

Aurora Photography Guide



AURORA VILLAGE
Yellowknife, Canada

Now that you're planning a trip to see one of nature's most incredible sights, you don't want to show up unprepared to capture the moment. If you're thinking only the pros can take a good photo, you're wrong. You just need a bit of equipment and a willingness to shoot on Manual. Don't let that scare you off if you haven't done so before. We'll give you a starting point for your settings and all you have to do is experiment and make a few tweaks for that great shot.

You don't need top of the line cameras or lenses; however, shooting with a digital DSLR camera is your best option. Compact digital cameras (point-and-shoot) are less capable of taking a good photo, but are still able to so long as it has a manual function that allows for a 15 second exposure around f/3.8. If you're thinking you'll just catch a quick snapshot off your phone, chances are you are going to be highly dissatisfied in your results and we recommend borrowing a camera or renting one before you come.

To Start

Set ISO to 800 or lower
Set 15 second shutter speed
Set 2.8 aperture

If you're unfamiliar with your camera, we'll help you out, but we strongly encourage you to spend some time with it, read the users manual, and get to know it so that you are prepared when you arrive.

Start with these settings and then adjust slightly until you get the photo you want. There are no exact settings because each camera and lens is different and also because your exposure will depend on how much light there is. The moon, stars, aurora and man-made light sources will all impact what settings you will choose.

