

Once in a blue moon

You've heard this saying many times, which means very rarely, but how often does a blue moon actually occur and does the moon really appear to be blue? The Straits Times tells you more about the elusive blue moon that will occur tomorrow.

WHAT IS A BLUE MOON?

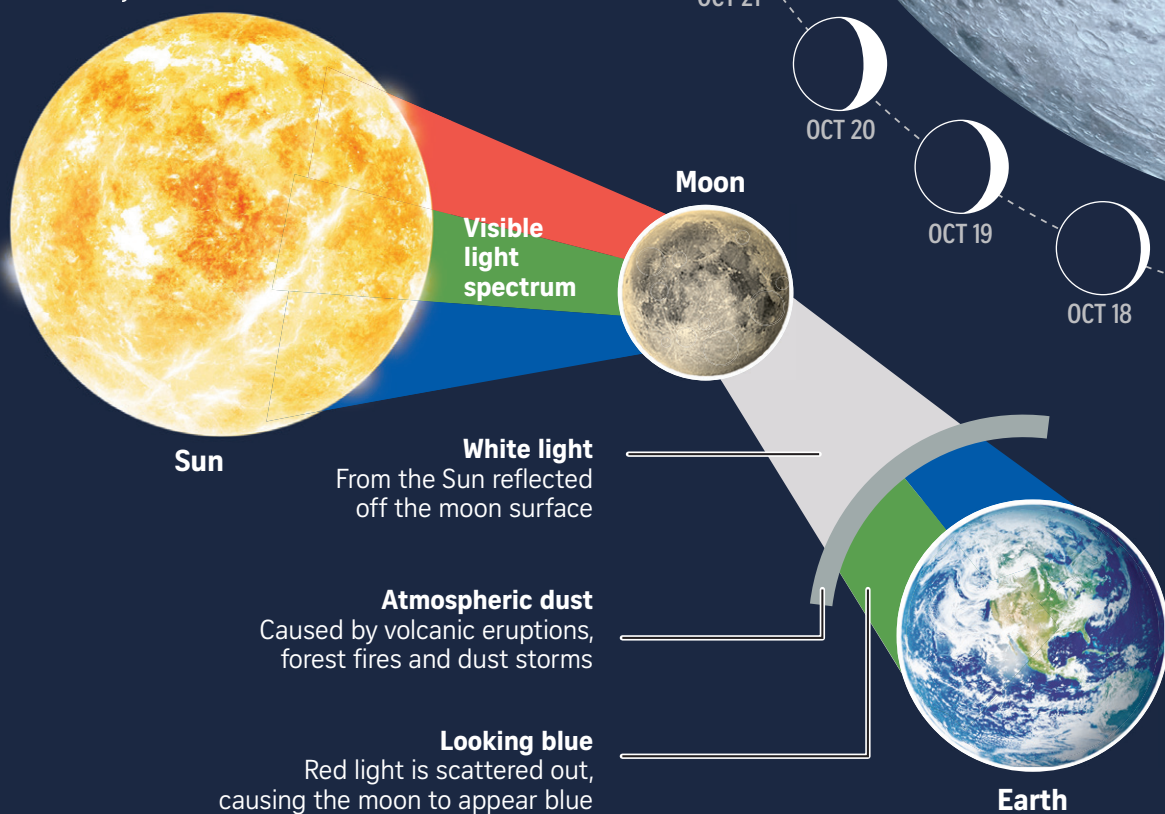
Unfortunately, a blue moon is not literally blue. When two full moons occur in a single calendar month, the second full moon is referred to as a blue moon.

This phenomenon usually happens about once every

2½ to 3 years

CAN IT ACTUALLY BE BLUE?

Yes. Under certain circumstances, particles in the atmosphere can scatter red light from the Sun, causing the moon to appear bluish. Ash from the Krakatoa volcano eruption in 1883 caused the moon to appear blue for almost a year.



START



SPOOKY BLUE MOON

This year, the blue moon will fall on Halloween (Oct 31), which makes it extra spooky and a perfect opportunity to dress up as a werewolf.

