

Autumn Skies over the Pinnacles

September, 2026

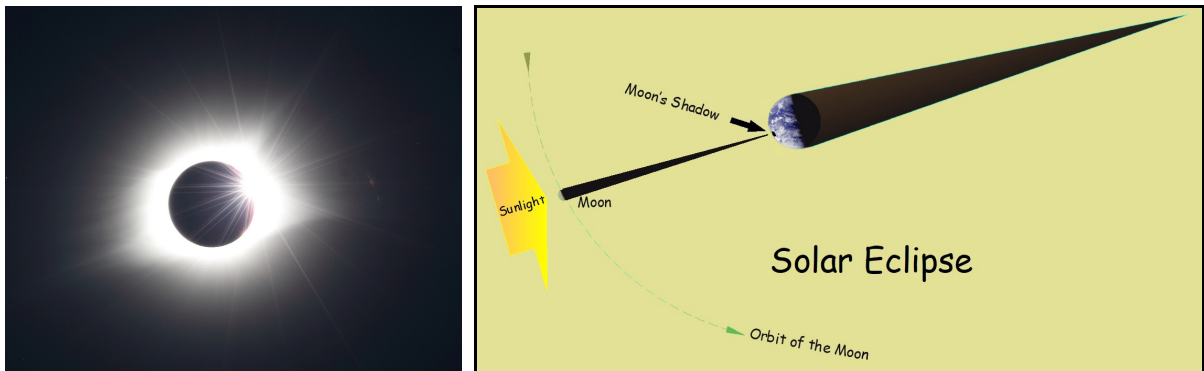
by Jeff Hutton

Fall's four Principal Phases of the Moon

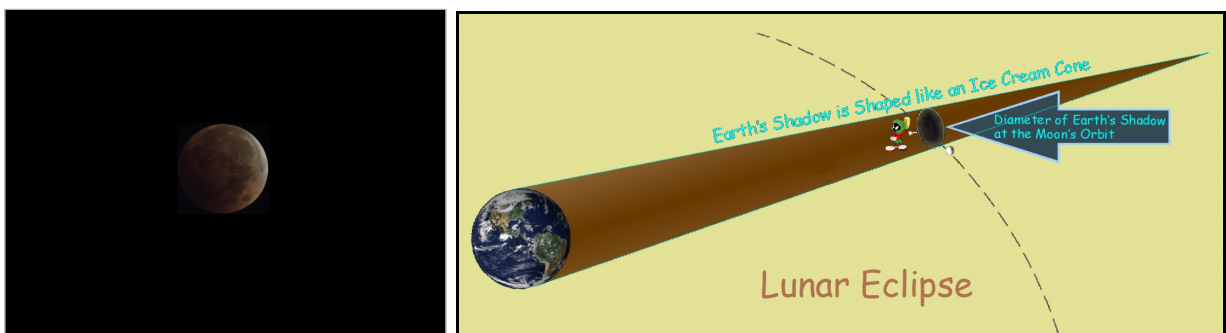
September 4	Last Quarter		October 3	Last Quarter		November 1	Last Quarter	
September 11	New Moon		October 10	New Moon		November 9	New Moon	
September 18	First Quarter		October 18	First Quarter		November 17	First Quarter	
September 26	Full Moon		October 26	Full Moon		November 24	Full Moon	

The Lunar Eclipse of August 26/27 2026

There are two recurring astronomical events that are almost sure to make the news. First, is a solar eclipse. That's when the Moon's orbit carries it between the Sun and some strip of real estate on the Earth. The shadow of the moon can be about 100 miles wide and streak at around a thousand miles an hour along a path as the Moon moves along its orbit and the Earth spins on its axis. Here's a picture of the solar eclipse of 2017.



A lunar eclipse happens when the Moon, traveling on its orbit is carried through the shadow that the Earth makes opposite the sun. The Moon can turn in color from a deep red to bright copper. The image below is how the Moon appeared during the lunar eclipse of January 20/21, 2019.



Which happens more often, solar eclipses or lunar eclipses?

The answer I is that solar eclipses are much more common. The catch is that you may have to travel thousands of miles to place yourself under the shadow of the moon and it charges across land or sea!

When a lunar eclipse occurs, everybody who is experiencing night time can see the spectacle!

On the night of August 26/27 the Moon once again passed through the shadow of the Earth. This time a little bit of the Moon remained in daylight even during the deepest part of the eclipse.

Notes on Experiencing the Lunar Eclipse



My friend, Terry, and I were a little surprised that the outer (penumbral) shadow was apparent as a smudge a little before the predicted start time of 10:35 PM. We heard the usual evening sounds of dogs barking and kids being called home by their parents. The night was warm and with plenty of humidity this late August night. As the minutes passed we saw the face of our Moon slowly disappearing from the lower left. Camera exposures were short, less than 1/500 of a second, the same as taking a daytime picture of some dark object.



Just as things got interesting with the Moon, two other friends, Libby and Roger, joined us. A thing shared is twice a joy. The dew point had been reached and water began forming on every surface, as in a light, cloudless rain. Terry's camera lens required frequent clearing with my portable air blower but my telescope optics, less open to the air, remained clear. The night insect sounds quieted as the spectacle continued. In order to capture the bronze hue from the Earth's darker (umbral) shadow, camera exposure had to be increased to 1/4 second, overexposing the still sunlit sliver of Moon.

It was well after midnight when my friends left me to capture the final hour of the Lunar Eclipse of August, 2026. An advantage of astronomy on your own deck is that you don't have to drive home! I might have turned in, too, but what's another lost hour of sleep? The almost perfect silence seemed to focus my efforts on witnessing the final minutes of this apparition.



Fittingly, September 19 is **International Observe the Moon Night** and Legacy Grove Park is hosting the Pinnacles Astronomy Club for a Moon (and Saturn) party. Stay tuned to the Berea College Forestry Center for more announcements of public star parties this fall and winter.