

Dark Sky Parks and Northern Lights

- [Resources](#)

Resources

Best Times in the U.P. to Stargaze and See the Northern Lights

Stargazing is great all year. Go out on a clear night with no lake-effect snow in the [weather forecast](#).

To see the Northern Lights, venture out on cloudless nights between August and April, with peak months being April, October and November. Check the forecast and tailor your search with these sites:

- [NOAA Space Weather Prediction Center](#)
- [National Weather Service](#)
- [Aurora Forecast](#)
- [Keweenaw Dark Sky Park](#)

When the KP Index is in the 0-2 range, the Aurora Borealis will be farther north, dimmer in intensity, and not as shimmery. When the index reaches the 3-5 range, the Northern Lights move farther from the poles and explode in color and motion.

The U.P.'s Best Stargazing and Northern Lights Viewing Spots

Go anywhere in the Upper Peninsula away from town lights to see the stars and planets. For [watching the Northern Lights](#), the farther north you go, the more likely you will see them on the horizon. The southern shore of Lake Superior offers the best views.

These are some favorite areas throughout the U.P.:

<https://app.snapsea.io/p/embed/96e01360-b39d-4d1e-87fb-09648bb4182f?locale=en>

- [Drummond Island](#)
- [Brimley State Park](#)
- [Whitefish Point](#)
- [Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore](#)
- [Munising](#)
- [Au Train](#)
- [Marquette](#)
- [Big Bay](#)
- [Escanaba](#)
- [Skanee](#)
- [Copper Harbor - Keweenaw Dark Sky Park](#)
- [Isle Royale National Park](#)
- [Eagle River](#)
- [Ontonagon](#)

Drummond Island

[Back to Top of List](#)

This [Lake Huron island](#) in the far-eastern Upper Peninsula offers some of the best Northern Lights viewing in the world. Two places to plop down your blanket and look out to the horizon are Drummond Island Township Park Beach about six miles east of the ferry dock and Glen Cove Beach on the eastern end of the island, just north of Marble Head.

<https://app.snapsea.io/p/file/embed/6f5b8308-0ff8-47ce-bab1-b3656a2898f1>

Brimley State Park

[Back to Top of List](#)

One of the [oldest state parks](#) in the Upper Peninsula, this park has 2,000 feet of sandy Lake Superior beach to watch the sky show on clear nights to the north.

Whitefish Point

[Back to Top of List](#)

[Whitefish Point](#) is located at the northeastern tip of the Upper Peninsula, 11 miles from the town of Paradise. Its Lake Superior rocky/sandy beach is renowned for rock collecting, freighter and bird watching, and seeing the Northern Lights.

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore

[Back to Top of List](#)

The country's first national lakeshore, [Pictured Rocks](#) pairs Lake Superior viewing with its historical, sandstone cliffs. If you think these views are stunning in the daylight, just wait for nightfall. With the park open 24 hours a day, you will have no trouble finding a spot to watch the Northern Lights and stargaze. Some popular viewing places are Grand Portal Point, Miner's Beach and Twelvemile Beach.

<https://app.snapsea.io/p/file/embed/e87c42bc-b15e-42e9-907c-0f0616ade208>

Munising

[Back to Top of List](#)

Along M-28 between Munising and Marquette, take any of the Lake Superior pullouts to find a spot along the shore to catch the Northern Lights or star-filled sky. The nice thing about these pullouts is in winter you have the option to watch the sky show from the warmth of your car.

Au Train

[Back to Top of List](#)

Located in the Hiawatha National Forest, [Au Train Beach](#) is easily accessible from M-28. It's a good dark sky area.

Marquette

[Back to Top of List](#)

The [U.P.'s largest city](#) has some of the best Northern Lights viewing, especially in the late fall and early winter months. Check out the M-28 pullouts mentioned above or hike in the summer months to watch this soul-stirring sky display from Sugarloaf Mountain.

<https://app.snapsea.io/p/file/embed/b6fadee7-a0a0-4470-97b2-10e52c962783>

Big Bay

[Back to Top of List](#)

The small town of Big Bay is 23 miles northwest of Marquette and is located on Lake Superior's Big Bay. You can catch the Northern Lights from the [Big Bay Point Lighthouse](#) (now a bed and breakfast) or Squaw Beach.

Escanaba

[Back to Top of List](#)

Lake Michigan also offers some Northern Lights viewing destinations. As you travel along US-2, duck down the Garden Peninsula and Stonington Peninsula east of Escanaba. When Northern Lights conditions are right, claim your viewing spot at [Fayette Historic State Park & Townsite](#) , [Sac Bay County Park](#) or [Ludington Park](#) in Escanaba. All three are open year-round.

Read more about the [Best places for stargazing in Michigan's U.P.](#)

Skanee

[Back to Top of List](#)

One of the best places near Skanee to view the Northern Lights and stars is in [Arvon Township Park](#). It is along the Huron Bay, one of the largest freshwater fjords in North America.

<https://app.snapsea.io/p/file/embed/9e6729f5-1c80-47bb-81b0-648d685208e7>

Copper Harbor - Keweenaw Dark Sky Park

[Back to Top of List](#)

The U.P. is thrilled to have a dark sky park certified by the International Dark Sky Association. It is the third in Michigan. The [Keweenaw Dark Sky Park](#) is headquartered at the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge outside of Copper Harbor and extends to Brockway Mountain. The lodge opens its grounds nightly at no cost to the public and offers stargazing workshops and events throughout the year.

[Map of the Keweenaw Dark Sky Park, located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan](#)

Isle Royale National Park

[Back to Top of List](#)

[Isle Royale National Park](#) — Minong “the good place” in Ojibwa — is one of the least visited national parks in the country. Conversely, it is also one of the most revisited and on National Geographic’s “Best of the World” list for 2021. While this remote and rugged Lake Superior park is a premier location to watch the Northern Lights, it is only open to visitors in the warmer months. Your best bet is to see the aurora between mid-April and late October.

Eagle River

[Back to Top of List](#)

On the west side of the Keweenaw Peninsula, Eagle River and [Eagle Harbor](#), along M-26 offer some Northern Lights viewing on their Lake Superior coastline. Look north toward Canada and watch the sky dance!

<https://app.snapsea.io/p/file/embed/817919c0-3fb2-4fe3-974e-abefff59ccc>

Ontonagon

[Back to Top of List](#)

Framed by the vastness of Lake Superior, Ontonagon boasts a prime location for viewing the Northern Lights. With minimal light pollution and breathtaking northern vistas, it's a photographer's dream come true. The nearby [Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park](#) offers additional options for finding that perfect aurora-viewing spot.

<https://app.snapsea.io/p/file/embed/2facfa5e-3fc3-4fed-9b55-e56ef4706079>

How to Take Stunning Northern Lights Photos

You do not need a full-frame camera to capture the shimmering beauty of the Northern Lights, although many professional stargazers prefer them. Use any camera with manual controls so you can adjust the ISO, exposure time and aperture settings. Set ISO between 1600-3200 with exposure lengths between 15 and 30 seconds. Pack a wide-angle lens and set the aperture between f/2.8 and f/5.6.

Bring a lightweight, sturdy tripod and add an intervalometer and two to three fully charged batteries to your camera case.

We hope to see you under the stars soon!