

## Location

The Northern Lights can be found in the North Pole, but can also be found around the South Pole.

They are only visible during a set time of year; these are during September to October and from March to April.



They can be seen from a range of different countries the most known is that of Iceland.

## Names

The Northern Lights is also known as Aurora Borealis.

Aurora = Roman goddess of dawn

Borealis = Greek name for the north wind

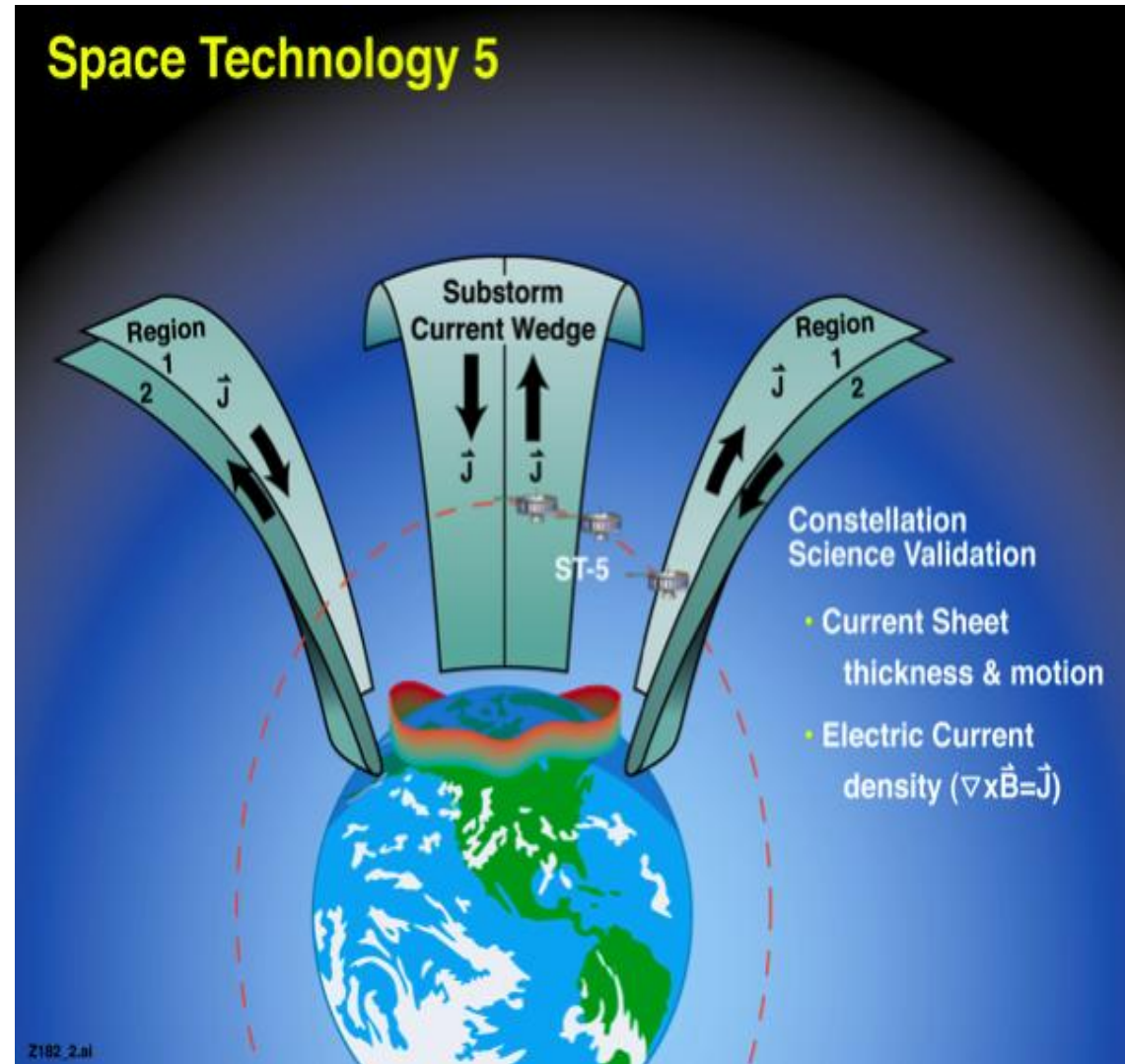
The Northern Lights are also called the Dance of Spirits

The Southern Lights is also known as Aurora Australis



## What is it?

1. The Sun sends solar winds and charged particles (cosmic rays) to the Earth.
2. The Earth's magnetic field deflects cosmic rays, causing them to spiral around the magnetic field close to the North and South Poles.
3. Electrons in the atmosphere make atoms glow in different colours



## Art



Viking ships below the aurora arcs, from Snorre Sturluson, Norway's Royal Sagas

One writer expressed these feelings as he watched a beautiful auroral display:  
*"No pencil can draw it, no colours can paint it, and no words can describe it in all its magnificence."*

