

Aurora 2025

ALASKA'S NORTHERN LIGHTS



Special Feature
Aurora Shapes

AN ALASKA PHOTOGRAPHERS' CALENDAR



Photo by Allan Long

Alaska Range, Denali National Park

Nikon Z 9, Nikkor Z 20mm f/1.8
3 sec., @ f/1.8, ISO 2000, taken in February



Allan Long

GETTING *the* SHOT

I drove to Denali National Park on a February night to photograph the auroras. It was a perfect setup; clear skies, -20° Fahrenheit, a moonlit, snow-covered landscape, and an active northern lights forecast. The displays were highly intense and colorful, with red, pink, and green hues dancing across the night sky, and I was the only one in the park that night for several hours. During the active part of the show, I had some issues with equipment, fogged-up glasses, and camera lenses. I ended up sitting in the snow and watching the shapes and colors unfold. It was an epic experience; sometimes, you must sit back, enjoy the sky, and take in what surrounds you. Thankfully, the northern lights were active pretty much the entire night, and after I corrected my equipment issues, I could still get some great aurora photographs. This image is taken from a four-photograph panorama stitched together.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29	30	31	1 <small>NEW YEAR'S DAY</small>	2	3	4
5	6	7 <small>Eastern Orthodox Christmas</small>	8	9	10	11
12	13 <small>Full moon</small> ○	14	15	16	17	18
19	20 <small>MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (Observed)</small>	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29 <small>Chinese New Year New moon</small> ●	30	31	1

DECEMBER 2024

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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FEBRUARY

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2025
JANUARY





Fred Hirschmann

GETTING *the* SHOT

Solar Cycle 25—in the eleven-year sunspot cycle—was more active than most scientists predicted. On a February evening in 2023, my wife, Randi, our two Australian Shepherds, Tazlina and Kobuk, and I were on a ridge at the edge of timberline 1,000 feet above our home near the Matanuska Glacier. The temperature on the ridge was a balmy 15 °F warmer than the -10 °F temps at home. Around 10 PM, the sky exploded with substorms of green, purple, and red northern lights. I set up two medium-format Pentax digital cameras facing southeast and northwest to record movies of the dancing auroras. The light show kept going and going. By 5 am, when I took this photo, the entire display had shifted due south above Mount Wickersham and the Matanuska Glacier. This frame was 135 of a 373-frame movie I shot before the approaching dawn washed out the curtains of aurora borealis.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2 Marmot Day (Alaska)	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12 Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) Full moon ○	13	14 Valentine's Day	15
16 Elizabeth Peratrovich Day (Alaska)	17 PRESIDENTS' DAY George Washington (1732-1799)	18	19	20	21 Heritage Day (Yukon Territory)	22
23	24	25	26	27 New moon ●	28	1

JANUARY

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MARCH

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30	31					

2025 FEBRUARY



Photo by Amy J Johnson

Tanana River

Canon EOS R5, RF 15-35mm f/2.8 (15mm)
10 sec., @ f/2.8, ISO 3200, taken in March



Amy J Johnson

GETTING *the* SHOT

In late March, I was venturing north to the Brooks Range, but a last-minute weather check revealed deteriorating weather. The aurora forecast was strong, so I turned around and headed south to clear skies to a scene along the Tanana River. When I arrived, my phone blew up, reporting a severe G4 geomagnetic storm. I quickly searched for a composition that included the edge of the river, set up two cameras in opposite directions, and photographed some of the most intense Aurora of my career, capturing this scene at 11:06 pm. The Aurora was so vibrant I could often see colors with the naked eye. I was excited because I knew locations with clear skies in the lower 48 would likely see this rare event. I later learned people in states as far south as New Mexico, Arizona, and Virginia saw aurora displays. It's one of those nights aurora enthusiasts will forever remember.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
23	24	25	26	27	28	1 Susan Butcher Day (Alaska)
2	3	4	5 Ash Wednesday	6	7	8
9 Daylight Saving Time begins	10	11	12	13 Purim begins Full moon ☉	14	15
16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19	20 Spring Equinox	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29 Vietnam Veterans' Day (Alaska) New moon ●
30	31 Seward's Day (Alaska)					

