

# Solar and lunar eclipse a rare pre-Halloween treat

**Neel Roberts**

*The Sky's the Limit*

Since we can remember, shadows have always been scary, but the bright side of that is when the cosmos wants to give a dual celestial show in the same month. Specifically, this October will yield an uncommon partial solar and total lunar darkening within two weeks of each other. We in the West will have a clear view of both, so mark the early morning of Oct. 8 and the afternoon of Oct. 23 to witness the events.

While total lunar eclipses are more common than their solar counter parts, a total solar is headed our way in less than three years. Alberta will catch a good part of it Aug. 21, 2017, but for the ultimate darkness (as in seeing the stars during the day), you'll have to drive south of the border near Idaho Falls. Websites like [www.eclipse2017.org](http://www.eclipse2017.org) and [www.greatamericaneclipse.com](http://www.greatamericaneclipse.com) are just a few with lots of information to help you plan. Considering the last one was almost 30 years ago in 1986 and the next won't be until another nine years in

2026, it's definitely worth taking the day off and making plans to partake in this extreme uncommonness.

## **Sky watch for the next month**

There will be a total lunar eclipse on Wednesday, Oct. 8 starting at 1:17 a.m., peaking at 3:55 a.m. and ending before dawn at 6:32 a.m. Night owls will have a beautiful view if they're willing to stay up overnight.

A partial solar eclipse takes place Thursday, Oct. 23 starting at 1:37 p.m., peaking at 3:45 p.m. and ending before sunset at 5:51 p.m. Be sure to wear proper eye wear as the corona can blind you if viewed directly.

The Orionids Meteor Shower peaks on Tuesday, Oct. 21 for about one to two hours before dawn just to the north of constellation Orion's bright star Betelgeuse. With the second-fastest entry velocity of the annual showers at 10-20 per hour, meteors from the Orionids produce yellow and green colours and have been known to produce an odd fireball. With a near new moon, the dark skies will produce bright meteors.

Did you catch the Zodiacal Light last month? It's a faint, roughly

triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extended up from the vicinity of the sun along the ecliptic or zodiac. The best time to see it is from Monday, Oct. 20 for two weeks in the northeast sky before dawn.

## **Public events for the next month**

Have you checked out our monthly public stargazing sessions at the Tourism and Trek Station this year at all? We've had a great year so far, so don't hesitate to get involved.

We'll talk about solar and lunar eclipses this month on Friday, Oct. 10 starting at 7:30 p.m. A short indoor presentation will be followed by stargazing, weather permitting. Treats and refreshments are provided free of charge, and all welcome.

Experts are on hand the second Friday of every month at 7:30 p.m. to explain the heavens, teach telescoping skills and help you develop your knowledge of our sky. For more information, contact the Tourism and Trek Station at 403-485-2994 or visit [www.vulcantourism.com](http://www.vulcantourism.com).

*Neel welcomes your questions and comments at 403-485-2683 and [Neel\\_Roberts@ptccanada.com](mailto:Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com).*