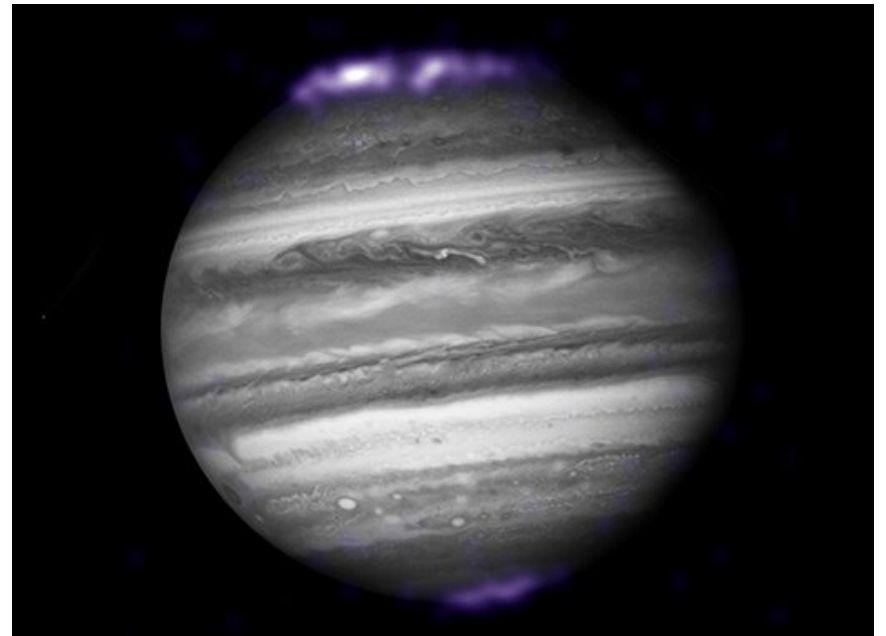
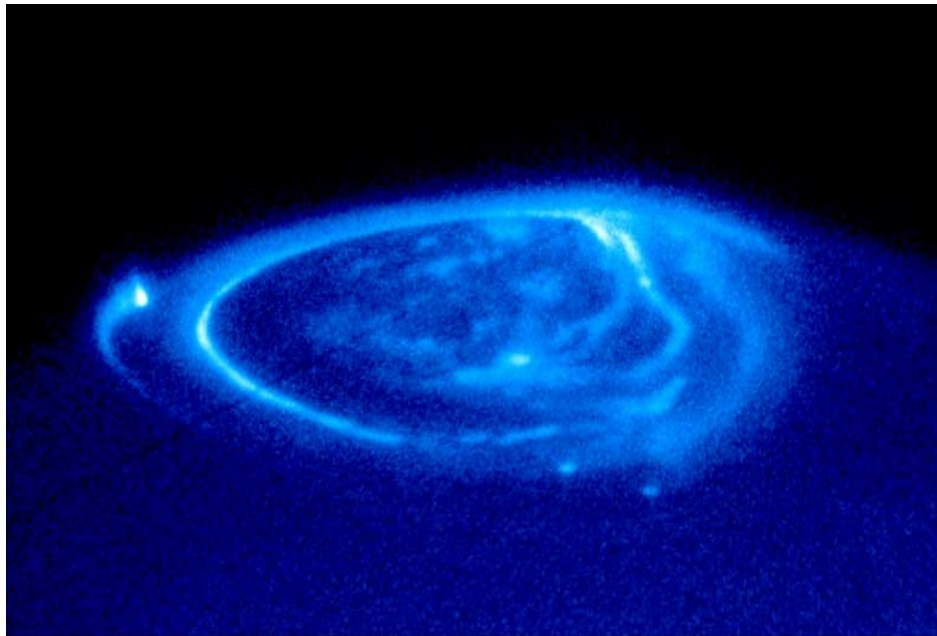
A drawing of northern lights made during a French expedition to Alta in 1838-39.





## Other Planets

The Northern Lights can also be found on other planets. Jupiter and Saturn both experience the Northern Lights. The Hubble Space telescope has photographed this. Below is an image of Jupiter.



## Myths



Since people in olden times did not understand what northern lights were, they often created myths and superstition to explain the dancing spirits or fighting hordes in the sky. Auroras were commonly associated with dancing in Norway; inhabitants believed that northern lights were old maids, dancing and waving.

**Vikings:** During the Viking period, northern lights were referred to as reflections from dead maidens.

**Scottish:** The well-known Scottish expression for auroras is "merry dancers".

**Eskimos (Inuits):** Among the Eskimos in Greenland and northern Canada, the aurora was the realm of the dead, and when the lights changed rapidly, it meant that dead friends were trying to contact their living relatives.

## Myths



**Native Americans:** Many Native Americans believed that they could conjure up ghosts and spirits by whistling to the lights. It was a common belief that the northern lights were the reflections in the sky of huge fires in the distant north, or that the mighty God himself lighted up the dark and cold parts of the world.

**Danish:** One romantic idea found in Danish folklore is that these lights were due to a group of swans flying so far to the north that they were caught in the ice. Each time they flapped their wings, they created reflections which created the northern lights.