FEBRUARY

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APRIL

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2025
MARCH



Photo by Dave Parkhurst

Portage Valley, Kenai Mountains

Nikon D3s, AF-S Nikkor 14-24 f2.8G ED
3 sec., @ f/2.8, ISO 1000, taken in April



Dave Parkhurst

GETTING *the* SHOT

Upper-level winds form a cloud cap over one of the northernmost peaks of the Kenai Mountain Range at the edge of Portage Valley in Southcentral Alaska. Over the ages, Explorer Glacier once joined a mega-glacier that surged to the sea. The subtle glow of a southern moon adds a touch of its light and shadow across the scene. Northwest winds remained constant and brutal, keeping the wind chill below zero. Over several hours, huge pulses of aurora expanded past Alaskan skies, dancing and pushing over the curvature of the Earth down to lower latitudes. In one magnificent wave, a grand whirlwind of multicolored aurora rose hundreds of miles above Alaska, lasting mere seconds and then once again disappearing over the horizon. When such eloquent forces of nature are witnessed and coalesce with one another ever so fleetingly, they are sealed in the mind's eye forever.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12 <small>Passover begins Full moon</small> ○
13 <small>Palm Sunday</small>	14	15 <small>U.S. tax returns due</small>	16	17	18 <small>Good Friday</small>	19
20 <small>Easter</small>	21 <small>Eastern Orthodox Easter Easter Monday (Canada)</small>	22 <small>Earth Day</small>	23	24	25 <small>Arbor Day</small>	26
27 <small>New moon</small> ●	28	29	30	1	2	3

MARCH

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MAY

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2025
APRIL



Photo by Patrick J Endres

Rustic cabin, Alaska Range

Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Tamron SP 15-30mm f/2.8 (15mm)
20 sec., @ f/2.8, ISO 1600, taken in February



Patrick J Endres

GETTING *the* SHOT

The Alaska Range arcs across Alaska's Interior, flanked on the west by the Denali massif at 20,000 plus feet and several other mountains more than 12,000 feet high to the east. Many Alaskans have recreational off-the-grid cabins tucked away in the forested regions of these scenic mountains. I pulled a sled with my camera gear behind skis to one such cabin in late February after a fresh snowfall. When photographing the aurora, I like to give some landscape context to the beauty in the sky, a way for the viewer to imagine being there. A warm, glowing cabin, nestled in the spruce trees juxtaposed against the snow-covered mountains, feels inviting. The propane lights cast a golden glow upon the outside snow to add a warm element. Even though the aurora forecast predicted low activity, enough color appeared for this west-oriented shot. The starry night sky contributes to a scene of quiet solitude.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 <small>Mother's Day</small>	12 <small>Full moon</small> ○	13	14	15	16	17 <small>Armed Forces Day</small>
18	19 <small>Arbor Day (Alaska) Victoria Day (Canada)</small>	20	21	22	23	24
25	26 <small>MEMORIAL DAY New moon</small> ●	27	28	29	30	31

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

2025
MAY



Photo by Marketa S Murray

Snow-loaded spruce forest

Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Rokinon 14mm f2.8
8 sec., @ f/2.8, ISO 3200, taken in March



Marketa Murray

GETTING *the* SHOT

Around the spring and autumn equinoxes, there is a better chance to see Auroras because the Earth's tilt means the magnetic field is aligned to make conditions more favorable for the Aurora to shine. Despite a grim weather forecast, a possible G3-4 solar storm lured us from Fairbanks to the Arctic Circle in blizzard conditions and temperatures as low as -27 °F. We turned around at the Arctic Circle with concerns about road conditions and developing snow drifts. Conditions were especially treacherous as we approached the steep section of the Dalton Highway known as Beaver Slide; with barely one lane of road visible, we put on chains to climb that challenging hill. But what a surprise when we started to see stars two hours into the return drive! We had 40 minutes of dancing Auroras in this magical spot. I've said it before; these Auroras were truly the most memorable ones I have ever photographed.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6 <small>D-Day, 1944</small>	7
8	9	10 <small>Full moon</small> ○	11	12	13	14 <small>Flag Day</small>
15 <small>Father's Day</small>	16	17	18	19 <small>EMANCIPATION DAY (Juneteenth)</small>	20 <small>Summer Solstice</small>	21
22	23	24	25 <small>New moon</small> ●	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5

