



Special Feature

Photographers'

favorite gear

An Alaska Photographers' Calendar







Amy J Johnson

Tucked away in Alaska's rugged Brooks Range is the remote Iniakuk Lake Wilderness Lodge. I flew there on a small bush plane fitted with skis, and we landed on the snow-covered lake. Iniakuk Lake is directly under the aurora belt, and I was excited for a few days of photography given the good aurora forecast. I scouted several photo locations during the day and liked the cabin scene overlooking a river. Candles provide just enough light inside to provide a warm glow. Abundant snow made travel offtrails difficult, so I walked with boots on hard-packed snowmachine trails. I love the remote, wild feeling endemic to the rugged Brooks Range, having lived there for many years in my early life. There is no light pollution or noise pollution, very few inhabitants, and the silent white of winter instills peace.

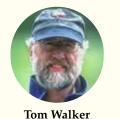
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	1 NEW YEAR'S DAY	2	3	4	5	6
Eastern Orthodox Christmas	8	9	10	11 New moon	12	13
14	15 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (Observed)	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25 Full moon	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

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For the first two weeks of March, I chased around Interior Alaska, searching for clear skies. The temperatures dropped below zero but more often hovered around ten above, but almost always with a stout wind, making it hard to stay warm. Due to a particularly snowy winter, some of my favorite aurora photography spots were inaccessible. Nonetheless, I had good luck finding clear skies. The downside was that the aurora only made feeble and lackluster appearances, on two nights hardly showing up at all. When the skies turned cloudy over the Tanana Valley, I went home to Denali, a little frustrated. Following that brief storm, the skies cleared, the wind quit, and the temperatures soared into the low 30s. That night I drove just ten miles from home and, despite space weather predictions, was treated to the best display of the winter, on a night so warm, I never zipped my parka closed. The secret to the shot: never give up.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	31	1	2 Marmot Day (Alaska)	3
4	5	6	7	8	9 New moon	10 Chinese New Year
11	12 Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)	13	14 Valentine's Day Ash Wednesday	15	16 Elizabeth Peratrovich Day (Alaska)	17
18	19 PRESIDENTS' DAY George Washington (1732-1799)	20	21	22	Heritage Day (Yukon Territory)	24 Full moon
25	26	27	28	29	1	2
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Hugh Rose

GETTING the SHOT

The White Mountains National Recreation Area, located 35 miles north of Fairbanks, is a winter playground, with well over 100 miles of groomed trails and multiple public use cabins. In early March, I set out with a group of friends on snow machines and cross-country skis to enjoy this winter playground. Our first stop was the Caribou Bluff cabin, nestled among the White Mountains with a scenic backdrop. We arrived just as darkness settled in, and soon the aurora's appearance interrupted a late night dinner as we photographers in the group ran for our cameras. I'm fortunate to have a partner willing to pose once in a while in my aurora photos, which is no small task since this exposure was 30 seconds, and you can imagine, it was not the only one! A human element adds an "I could be there" message to the image.

S	unday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25		26	27	28	29	1	Susan Butcher Day (Alaska)
3		4	5	6	7	8	9
10	Daylight Saving Time begins New moon	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	St. Patrick's Day	18	19 Spring Equinox	20	21	22	23 Purim begins
31	Palm Sunday Full moon Easter	25 Seward's Day (Alaska)	26	27	28	29 Vietnam Veterans' Day (Alaska) Good Friday	30
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FEBRUARY

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Photo by Marketa Murray

Quartz Lake Dock

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, Nikon 14-24mm f/2.8 (14mm) 10 sec., @ f/2.8, ISO 3200, taken in August





