

The Bright Spark

LIGHT GUYS ON HOLIDAY

Viraf Pocha



Hey – We have all had a wonderful season. The Covid bounce-back has been amazing.

Lots of work means lots of money in the bank.

Lots of work means we've been away from our families.....a lot.

Lots of work means we are exhausted.

So, we need a holiday. Here I am wearing my Lighting Tour Guide hat and sharing some destinations every Light Guy should visit.

Destinations that pack something for our families. Something for our souls.

Something to inspire us to have an even more successful season ahead.

Some of us have been lucky to be on summer tours in Europe and America; and I'm sure you will have seen some amazing shows and played with some amazing equipment. Lucky you. Please share your stories on social media so all of us can learn a little.

This here is when you wear your holiday clothes and step out for some fun.

The first destination must be the NORTHERN LIGHTS. Aurora Borealis.

The sight filled the northern sky; the immensity of it was scarcely conceivable.

As if from Heaven itself, great curtains of delicate light hung and trembled.

Pale green and rose-pink, and as transparent as the most fragile fabric, and at the bottom edge a profound and fiery crimson like the fires of Hell,

they swung and shimmered loosely with more grace than the most skilful dancer.

Lyra thought she could even hear them: a vast distant whispering swish.

- **Phillip Pullman, His Dark Materials**

Solar storms on our star's surface give out huge clouds of electrically charged particles.

Most of these particles are deflected into space, but some get captured in the Earth's magnetic field, accelerating down towards the north and south poles into the atmosphere.

"These particles then slam into

atoms and molecules in the Earth's atmosphere and essentially heat them up," explains Royal Observatory astronomer **Tom Kerss**. "We call this physical process 'excitation', but it's very much like heating a gas and making it glow."

The Aurora's characteristic wavy patterns and 'curtains' of light are caused by the lines of force in the Earth's magnetic field.

I'm sure we have all seen the photos – but it is impossible to capture the scale. From one end of the horizon to another. Imagine 100 Pink Floyd stages lined up on the horizon. Now double that vision.

Usually green, sometimes blue. If you are lucky - pink.

Buy top quality snow jackets and boots. You need to be around the Arctic Circle. Best would be to chase them. It is nature, so you must be lucky. They don't show up on demand. Like in a tiger sanctuary – one day, nobody will see anything. The next night, the sky is on fire.

Ideally, you can chase them. By boat and then by car. Start from Greenland to Iceland. Then onto Norway. Tromsø is accepted as the heart of the Northern Lights. Svalbard too (also in Norway) reports great viewings. Then onto Swedish and Finnish Lapland.

In Finland, you can also rent a glass igloo and see the lights from the comfort of a heated glass bubble.

Of course, if you are adventurous – spend a night in a tent in the Scandinavian wilderness.

This is usually a winter activity.

In the summer, across the same Northern skies, you may be lucky to see **Circumhorizontal Arcs** or "**Fire Rainbows**".

These beautiful natural phenomena are popularly known as fire rainbows. The form when sunlight hits the ice crystals trapped within cirrus clouds that are very high in the sky.

If you miss that – you may catch **Nacreous Clouds**. Again, spotted in the polar regions, high up in the atmosphere, where the air is cold and dry. The setting sun lies lower than the clouds, creating a colourful iridescent shine as they reflect sunbeams back. These clouds are also known as the 'mother of pearl clouds' and are only seen at the twilight hours of dawn and dusk.

Moving to warmer climates, but still looking into the sky – Let's go to Vene-

zuela. Specifically, to the mouth of the Cataumbo River, which sees more lightning than anywhere else on Earth. The 'everlasting lightning' occurs upto 260 nights of the year and can last over 10 hours. The area is so stormy because cool breezes from the mountains meet warm, moist air, creating electric charges and lightning storms that can have over 280 lightning strikes per hour.

After bowing our heads to nature – let's head indoors.

A list of some incredible Light Exhibitions

Budapest. To the **Light Art Museum**, located within the Heritage Downtown Market Hall. Walk through a series of large-scale, multi-sensory installations that harness technologies to create some amazing spaces.

The **Museum of Light** in **Mexico City** is located in the former San Ildefonso College. This is probably the closest to a traditional museum that explores the relationship of light to various sciences. Its six major permanent exhibits are **The Nature of Light** which explores the basic principles of light as physics. **The Light of the Stars** exhibit focuses on the chemistry of these celestial bodies.

A World of Colours and **Light in the Arts** are pretty much just that.

Light and the Biosphere focuses on how light is important to life.

The last section is called **Vision**, which focuses on how eyes work.

On to Tokyo, where **TeamLab** has set up the engaging **Interactive Light Museum**. This **Japanese Digital Art Collection** brings together some of Japan's foremost designers to create immersive experiences where people are invited to walk through the exhibits – sometimes even shaping them. In fact, the advice for you is, wear white tops and pants with flat sports shoes – so the mirrors don't embarrass you and you blend into the exhibits.

This exhibition is now touring the world and will soon find a permanent space in Hamburg.

Close by in **Krakow, Poland** is the **Museum of Light & Illusions**. Relatively small but located on a bustling street bursting with youthful activity, this quirky place is a relief from the incredible art and sculptor that fills the nearby areas.

Let's hop across to **Paris**. The **Centre**

Pompidou. This beautiful building houses a superb collection of installations built and incorporating lighting sources in innovative ways.

Will Lighting ever replace ART?

To answer that, let's zip across the world to the **Fields of Light** at the base of **Uluru Rock** in **Australia**.

Imagine 50,000 stems of flowers in glass – all lit up in the shadow of this imposing mountain.

Truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Let's now head to the **Lantern Festival**. The Chinese Lantern Festival is held around February and a separate Lantern Festival is held across the region on Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia. Chiang Mai, up in the mountains, is an ideal location to enjoy this festival of light and love.

The USA and the UK also celebrate versions of this festival.

Our own festival of lights, **Diwali**, marks the start of the 'Season' in India. Something for everyone.

Let's end our tour at the **Snow and Ice Festival** in Harbin, China. Usually runs from late December till late February.

While it's officially an Ice Festival, lights are used widely to highlight the translucency and transparency of the ICE.

If not a must visit – a must-browse-to-glimpse the immense scale of the exhibits.

Feeling inspired? Energised?

Great. Let's see some wonderful work here in India where some people are hard at work to build and develop a Light Festival right here in the country.

In the last few years, we have seen some great Sound and Light shows at so many monuments around India. Our Future is BRIGHT.