

PHOTOGRAPHING THE AURORA

Photograph Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights)

How to photograph aurora borealis (northern lights)? You will first need the right camera equipment and know how to use it. You will need an SLR camera (film or digital) that allows you to control the shutter speed extensively, as well as a tripod, small flashlight, high speed film for film cameras (lower ISO speeds will work, but longer exposures are required). It is important to note that higher speed film will generally produce grainier pictures while low speed films might be too slow to capture fast moving northern lights effectively. Manual digital cameras can provide the best option for amateur photographers giving them the ability to immediately see the results and make necessary adjustments to their shutter speed, ISO setting, and aperture settings to capture the perfect northern lights picture.

Exposure Times (seconds):

		Film Speed (ISO)				
		50	100	200	400	800
Aperture Settings	1.4	50s	25s	15s	8s	4s
	1.8	80s	40s	23s	12s	6s
	2.0	110s	50s	30s	15s	8s
	2.8	220s	110s	60s	30s	15s
	3.5	--	--	90s	45s	23s
	4.0	--	--	120s	60s	30s

* These settings are for general reference and only provide a guideline to start with. Experimentation with Aurora photography is half the fun. You can use the above settings for digital cameras. Works best with digital cameras that have manual setting capabilities.

When photographing aurora borealis in cold weather there are a number of things you should be careful of.

1. Bring extra batteries – Batteries have a much shorter lifespan in the cold, you may even go through two sets of batteries in a single night.
2. Try to keep your camera warm – Some people use hats and magic bags to help keep their camera warm. This extends battery life and reduces chances of breaking film due to cold (film becomes very brittle in the cold).
3. Let your camera warm up fully when bringing it in from the cold – Heavy condensation and frost can form on your lens, do not wipe your lens as the frost can scratch it.
4. If using a film camera, rewind your film slowly – Rewind film manually if possible, cold film can become very brittle and may break if rewound too fast.
5. Avoid electrostatic discharge – Electrostatic discharge can affect your negatives, you can help avoid this by grounding yourself to the camera before removing or inserting film.

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