Marketa S Murray

Following the sun's solar activity, including solar flares and coronal holes, is critical as an aurora photographer. When those fastmoving solar particles reach Earth's atmosphere and excite the atomic oxygen at the top of our atmosphere, they create vibrant red and purple colors. One August evening, the aurora data revealed a rotating canyon-shaped coronal hole, and the particles hit right after sunset. As the fast-moving solar wind stream hit the Earth's magnetic field, the sky lit up in a full spectrum of colors. The camera can capture the range of colors a hundred times better than we can see with our own eyes. On a night like this, you keep pushing the shutter, changing composition, getting lower, getting higher, running closer to trees and the lake. You keep clicking that shutter to see the next colorful shot seeing those images appear on your camera display is the beauty of being an aurora photographer.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3	1	Easter Monday (Canada)	2	3	4	5	6
7		8 New moon	9	10	11	12	13
14	4	15 U.S. tax returns due	16	17	18	19	20
2	1	Passover begins Earth Day	23 Full moon	24	25	26 Arbor Day	27
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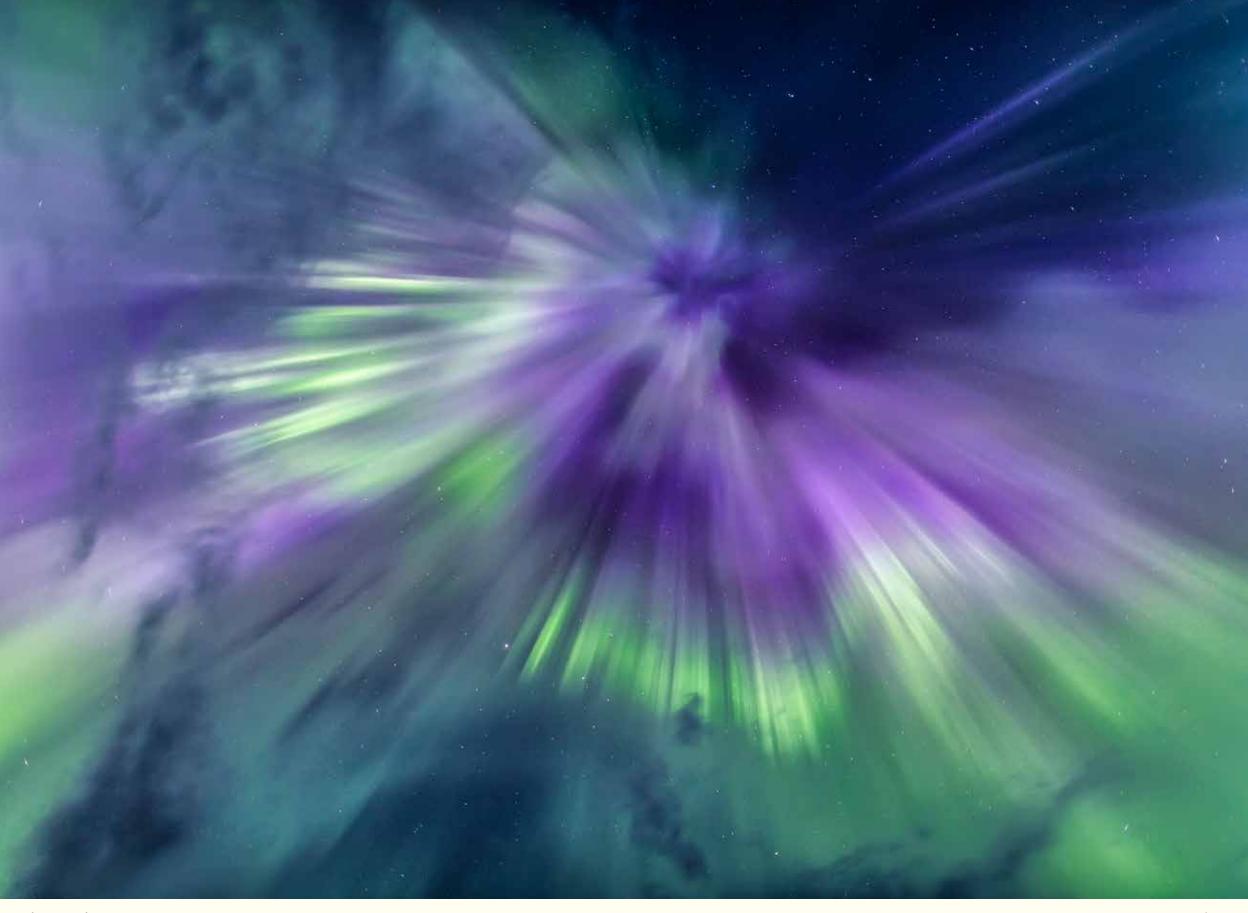
Sean Neilson