MAY

				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	31

JULY

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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

2025
JUNE





Carl Johnson

GETTING *the* SHOT

Kotzebue, or Qikiqtaġruk in the Iñupiat language, is a Native Alaska village in Western Arctic Alaska along the coast of the Baldwin Peninsula in Kotzebue Sound. Some Alaska Native people believe that the lights of the aurora borealis are the spirits of those who have passed on before them. When I found the cemetery on the hill during my first visit to Kotzebue, I envisioned an image of the aurora borealis that represented that belief. During a later visit in March, I made a point to climb the hill before sunset on a clear night and compose a scene with the cemetery markers in the foreground. After the sun went down, the glow of dusk reflected on the crosses, and the aurora borealis started to dance. It was one of my most meaningful aurora photo experiences.

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

JUNE

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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

AUGUST

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	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
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2025
JULY



Photo by Amy J Johnson

Fairbanks

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



Amy J Johnson

GETTING *the* SHOT

Fairbanks, Alaska's "golden heart city," is also dubbed the US aurora capital due to its northern latitude and proximity to the aurora belt. Fairbanks has a generally dry climate with frequent clear skies making it an ideal home base for an aurora photographer! In late August, the flowers decorating the city are in their final stage before succumbing to the autumn frost of early September. I scouted this location, thinking that a strong aurora display would offer a favorable direction to make the composition work. NOAA issued a G1-class geomagnetic storm warning, which can often result in an impressive aurora display. The storm hit as predicted in late August with an outstanding debut show to kick off the aurora season. Many visitors don't realize that the aurora is not visible in Fairbanks until mid- to late-august when darkness returns after a light-infused summer.

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

JULY

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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	31		

SEPTEMBER

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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

2025
AUGUST



Photo by John Hyde

Juneau Ice Field, Coast Mountain Range

Sony ILCE 9, Sony 15mm f/2.8 (21mm)
2.5 sec., @ f/2.8, ISO 3200, taken in September



John Hyde

GETTING *the* SHOT

The biggest challenge in photographing the aurora in SE Alaska can often be the weather. A good aurora forecast combined with a good weather forecast is essential. Unfortunately, they don't always coincide, but the displays can be dramatic when they do. We chartered a helicopter to a ridge overlooking the Mendenhall Glacier, about 4000 feet. After setting up camp, we saw a faint green glow on the horizon. We quickly scrambled 1/4 mile over rocky terrain to our photo location. The display continued growing while we exposed frame after frame. The wind picked up to about 25 mph, and the temp dropped to about 10° Fahrenheit. Not too bad by itself, but with the wind, it felt much colder. To get the best life from our batteries, we kept them inside our parkas, changing them as necessary. That night luck had been with us, clear skies and a wonderful evening spent under the dancing aurora overhead.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	1 <small>LABOR DAY</small>	2	3	4	5	6
7 <small>Grandparents' Day Full moon</small> ○	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 <small>New moon</small> ●	22 <small>Autumn Equinox Rosh Hashanah begins</small>	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4

AUGUST

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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
31						

OCTOBER

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19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

2025 SEPTEMBER



Photo by Patrick J Endres

Middle Fork, Koyukuk River, Brooks Range

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, Tamron 15-30mm f/2.8 (15mm)
10 sec., @ f/2.8, ISO 1600, taken in October



Patrick J Endres

GETTING *the* SHOT

During Alaska's late autumn, temperatures cool, and river levels recede before the soon-approaching freeze-up. To be at the water's edge during an aurora display is exciting because the luminous colors in the sky reflect upon the water, bringing the sky magic to the ground. Just before 1:00 am this October morning, the aurora shapes developed slowly with broad bands that almost perfectly matched a bend in the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River, which flows out of the Brooks Range. The result was a flood of color that cast a velvety glow on the water's surface. The river was alive with color thanks to calm conditions, and the light cloud cover above was thin enough to let the stars shine through. Besides open water, the other benefit of this time of year is warmer temperatures, which make the aurora photography process much easier, as any deep-winter aurora photographer will confirm.

