

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPEDITION GUIDE

What Causes The Northern Lights Phenomenon?

The northern lights, or the Aurora Borealis, are basically Earth's cosmic light show. Tiny charged particles from the Sun speed toward our planet, get pulled in by Earth's magnetic field, and crash into gases high in the atmosphere. Those gases light up as nature turns on neon signs, creating the shimmering greens, reds, and purples dancing across the polar sky, treating your eyes to the most spectacular view.



Where Are These Lights Spotted?

The northern lights don't just appear anywhere; instead, they have a favourite place to perform.

They gather in a ring-shaped band around the Arctic Circle called the auroral zone, almost like a natural stage where the sky puts on its nightly show.

This glowing band stretches across some of the world's most striking northern landscapes: the fjords of Norway north, the quiet snow-covered forests of Sweden and Finland, the volcanic horizon of Iceland, the icy plateaus of Greenland, the vast open wilderness of Canada, especially Alaska and Yellowknife, and the remote expanses of northern Siberia.

Interestingly, the Northern Lights were spotted in Ladakh in 2023 during a geomagnetic storm. Those lucky enough to be in Ladakh during the time sure had one heck of a trip.

Best Time To Spot the Auroras



With the sun at its solar maximum, the Auroras are shining at their brightest. If you miss it in 2026, you might have to sulk till 2030 to witness the Northern Lights putting on their best show.



Best Months
September to March



Best Time
10 p.m. to 2 a.m.



Even if you visit during the ideal season, at the perfect hour, and in one of the best spots on Earth, you still need a good dose of luck. The skies have to be clear for the auroras to appear, because no matter how strong they are, thick clouds will hide them completely.

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Aurora Tracking Apps

Just like everything else, there are apps to track the Auroras as well. How cool is that? You can install the Aurora App and track where exactly you will be able to spot the Auroras and at what time. This will help you save a lot of time and energy.



How To Capture The Auroas?

Those who have been to the Arctic and have witnessed the Auroras are aware of the struggle of capturing them. Sure, it looks absolutely lovely with the naked eye, but it would be really nice if it looked that good in our cameras as well, because we have an Instagram account to flex. Isn't that correct?

Well, here are some really helpful tips for capturing the most beautiful shots of the Auroras:



Use The Right Gear

- Camera: A DSLR or mirrorless works best, but many newer phones have a "night" or "long exposure" mode.
- Lens: A wide-angle lens (14-24 mm) to capture the sky, with a fast aperture (f/2.8 or lower).
- Tripod: It's essential because Auroras require long exposures, and any shake will blur the shot.
- Remote shutter or timer: Prevents camera movement when you press the button.



Key Camera Settings

- Focus: Set the lens to manual focus and focus on a distant light or the stars until they're sharp.
- Aperture: f/2.8 or the widest your lens can go.
- ISO: Between 800-3200. Higher ISO brightens the image but adds noise.
- Shutter speed: For slow, soft auroras: 10-20 seconds, for fast, dancing auroras: 2-6 seconds (to keep the shape crisp)



Phone Settings

- Enable night mode or pro/manual mode, if available.
- Use a tripod for stability.
- Set exposure to several seconds if you can.
- To capture yourself, set a timer and hold your pose for several seconds after the picture has been taken.

What To Pack For The Trip?

If you have finally decided to have the most memorable trip of your life, then you must be wondering about what you should pack and how many layers you would require so you don't turn into a frozen ball. Well, don't worry, we have you covered with a list of all the essentials.

Clothing In Layers

Base Layer (Next to Skin)

- Thermal top and bottom (merino wool is ideal)
- Thermal socks

Mid Layer (For Insulation)

- Fleece or wool sweater
- Insulated pants or fleece-lined leggings

Outer Layer (For Wind and Snow)

- Waterproof, windproof parka
- Waterproof snow pants
- Down jacket (optional but great for extra warmth)

Accessories



Warm hat/beanie



Neck gaiter or balaclava



Insulated gloves + thin liner gloves



Waterproof winter boots with good grip



Mittens (often warmer than gloves)

Personal Essentials



Moisturiser + lip balm



Sunglasses



Medications and basic first aid



Reusable water bottle



Snacks for long nights outdoors

Hacks You Should Know Before The Trip

- Use Aurora forecast apps for real-time alerts.
- Move away from towns to avoid light pollution.
- Take a camera test shot; it often detects auroras before your eyes.
- Dress in layers and use hand/foot warmers.
- Keep phones and power banks warm inside your jacket.
- Use a headlamp for setup, then switch it off when shooting.

- Wear thin liner gloves to handle cold metal gear.
- Bring snacks and a hot drink to stay comfortable outside.
- Turn around often, auroras can appear in multiple directions.
- Use shorter shutter speeds for fast-moving auroras.
- Take short indoor breaks to warm up if possible.
- Be patient, auroras can intensify suddenly.

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