

Close Encounter of the Moon with the Bright Star Spica

On the nights of **April 21-23**, the waxing gibbous Moon (full on April 23rd) passes by the bright star Spica in Virgo – with a close encounter of about 1-degree separation on April 22nd.

As the Moon proceeds eastward along the ecliptic each night, watch its illuminated disk grow (wax). The Moon moves eastward, about 13° along the ecliptic, from one night to the next, or about ½° per hour. Try following its movement across the sky during these spring nights.

Because Spica (a Roman name meaning “ear of grain”) is located along the ecliptic (the approximate path of the Sun, the Moon, and the planets across the sky), encounters with the Moon are not rare. Spica sends its photons of light our way from a distance of 250 light years (≈ 6 trillion miles times 250).

Illustration courtesy of [SKY & TELESCOPE](#)