A friend invited me out for a beer on an April evening, but I suggested we look for the aurora instead. Fortunately, we made the right choice. Just before dark, we arrived at Mendenhall Lake near Juneau, along Alaska's southeast panhandle. Soon the aurora appeared faintly over the horizon. When you can see aurora amidst a twilight sky, you know you are in for a treat! We walked along the edge of the frozen lake, exploring compositions until we came to a small, glass-calm meltedout section, providing the perfect place for an aurora reflection. I tried a few perspectives but preferred the scene with the stacked-up ice, which provides an interesting foreground. Approximately 30 minutes after we set up tripods, the aurora erupted for about one incredible minute. It was so bright I reduced my ISO by two full stops to prevent blowing out the beautiful highlights. The evening lesson: Beer is nice, but aurora is better!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5 Eastern Orthodox Easter	6	7 New moon	8	9	10	11
12 Mother's Day	13	14	15	16	17	18 Armed Forces Day
19	Arbor Day (Alaska) Victoria Day (Canada)	21	22	23 Full moon	24	25
26	27 MEMORIAL DAY	28	29	30	31	1
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John Hyde

You rarely get clear skies and aurora simultaneously in Juneau, so I'm always watching the weather and aurora forecasts. A friend and I searched out a new photo location on a small island with a small pond hoping to catch the aurora overhead with reflections below. While waiting by camp, the aurora appeared in the northern sky. After an hour of shooting, clouds started to move in, and as the display faded, I returned to my pack for another SD card and something hot to drink. As I turned around, I was stunned by an overhead corona display behind me to the south. The most intense aurora displays in southeast Alaska usually occur in the northeast and northwest sky. But sometimes, they can take you by surprise, appearing in the southern sky. Lesson learned, don't forget to check out the 360-degree view! The clouds moved in within moments after clicking the shutter for this photo, and the starry sky was gone.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	D-Day, 1944 New moon	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14 Flag Day	15
16 Fathers' Day	17	18	19 EMANCIPATION DAY (Juneteenth)	20 Summer Solstice	21 Full moon	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
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MAY JULY

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JUNE







Charity Hommel

I live in the small town of Wrangell, in southeast Alaska, which is notorious for its ever-cloudy, lush rainforest weather. With a promising Kp index forecast, I had my camera ready to go for three days, just in case the clouds broke. I stepped outside at 9:30 pm for one last look before heading to bed and saw a strong band of green toward the north! I grabbed my gear and drove to a boat launch near my home. The sky was wild with bright dancing Aurora, and I knew this would be a spectacular show. I set up my camera at the water's edge to incorporate Wrangell and the harbor lights. It was so peaceful and powerful; I could feel the energy. Suddenly my feet felt cold and wet. I was so mesmerized and focused on taking pictures I hadn't noticed the tide was coming in—fast! The display was over in half an hour, and I felt blessed to witness and capture the evening show.

