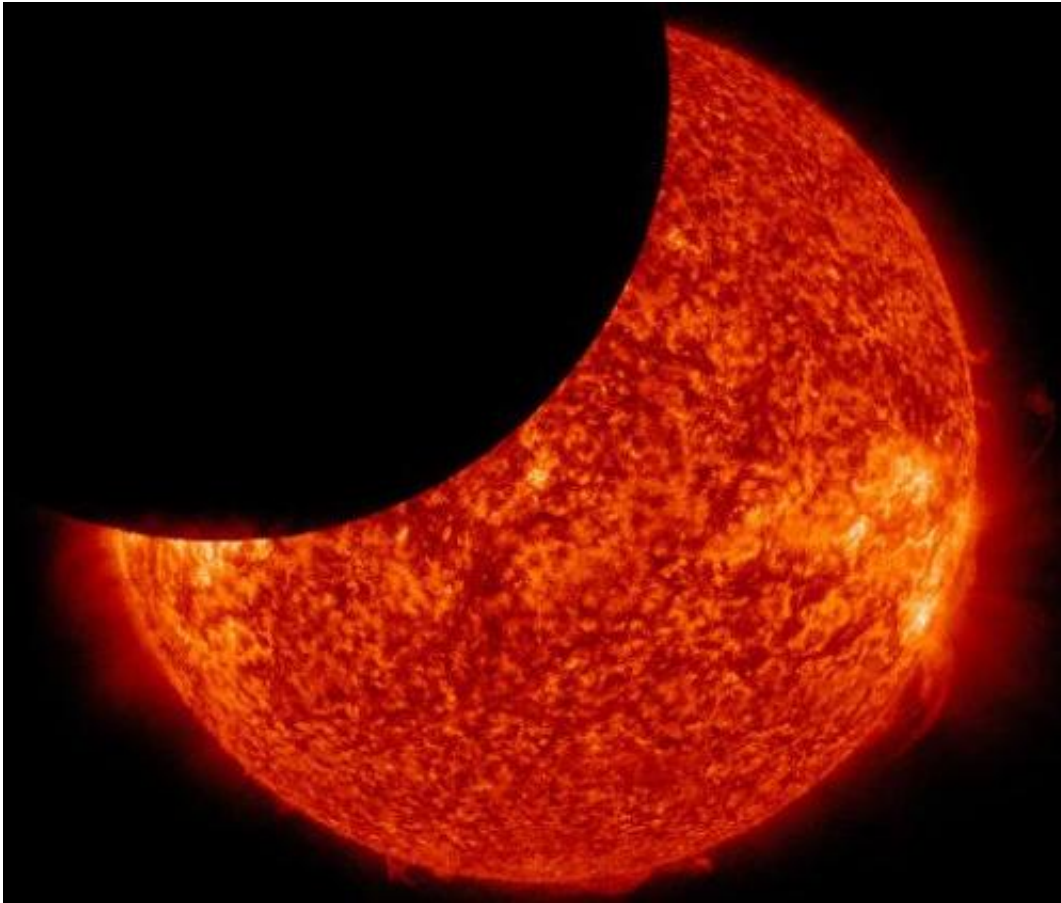


The earth's shadow covers the full moon during a lunar eclipse October 8, 2014 in Washington, DC

The red-tinged [moon](#) was clearly visible in the early morning skies Saturday across the Los Angeles region, casting an eerie pall down Hollywood's deserted streets.

The city's iconic Griffith Park observatory, nestled near the Hollywood sign, was streaming the event live over the Internet.

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



The moon as it moves between NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory, or SDO, and the sun, January 30, 2014

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