Aurora Go/No-Go Card

Should you go out for the northern lights tonight? Work down the page. · auroramoose.com

1 Days ahead: is it worth keeping the night free?

NOAA 3-day forecast, max Kp	Arctic (Tromsø, Lapland, Iceland, Alaska)	Scotland, Canada, northern US
Kp 0–2	**Go if clear**	**Unlikely**
Kp 3–4	**Good night**	**Far north only, low on horizon**
Kp 5 (G1)	**Strong, often overhead**	**Worth planning for**
Kp 6+ (G2+)	**Big show likely**	**Go. Phones will catch it first**

27-day outlooks only tell you which *week* to keep free. CME arrival times are often off by 10+ hours.

2 Afternoon: can you actually see the sky?

- [ ] **Cloud:** hourly forecast for your spot shows under ~30% cover after dark. If not, check one or two places within an hour's drive.
- [ ] **Darkness:** sun more than 12° below the horizon (in autumn and spring at high latitude, that can be late).
- [ ] **Moon:** note when it rises and sets. A bright moon high up hides faint aurora.
- [ ] **View north:** your spot has an open northern horizon (south in the southern hemisphere) and no street lights.
- [ ] **Roads:** conditions and fuel checked. Someone knows where you're going.

3 After dark: what the live solar wind says

Live value	Go	Wait and watch	Stay in
Bz (nT)	South (negative) for 15+ min, ideally −5 or lower	Flipping around 0	North (positive) for hours
Speed (km/s)	Above ~450, rising	350–450	Below ~350 and steady
Density (p/cm^3)	Sudden jump (a stream or CME arriving)	Normal, 3–10	n/a
OVATION map	Oval over or near you	Oval just to your north	Oval far to your north

> **Rule of thumb:** when Bz turns south and stays there, activity usually follows within 30–60 minutes. Bursts (substorms) often last only 15–30 minutes, and the most likely window is about 10 pm–2 am local time.

4 Outside

- [ ] Phone screen dimmed or red, no torches pointed at the sky. Give your eyes **20 minutes**.
- [ ] Faint aurora looks like grey cloud to the eye. Point your phone camera north in night mode; it sees green first.
- [ ] Quiet start? Keep checking. The second half of the night often differs from the first.

© 2026 Moose · auroramoose.com · Data: NOAA Space Weather Prediction Center, Finnish Meteorological Institute, Open-Meteo

Free to print and share, unchanged and with credit

The cold-night kit

Standing still under the sky is colder than any activity. Pack for an hour without moving.

A Wear

- [ ] Wool or merino base layer, top and bottom
- [ ] Fleece or down mid layer
- [ ] Windproof, insulated outer jacket and trousers
- [ ] Insulated winter boots, a size up
- [ ] Thick wool socks (plus a spare pair)
- [ ] Thin liner gloves under warm mittens
- [ ] Hat that covers your ears
- [ ] Buff or scarf for face and neck

B Bring

- [ ] Phone, fully charged, in an inside pocket
- [ ] Power bank or spare camera batteries, kept warm
- [ ] Small tripod or something steady to rest the phone on
- [ ] Head torch with a red light mode
- [ ] Hot drink in a flask, and a snack
- [ ] Foam pad or something to stand or sit on
- [ ] Hand and toe warmers
- [ ] Offline map of your spot

C Phone camera starting points

Phone	Settings to try
iPhone	Night mode on, phone on a tripod or rested so it can use the longest time (up to 30 s). Tap to focus on a distant light or bright star. Turn flash off.
Samsung / Android	Pro mode: ISO 800–3200, shutter 5–15 s (shorter if the aurora is moving fast), focus set to infinity (∞), white balance about 3500–4000 K. Or Night mode on a tripod.
With fireworks	Shorter exposures (2–4 s). Keep the town small on the horizon and the sky big in the frame.

D Safety in the cold

- [ ] Tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back.
- [ ] Stay off frozen lakes and rivers unless you know the ice is safe locally.
- [ ] Park fully off the road; never stop on a bend. Watch for reindeer and moose in the dark.
- [ ] Numb, white patches on cheeks, nose or fingers mean frostbite starting. Go back to the warm.

Want the checks done for you? Moose, our free Android app, combines live aurora activity, your cloud cover and darkness into one score, and only alerts you when they line up. Search "Moose Aurora Alerts" on Google Play.

Guides and forecasts: auroramoose.com/blog · Live data: auroramoose.com/northern-lights-tonight

© 2026 Moose · auroramoose.com · Data: NOAA Space Weather Prediction Center, Finnish Meteorological Institute, Open-Meteo

Free to print and share, unchanged and with credit