Su	unday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30		1 Canada Day (Canada)	2	3	4 INDEPENDENCE DAY	5 New moon	6
7		8	9 Alaska Flag Day	10	11	12	13
14		15	16	17	18	19	20
21	Full moon	22	23	24	25	26	27 Ted Stevens Day (Alaska)
28	Parents' Day	29	30	31	1	2	3
	JUNE	AUG	UST				7()74

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Laura Lyn Gregory

After a long, bright Alaska summer, the aurora season returns to Interior Alaska in late August and early September. One October evening, I was laughing with friends on the shores of Olnes Pond, near Fairbanks, Alaska. We reminisced over past Aurora photography ventures while capturing the faint green glow flickering slightly above the tree line. Just when we thought the strong aurora forecast would never materialize, my eyes filled with joy as the once hazy green band in the sky caught fire with color. As the sweeping shapes raced across the sky, tall green pillars dipped at the bottom with a reddish-pink hue. I lay on the cool ground, speechless and in awe of the swirling lights. I made sure to get a few images to share as the aurora rainbow of green, pink, red, and purple reflected in the pond. I left with new memories, a warm smile, and a full memory card.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4 New moon	5 Civic Day (Canada)	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 Discovery Day (Yukon Territory) Full moon	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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AUGUST







Todd Salat

After a bright Alaskan summer, it's always welcome when dark skies return, and with it, the aurora! My autumn goal was photographing the northern lights over the Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. Built in the early 1900s near a world-class copper deposit, the artistic appeal of the rustic red Kennecott Mill Site had me hooked. On this memorable night, a bright moon lit up the snow-capped Wrangell Mountains as multiple green aurora bands materialized out of thin air and danced through the Big Dipper. To illuminate the foreground during this 12-second exposure, I used a handheld million candle-power spotlight to beam up the buildings. Using slide film, I had no way of knowing if I exposed properly using this "light painting" technique. Once I got my film developed, I was ecstatic with the results and still consider this aurora hunt one of my most treasured.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 LABOR DAY New moon	3	4	5	6	7
8 Grandparents' Day	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 Full moon	18	19	20	21
22 Autumn Equinox	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
AUGUST	OCT	OBER				2024

AUGUST OCTOBER

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SEPTEMBER







Patrick J Endres

During a strong aurora prediction, I flew from cloudy Fairbanks for clear skies in Juneau, my first time visiting Alaska's capital city. I set up along the Mendenhall Glacier beach, just past a group of other photographers. After 30 minutes, I heard screaming from their location, and they shouted at me, "Hey photographer, a bear is coming your way!" I immediately started shouting, and the bear ran into the forest. I continued to make noise as I walked towards the other photographers who said the bear falsely charged them. Nervewracked, we all decided to leave. Later, the lights got stronger, and I thought, I should go back for the shot. I assured myself, make noise and you'll be fine. My decision paid off because about 4:30 am, the lights slowly danced over the glacier, reflecting in the calm water. Rule #1 when shooting the aurora in bear country, make noise!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29	30	1	Rosh Hashanah begins New moon	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11 Yom Kippur begins	12
13	14 COLUMBUS DAY (Observed) Thanksgiving (Canada) Indigenous People's Day (Alaska)	15	16	17 Full moon	18 Alaska Day (Alaska)	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31 Halloween	1	2

SEPTEMBER 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

NOVEMBER 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

OCTOBER







Based on a promising aurora forecast, I went south of Anchorage early on a March evening with some photographer friends, hopeful for some active aurora borealis. The Turnagain Arm is a great place to photograph the aurora because it provides photography options in both a northern and southern direction. Weaker auroras are commonly seen in the north, but powerful displays can be seen in the southern sky. The aurora began early, shortly after twilight, with a green glow that filled the sky, accented by a bright green band to the southwest. The show became more energetic as the moon rose above the horizon, exploding with various colors and rising high into the sky over the Kenai Mountains across the Turnagain Arm. The beautiful winter landscape, the active aurora, and the company of photographic friends made this a night to remember.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	31	1 New moon	2
3 Daylight Saving Time ends	4	5 Election Day	6	7	8	9
10	VETERANS DAY Remembrance Day (Canada)	12	13	14	15 Full moon	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	Order next year's Aurora calendar today at www.GreatlandGraphics.com	28 THANKSGIVING	29	30 New moon

	OCTOBER								DECEMBER										
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NOVEMBER