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

SEPTEMBER

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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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NOVEMBER

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9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
30							

2025
OCTOBER



Photo by Shane Parker

Kodiak Island

Nikon Z6, Tamron SP 15-30mm f/2.8 (15mm)
2.5 sec., @ f/2.8, ISO 3200, taken in February



Shane Parker

GETTING *the* SHOT

February is a fantastic month to photograph the Aurora in Fairbanks, so my buddy and I went to chase the lights for a week. After days of cloud cover and mediocre aurora displays, we returned to Kodiak Island a little discouraged and disappointed. Upon landing at the airport, I received an alert that a major solar storm would hit Earth that evening. With no sleep from my recent trip, I persevered and stayed up for the big show. Kodiak receives a few big displays a year, but nothing compared to those found in communities further North. As darkness fell, a slow glow appeared on the horizon. Suddenly, the sky exploded full of color and pulsated into the early morning hours. Fortunately, I have a beach nearby where I can capture shots like this. With a sturdy tripod, I began clicking away. The lights surrounded me, and I often forgot to push the shutter to capture the image. Sometimes you have to live in the moment.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2 Daylight Saving Time ends	3	4 Election Day	5 Full moon ○	6	7	8
9	10	11 VETERANS DAY Remembrance Day (Canada)	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19 New moon ●	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 THANKSGIVING	28	29
30						

Order next year's Aurora calendar today at www.GreatlandGraphics.com

OCTOBER

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5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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DECEMBER

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21	22	23	24	25	26	27
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2025 NOVEMBER





Todd Salat

GETTING *the* SHOT

Seward, Alaska, is one of the most elusive targets I've had in my aurora-hunting ventures. I've tried many times with only minor results to catch a light show over this iconic little town sheltered in the world-class Kenai Fjords, so when I saw the forecast for clear weather aligning with an active aurora alert, I drove 125 miles south from my home base in Anchorage. The northern lights were a no-show the first night, proving that aurora prediction is not an exact science. The second night, however, was extraordinary! Just before midnight on February 20, 2023, a geomagnetic storm brewed up and knocked the socks off Seward. What a grandiose setting to experience the power of the aurora. Nestled in Derby Cove, the city lights illuminated Mount Marathon and reflected in the wonderfully calm waters of Resurrection Bay. The tide was in, and the "lights" were on, creating a treasure trove in the cove.

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

NOVEMBER

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JANUARY 2026

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2025
DECEMBER

Common Aurora Shapes

While no two aurora displays are the same, and there is no uniform aurora shape, astronomers use a few terms to describe them. Displays may include several shapes, sometimes stationary, at other times morphing quickly producing a luminous show.



photo by Steven Miley

ARCS

Arcs are one of the most common shapes of the aurora borealis, which appears as a bright, curved band of light stretching across the sky in a roughly east-west direction. The arc can be smooth and symmetrical or have a more jagged, irregular shape.



photo by Patrick J Endres

BANDS

Bands are similar to arcs but possess more curves, and arcs can change into bands in minutes. A band is recognized as a form of arc but with an irregular, wavy lower border rather than a smooth one. They may look serpentine in structure, curving, and twisting.



photo by Benjamin Traylor

CURTAINS

Curtains are a common form of rayed band viewed from a distance, which takes a hanging, wavy appearance. They may appear as a series of parallel, vertical bars of light that can resemble hanging drapes or curtains.



photo by Amy J Johnson

RAYS

Auroral rays are narrow, vertical beams of light that appear to radiate from a central point in the sky. They can be bright or faint and extend from the horizon to the zenith.



photo by Patrick J Endres

PATCHES

Auroral patches feature irregularly shaped areas of diffuse, glowing light that can cover large portions of the sky. They can appear in various colors, stationary, or move slowly across the sky.



photo by John Hyde

CORONAS

A corona is a circular or oval-shaped aurora that appears to radiate from a single point in the sky. It can have a bright central spot surrounded by a dimmer ring of light, which occurs during strong overhead activity.

2026

JANUARY

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MAY

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SEPTEMBER

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FEBRUARY

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JUNE

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OCTOBER

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18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
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MARCH

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JULY

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NOVEMBER

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APRIL

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AUGUST

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DECEMBER

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20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27	28	29	30	31			

Aurora 2025

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- Photographers share the story behind the photo and reveal how they "Got the Shot"
- Special Feature: Common aurora shapes
- Photo location map



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