The next Halloween blue moon will occur only in the year

2039

FEELING LEFT OUT

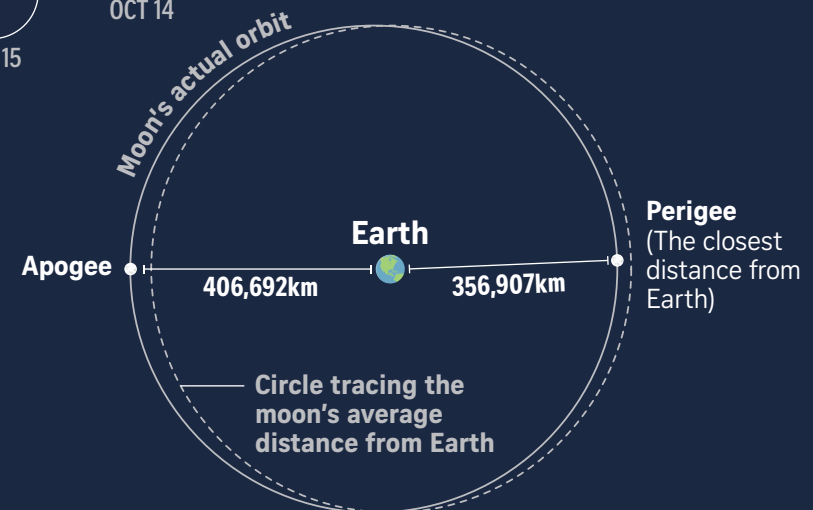
Having only 29 days,

February

will never have a blue moon.

SIZE DOESN'T MATTER

This year's blue moon may also be dimmer and smaller than usual, as it is very close to its apogee (the farthest distance from Earth)



FULL MOONS OF 2020

Full moons that occur every month have individual names that date back to the Native Americans a long time ago as a means of keeping track of dates and seasons.



Wolf Moon
(Jan 10)

- Named after howling wolves, the Wolf Moon occurs in mid-winter, when wolf packs come out to hunt.



Snow Moon
(Feb 9)

- Named the Snow Moon due to February having the heaviest snowfalls.



Worm Moon
(March 9)

- Named after the worms emerging from the ground at the end of winter.



Pink Moon
(April 7)

- Named after a North American flower called phlox which is one of the earliest flowers to bloom in spring.



Flower Moon
(May 7)

- Dubbed Flower Moon as May is mid-spring when all flowers bloom.



Strawberry Moon
(June 5)

- Took its cue from strawberries that ripen at this time of the year.



Buck Moon
(July 5)

- Named the Buck Moon as July is usually when buck deers grow new sets of antlers.



Sturgeon Moon
(Aug 3)

- Dubbed the Sturgeon Moon as the sturgeon fish is usually caught at this time of the year in the lakes.



Corn Moon
(Sept 2)

- Named the Corn Moon as people start harvesting crops such as corn.



Harvest Moon
(Oct 1)

- Named the Harvest Moon as it represents the month of harvest.



Hunter's Moon (Blue Moon)
(Oct 31)

- Named the Hunter's Moon as hunting season begins in order to stock up food for winter.



Beaver Moon
(Nov 30)

- Named after the beavers which become active while preparing for the winter season.



Cold Moon
(Dec 29)

- Named the Cold Moon as it occurs at the start of the winter season.

LUNAR FACTS

A treat for everyone

This Halloween moon will be the first

since 1944

when nearly all the time zones in the world will experience a full moon.

Older than you think

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first reference to the blue moon was made in a 1528 proverb:

If they say the moon is blue, we must believe that it is true.

This expression implies something that is absurd. The current meaning of a rare occurrence only developed later.

The Metonic cycle

Moon phases recur on the same day of the year approximately in a

19-year loop.

Hence, the next Halloween full moons will be in 2058, 2077 and so on.

Runaway moon

The moon, with the help of Earth's rotation energy, is slowly moving farther away from Earth each year, at a rate of about

3.78cm per year.



Not every day that I have the blues

Another spooky-looking moon phenomenon is appropriately named the

'Blood moon'.

During a total lunar eclipse, the Earth blocks sunlight from directly reaching the moon. As the Sun's rays pass through our atmosphere, only red light cuts through largely unaffected, giving the moon its reddish tinge.