While the southcentral Alaska island of Kodiak is full of photographic treasures, it is not known for frequent aurora sightings due to the constant overcast skies and unpredictable weather conditions. Kodiak may see faint aurora displays on the horizon between four and seven times a year. Lucky for me, I live in a home overlooking Monashka Bay that looks straight to the North. On this early February evening, I observed a green glow in the sky, grabbed my gear, walked down to the beach, and set up my tripod along the water's edge. I focused on the brightest star in the sky, took a test shot, and was thrilled to find Aurora and clear skies on the same night. With an intervalometer set, I enjoyed the beautiful beach by myself while the camera did its magic and took 440 images. I later stacked them together to make this final scene of a magical star trail over the bay.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	Pearl Harbor Day
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 Full moon	16	17	18	19	20	21 Winter Solstice
22	23	24	25 CHRISTMAS Hanukkah begins	26 Boxing Day (Canada)	27	28
29	30 New moon	31 New Year's Eve	1	2	3	2024

NOVEMBER JANUARY 2025

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DECEMBER

Photographer's gear favorites



Amy J Johnson

INSULATED TRIPOD LEGS

Adding insulated foam padding to metal tripod legs helps protect your hands from the freezing cold.

And, it's an inexpensive modification that is easy to do yourself.





Tom Walker

THERMOS OF HOT TEA

Let's face it. Aurora
photography ventures are
often under very cold temps.
A thermos of hot tea is a big
help on a long cold night.
And the caffeine jolt is an
added bonus.





Hugh Rose

QUALITY BALL HEAD

A quality tripod ball head is imperative for aurora photography. Get one that operates smoothly even in freezing temps. These models are expensive but transform the photography experience.





Marketa S Murray

TRIPOD & BALLHEAD

I'ven been using my Manfrotto tripod for 15 years. It's easy and fast to set up and adjust. And, the dry ball head doesn't need lubricant and will not get stiff, even in -40-degree temps.





Sean Neilson

WOOL ANORAK

My New Zealand wool anorak is extremely warm, yet not confining, and the big pockets store snacks, spare batteries, and toasty hand warmers for those super chilly winter nights.





John Hyde

SOFT CLOTH

In moist conditions or when near open water, I use a soft cloth about 16"x16" to drape over the lens and camera to keep frost off both the lens and the camera. A simple solution.





Charity Hommel

LENS BARREL TAPE

To secure critical lens focus, I preset my lens to infinity during daylight and tape the focusing ring to the barrel so I don't clumsily alter it during the dark, causing a blurry aurora image.





Laura Lyn Gregory

HEATED GLOVE LINERS

Motion Heat brand heated glove liners with screen touch sensitivity. They warm instantly, even in -40-degree temperatures and last up to nine hours of constant heat around the fingers.





Todd Salat

HEAD LAMP

Besides quality camera gear, my most precious item for nighttime photography is a head lamp that includes a red-light mode to preserve night vision. A handheld flashlight just does not cut it.





Patrick J Endres

WATERPROOF BOOTS

Insulated waterproof kneehigh boots keep your feet dry and warm and allow photography while standing in the water. They are a must for my aurora kit whenever I'm standing in or near water.





Carl Johnson

WARM CLOTHING

Insulation from cold temps is critical. I stay warm with a traditional Inupiat parka, insulated Duluth Trading Company pants, The Heat Company Smart Gloves, and Baffin boots.





Shane Parker

STURDY TRIPOD

A sturdy tripod is essential to photograph the aurora, which requires slow shutter speeds. It does not have to look pretty or be expensive but must provide a steady platform.



2025

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Aurora 2024

Alaska's Northern Lights Calendar







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Tom Walker White Mountains Nat. Rec Area Hugh Rose Quartz Lake



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- 8 12 feature photos from Alaska's top aurora photographers including camera and lens settings
- Photographers share the story behind the photo and reveal how they "Got the Shot"
- Special Feature: Photographer's favorite aurora gear.
- Photo location map



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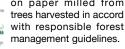


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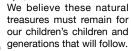
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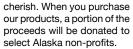
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