

## Let there be the northern lights

Is the time to book your trip to Northern Norway - this winter will be the best in many years to see the northern lights, says NASA.

*Image: Antti Pietikainen and [www.theaurorazone.com](http://www.theaurorazone.com)  
Photo By: The Aurora Zone: Searching for the Northern Lights*



*<http://www.flickr.com/photos/theaurorazone/>*

*Aurora tonight - more on my site <http://dakotalapse.com/?p=581>*



*Photo By: DakotaLapse*

Each appearance of the northern lights is unique. Often you see three green bands across the night sky. Or the lights come as flickering curtains **or** rolling smoke. The colour is a luminous green, often with a hint of pink along the edge, and occasionally with a deep violet centre. If there is a lot of activity up there, the northern lights explode for a minute or two in a corona.

## The science behind the northern lights

What exactly is the northern lights? It is the sun that lies behind the formation of the auroras.

During **large solar explosions** and flares, huge quantities of particles are thrown out of the sun and into deep space. When the particles meet the Earth's magnetic shield, they are led towards a circle around the magnetic North Pole, where they interact with the upper layers of the atmosphere. The energy which is then released is the northern lights. All this happens approximately 100 kilometres above our heads.

*Photo By: John Hemmingsen*



*<http://www.flickr.com/photos/johnhemphoto/>*

## Living legend

Perhaps not so surprisingly, the northern lights' spectacle has given rise to as many legends as there have been people watching. Symbols linked to the northern lights are found on the Sami shamanistic drum. The phenomenon has several different names in Sami. It is, for instance, known as Guovssahas, which means "the light which can be heard". The northern lights were traditionally associated with sound by [the Sami](#), the indigenous people of Norway. And during the Viking Age, the northern lights were said to be the armour of the Valkyrie warrior virgins, shedding a strange flickering light.

## Be patient

When dreaming about seeing the northern lights, you must remember that you are at the complete mercy of nature. The northern lights love to play hide and seek. Observing the aurora



*Photo By: Antony Spencer Photography*

borealis is often a tug of war between your patience and the aurora itself. Stay in the northern lights area at least a week, preferably two, and you will be rewarded - unless local weather suddenly decides to obstruct your view with clouds.