

Special event set for lunar eclipse - Lethbridge Herald

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Southern Albertans have the next best thing to front-row seats in astronomical terms for Saturday's total lunar eclipse.

The Star Trek Space Station in Vulcan is inviting everyone to view the super-sized eclipse starting at 5:30 a.m. Members of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada will be on hand with telescopes, binoculars and answers to questions for any early birds interested in sky-watching. Neel Roberts, a society member and astronomy co-ordinator, said the event is worth getting up for.

"First of all it's going to be the western part of Canada - another reason the West is the best - and number two it's going to look a lot larger than it usually is. That's strictly a bit of an optical illusion. The moon isn't physically larger, it's just the way the light refracts itself through the sky," Roberts said. "And it's looking like clear skies."

Viewers of the eclipse, which can be seen without a telescope or binoculars, will also be treated to a red-coloured moon.

"It does turn blood red so it almost looks like a Mars but it's still a moon," he said.

Anyone who watches until the last possible moment might also be witness to a split second where the moon is setting at the same time as the sun is rising. As the moon passes through the Earth's shadow, the eclipse will reach its peak around 7 a.m. or 7:30 a.m. and the setting of the moon should be between 8:30 a.m. and 9 a.m.

Saturday's event will be the last total lunar eclipse until 2014.

"This is one of those events where it's so nice you can just show up and have a look at it and you've got a place where you can go and warm up and look at some Star Trek stuff while you're there," Roberts said. "You'll never see this again for a long time and the next one that's coming won't be as good as this one. And it's free."