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Q&A with Florian Wachter: Hunting Aurora Borealis  



[@Florian_W](#) is an independent photographer whose career spans more than 12 years. He's the owner of [Flow Motion](#), a small photographic studio in the German region of Hochfranken, and also one of the oldest members of Google's Street View trusted program.

What is the biggest challenge about shooting the Northern Lights?

It's all about patience and good timing. Four years ago, I traveled with my girlfriend, who is also a passionate photographer, to Iceland in the hopes of seeing the Northern Lights. This ended up being an amazing trip and well worth it. It was the beginning of March but we were very lucky with the weather and took some great landscape photos. Unfortunately, we didn't get to catch a glimpse of the Northern Lights. We waited patiently in the fields each night but with no success.

That didn't discourage us though and in the winter we flew to Northern Norway. This is where, for the first time, we saw Aurora Borealis shine the brightest.

So the biggest challenge, I guess, is being in the right place at the right time. Also, the lights alone are nice but only with the right foreground and perhaps some silhouettes in the distance are you going to get a great photo. That's why you need to carefully check the location and weather forecast beforehand. Plan ahead, as much as you can. And even then, there are no guarantees. This year in Lofoten, there were such thick clouds every evening that we almost got nothing. But that's all part of the game.

What sort of gear did you use?

I use different kinds of gear. Of course, a really good stable tripod is vital. For bodies, I prefer Canon 6D or 5D Mark IV. For lenses - Tamron 15-30mm /f 2,8, Canon 24-70 mm f 2,8/L, Canon 8-15mm f4/L and sometimes also with fixed focal length or 12-24 mm Sigma f3,5. The most important thing, however, is good clothes. If you get cold while waiting, the whole night is at risk.

What advice can you give to fellow photographers who also want to photograph this phenomenon?

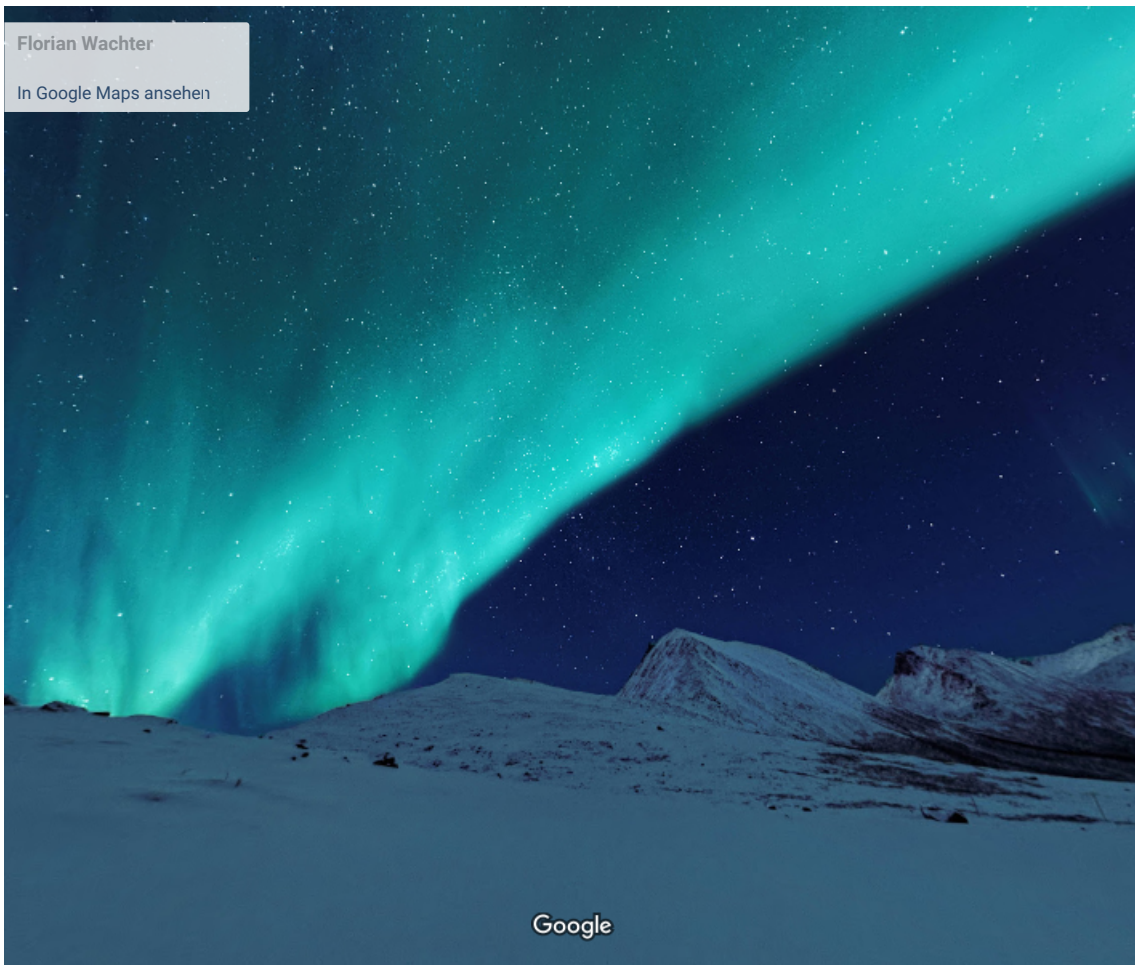
Always have a spare battery and a memory card at hand. There is hardly anything more annoying than having to go back to the car, exactly when the show has started. We always prepare the cameras in advance. We adjust the focus so it doesn't have to be done on the spot, load the lamps and the rest of our gear and when the time has come, we just jump in the car and go.

Where to next?

There are lots of places we'd like to visit. Actually, we loved our first trip to Iceland so much that ever since we've been going north at least once every year. Greenland is in the plans and perhaps Lofoten again in the summer. This time, we might go on my motorbike and bring some camping gear as well. For next winter, we're also considering Northern Finland.


Florian Wachter

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