

How to see the Perseid meteor shower as it peaks this weekend

: 8/8/2024

The Perseid meteor shower is seen in the Chinese city Chifeng on Aug. 14, 2023.
(Costfoto/NurPhoto/AP)

By [Amudalat Ajasa](#)

August 8, 2024 at 11:00 p.m. EDT

While daytimes in August are accompanied by the beaming sun, many of the warm nights are filled with a dazzling “shooting star” display, courtesy of the annual Perseids meteor shower. It’s one of the best meteor showers of the year — next to the Geminids and Quadrantids — and the mystifying show will **peak** Sunday night into Monday morning. But unlike winter meteor showers, you won’t have to bundle up to watch, except perhaps for any long sleeves you wear to ward off pesky mosquitoes.

[Ask your climate questions. With the help of generative AI, we'll try to deliver answers based on our published reporting.](#) →

The showstopping summer display graces skies across the Northern Hemisphere from mid-July throughout August each year. All skywatchers need to do is find dark skies, preferably outside of the city.

According to the [International Meteor Organization](#), skywatchers, under clear dark skies, can expect to see 50 to 75 meteors an hour. Lucky skywatchers could see up to one meteor a minute give or take, according to Peter Veres, an astronomer at Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. The Perseids are “one of the most active showers during the year,” Veres said.

Story continues below advertisement

Shooting stars and meteors are the same thing. A meteor is any piece of space rock, interstellar pebble or other chunk of debris that burns up in a planetary atmosphere. Each year, Earth bulldozes through trails of debris left behind by the Comet Swift-Tuttle that went past the planet in 1992.



Follow Climate & environment

The rice-size meteors burn up as they encounter Earth’s outer atmosphere, creating long-tailed meteors, bright flashes and even some fireballs, said Ted Bergin, professor of astronomy at the University of Michigan.

During the peak of the show, Earth will be traveling through the center of the debris pile, he said.

“It’ll be bright flashes across the sky that just have a tail on them,” Bergin said. Meteors will be zipping through the sky 37 miles per second, according to the International Meteor Organization — so don’t blink too long or you could miss them.

Story continues below advertisement

“Comets are some of the oldest material in the solar system. So you’re seeing some of the oldest pieces of the solar system burning up in the atmosphere of the Earth,” Bergin said.

We reliably observe the meteors at the same time every year since we encounter the same debris pocket at the same place in our yearly orbit around the sun.

If you’re in the Northern Hemisphere, you’re in luck. Residents across the region will have the best seats. The Perseids will officially peak Sunday between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. standard time, Bergin said. But meteors will be easiest to see as soon as it’s dark outside, after the moon has set.

If you don’t want to stay up until the wee hours of the morning, you may also have optimal viewing after the moon sets around midnight. And if you miss the show during its peak, the encore the evening after could be just as rewarding.

Story continues below advertisement

The moon’s light may slightly wash out the fainter meteors, since it will illuminate at 44 percent Sunday evening, according to the American Meteor Society.

For the stargazers: Since the Perseids originate from the constellation Perseus, the epicenter of the show will come from there. If you can’t find Perseus, you can also look for Cassiopeia, which looks like a slightly irregular “W” in the sky, and the center of the shower will be below it.

Bergin also suggests looking in the direction of where the stars rise, which rise in the east and set in the west.

“It’s not like you have to be looking at a particular spot because the meteors streak across the sky with a gigantic slash,” Bergin said.

More viewing tips from the experts:

- Look for darkness. This may be in a rural location, or if you can’t get to a rural location, look to the darkest part of the sky wherever you are.
- Leave your phone inside. Every time you look at your phone, it takes your eyes about 15 minutes to adjust to the darkness. Looking at a device before turning to the sky may ruin your innate night vision.
- Be patient. Just because there is an average count doesn’t mean you’ll see that many meteors per hour.

More on climate change

Understanding our climate: [Global warming is a real phenomenon](#), and weather disasters are [undeniably linked to it](#). As temperatures rise, heat waves are more often sweeping the globe — and parts of the world are [becoming too hot to survive](#).

What can be done? The Post is tracking a variety of [climate solutions](#), as well as the Biden administration's [actions on environmental issues](#). It can feel overwhelming facing the impacts of climate change, but there are [ways to cope with climate anxiety](#).

Inventive solutions: Some people have built [off-the-grid homes from trash](#) to stand up to a changing climate. As seas rise, others are exploring [how to harness marine energy](#).

What about your role in climate change? Our [climate coach Michael J. Coren](#) is answering questions about environmental choices in our everyday lives. [Submit yours here](#). You can also [sign up for our Climate Coach newsletter](#).

- [Pollution fueling a sex imbalance among endangered green sea turtles](#)

[November 26, 2023](#)

[Pollution fueling a sex imbalance among endangered green sea turtles](#)

[November 26, 2023](#)

- [This Fox News host gives climate skeptics airtime but went solar at home](#)

[October 25, 2023](#)

[This Fox News host gives climate skeptics airtime but went solar at home](#)

[October 25, 2023](#)

- [How humans have altered the Earth enough to start a new chapter of geologic time](#)

[June 20, 2023](#)

[How humans have altered the Earth enough to start a new chapter of geologic time](#)

[June 20, 2023](#)

By [Amudalat Ajasa](#)

Amudalat Ajasa covers extreme weather news for The Washington Post and writes about how extreme weather and climate change are affecting communities in the United States and abroad. [🐦 Twitter](#)



NewsletterTUESDAYS



Climate Coach

Climate Coach Michael Coren advises you on how to navigate life on our changing planet. Delivered Tuesdays.

In order to comment, please [set a display name](#).