

Why is the blood moon red. NASA

For the first time in more than two years, Americans will have a chance to see a total lunar eclipse – an event made even more exciting by the fact that a very rare “blood moon” will also be viewable in the sky.

The lunar eclipse will begin early Tuesday morning at 12:53 a.m. EDT, when the Earth will start to move in between the sun and the moon. Once the moon becomes completely blanketed by the Earth’s shadow, however – around 3 a.m. – this eclipse will become even more interesting: the moon will be covered in a red or orange light.

Speaking with ABC News Digital, NASA scientist Michelle Thaller explained the phenomenon.

“The moon is going to line up in just the right angle to pass through the shadow of the Earth,” she said. “That’s going to block the sun’s light from reaching the moon, and that means we’ll actually see the earth’s shadow creep across the full moon. At the deepest part of the eclipse, the moon does actually look red, it really does.”

“This is happening because the sunlight that’s reaching the moon is just the sunlight bending through the earth’s atmosphere,” she added. “The same reason that a sunset is red, the earth’s atmosphere scatters away blue light but lets red light through.”