Supermoon December 2026: the closest full Moon of the year

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The Moon is full on 23 December 2026, about 356,700 km away, the closest full Moon of 2026. What "supermoon" means and what a child will notice.

The Moon is full on the evening of 23 December 2026 in US time zones (1:28 am on the 24th in Greenwich time), and it is the closest full Moon of the year: about 356,700 km from Earth's center, by astronomy-engine. On Christmas Eve it is still about 98% lit and looks full. It rises in the east around sunset and is up all night. Peabody's event page has the countdown.

What "supermoon" means

The Moon's path around Earth is an oval, so its distance swings between roughly 356,000 and 406,000 km. A full Moon near the close end is popularly called a supermoon. It isn't an astronomy term with a fixed line; it's a name for "a full Moon that's nearer than usual".

What a child will notice

Honestly, not much difference in size. Compared with November's full Moon, about 360,750 km away, December's is only about 1% wider, far too little to see. Compared with the smallest full Moons of a year, it's about 14% wider and noticeably brighter, but you never see two full Moons side by side to compare.

What a child will notice is the light. A full Moon in winter, especially on snow, makes a yard bright enough to see colours and cast sharp shadows. Go out and look at your shadow by moonlight.

When to look

Around sunset on the 23rd or the 24th, low in the east: that's when it looks biggest and most orange, thanks to the Moon illusion and the extra air. In Denver it rises at about 4:10 pm on the 23rd and 5:30 pm on the 24th; Sky Tonight gives your own times.

Christmas Eve and Christmas morning

On Christmas Eve, Thursday 24 December, the Moon is about 98% lit and rises about 40 minutes to an hour after sunset, low in the east-north-east. By bedtime it is well up in the east. On Christmas morning it is still up, low in the west, until about 8:30 to 9 am, so it is there for anyone who looks out early.

Why a winter full Moon rides high

A full Moon sits opposite the Sun in the sky. In December the Sun stays low all day, so the full Moon does the reverse: around midnight it is high in the south, far higher than a summer full Moon. That, and snow on the ground, is part of why December moonlight seems so bright.

Three things to do by moonlight

1. Find your shadow. Stand with your back to the Moon and look at the ground.
2. Read a big word. Write MOON in thick marker on a card and see if your child can read it by moonlight alone.
3. Draw it. Back inside, add tonight's circle to the Moon journal, with the date.

What to say when a child asks if it's bigger

"A tiny bit, but not enough for eyes to see. It's closer than usual because the Moon's path around Earth is a slightly squashed circle." Then do the thumbnail test: arm straight out, cover the Moon with a thumbnail at moonrise and again at bedtime. It fits both times, and it would have fitted in November too.

If it's cloudy

The next full Moon, on Friday 22 January 2027, is nearly as close: about 357,600 km, against about 356,700 km in December. Nobody could tell them apart by eye. The evenings of 21 and 22 January both look full.

Three questions grown-ups ask

Does a supermoon cause anything? Tides run a little higher than usual around a close full Moon. That's all.

Is this the same as a blue Moon or a blood Moon? No. A blood Moon is an eclipse of the Moon; there isn't one this December.

Will clouds spoil it? They might; the next night still looks full.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, with no ads and no sign-up, and nothing your child taps on the space pages is sent anywhere. For a bedtime story after the Moon, the library has stories at your child's reading level.

Sources

- The phase instants, distances, how much of the Moon is lit, and rise and set times from Peabody's sky table, worked out with astronomy-engine (MIT license); times are for the middle of each 5° area.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/supermoon-december-2026