Triple treat: Eclipse, full moon, comet all

Look to the heavens for this rare sky show

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Skywatchers will enjoy a rare space triple-header Friday night and early Saturday: a "penumbral" lunar eclipse during the full "snow" moon — and the flyby of a comet.

Here's a look at what you will see if you set your eyes to the night sky.

PENUMBRAL LUNAR ECLIPSE

Eagle-eyed skywatchers will catch a "penumbral" lunar eclipse Friday evening during the full moon.

Not as spectacular — or noticeable — as a total lunar eclipse, this rather subtle phenomenon occurs when the moon moves through the outer part of Earth's shadow (known as the penumbra), according to EarthSky.org.

The outer shadow of the Earth blocks part — but not all — of the sun's rays from reaching the moon, making it appear slightly darker than usual.

The exact moment of the penumbral eclipse is 7:43 p.m. ET.

The eclipse will be visible from Europe, Africa, western Asia and eastern North and South America, NASA reports.

FULL 'SNOW' MOON

As required during any lunar eclipse, the moon will be full Friday night. And this month it's nicknamed the "snow" moon.

According to the Farmers' Almanac, names of full moons date back to Native Americans in the northern and eastern U.S. Each full moon has its own name.

"The tribes kept track of the seasons by giving distinctive names to each recurring full moon," the almanac says. "Their names were applied to the entire month in which each occurred."

Calling February's full moon the "snow" moon is right on target. On average, February is the USA's snowiest month, according to data from the National Weather Service.

The Farmer's Almanac says some tribes referred to February's moon as the "hunger" moon, because harsh weather conditions made hunting difficult.

COMET 45P

A few hours after the eclipse, Comet 45P, which has been visible after sunset for the past two months through binoculars and telescopes, makes its closest approach to Earth, when it will be "only" 7.4 million miles away, NASA says.

Look to the east around 3 a.m. Saturday, where the comet will be visible in the constellation Hercules. Binoculars or a telescope could be helpful. Watch for a bright blue-green "head" with a tail.

It will be visible in various points of the night sky until the end of February, NASA says. If you miss it, don't worry, says Jane Houston Jones of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory: It will return in 2022.

coming Friday