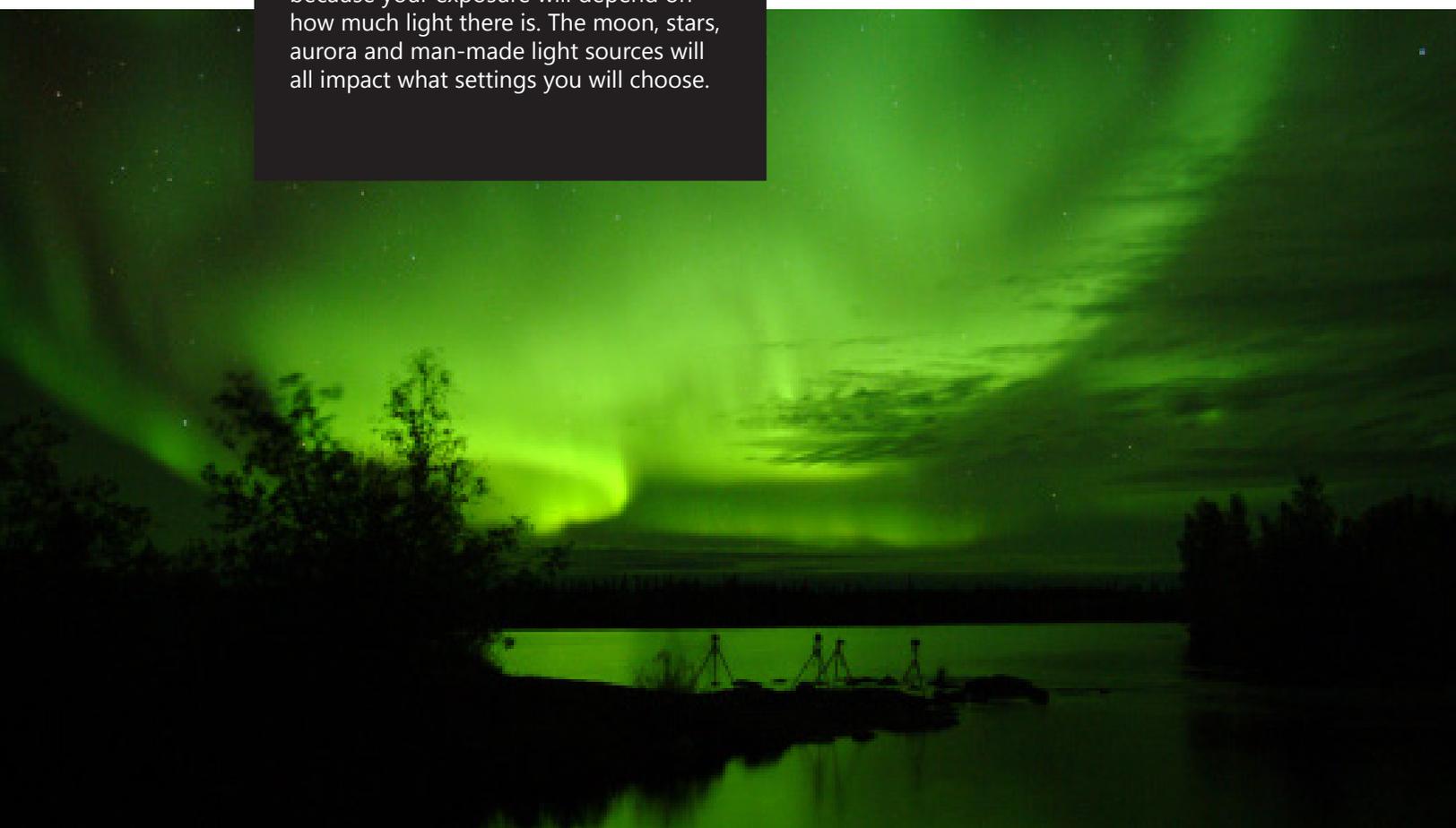
The Equipment

A tripod is a must. You will be shooting with longer exposures which means the camera must be kept completely still so as to avoid blurriness. Choose one with a ball head or pan tilt so that you can point your camera straight up as the aurora will often be going directly over your head.

Spare batteries are important. During the winter, it can be extremely cold and your batteries will drain quickly. Depending on how many photos you will be taking, you'll want to bring along the proper amount of batteries.

Headlamps are a good idea as it will be dark outside and you'll want your hands free so that you can adjust your camera settings without trying to hold a flashlight. Please be respectful to those around you though and shut it off when you don't need it.

A cable release or remote control is beneficial as it will allow you to take your pictures without disturbing the camera and potentially causing shakiness and blurring.



Quick Reference Page



The Lens

Because the aurora glides, dips and whirls across the entire sky, you'll want to use a **wide angle lens** so that you will be able to incorporate enough of the night sky. A 14-35 mm lens is a good choice, however bringing multiple lenses will give you more options with your shots.

The F-Stop

You'll want to shoot with the **lowest F-stop** possible in order to let in a lot of light. Generally, f/2.8 or smaller is the best; however, if you are shooting f/4.0 you will still be able to photograph the lights, but you will have to increase your exposure time to 30 seconds or more and increase your ISO.

The ISO

You want a **low ISO** in order to keep your images less noisy or grainy. For shooting the aurora, between 400 and 800 is good, however some lenses are capable of shooting higher than that, or you may have to increase it in order to accommodate your F-stop and exposure time. If possible, also turn on noise reduction in your settings.

The Exposure Time

It takes some experimenting, but a good starting point is **15 seconds**. Some photos come out great at 8 seconds and others need over 30 seconds. For exposures over 30 seconds, stars will start to trail and the aurora will be more blurry. By keeping it shorter, the distinct shapes will show, although too short and your image won't turn out.

Extra Tips

If you have any filters on your lens, you will want to remove them as they will cause concentric rings on your photo.

Use manual focus. Most camera's have trouble auto-focussing in low light and night conditions. With long exposures, the focus can change during the shot as well and impact the photo's quality.

There are plenty of foreground options at Aurora Village, such as our glowing teepees, lake and wooded areas, so make sure to use them to give your photo context. Try some shots without foreground for a more abstract photo.

Make sure to bring a memory card with plenty of storage space. You can also set up your camera with shutter actuation and it will take a photo at select intervals until your card is full and then you can make a time-lapse video with your footage, so long as you didn't move the camera.

Common Courtesy at Aurora Village

We have many guests coming out every single night who, like you, want that perfect photo. Please set your LCD screen brightness to low so as to reduce light pollution - no one wants an annoying light showing up in their beautiful aurora shot! You can also cover the screen when shooting and if there are any other lights that may stay on and interfere with other guests' experience, please cover them up. We also ask that you do not shoot using flash. If you do bring a headlamp, please shut off your light (it will also impact your own photos) when you do not need it.



Checklist

- Camera
- Wide Angle Lens
- Tripod
- Spare Batteries
- Memory Card(s)
- Cable Release
- Headlamp

Start Point Settings

ISO 800
15 Second Exposure
f/2.8

Basic Tips

Don't use flash
Use manual settings
Use manual focus
Set LCD brightness to low
Remove filters
Use tripod
Read users manual
Experiment!

AURORA VILLAGE

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