

# WATCH

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THE WATCH MAGAZINE REDEFINED

**Aesthetic** Details such as the aged 45-mm steel case and the faded look of the olive canvas strap transcend the ordinary.

**Sophistication** The COSC-certified RL300-1 self-winding mechanical movement achieves chronometer-level accuracy.

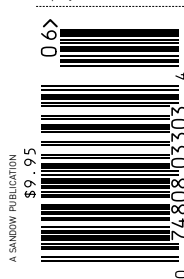


**Inspiration** The romance of a luxury safari is reflected in the vintage style of the dial and the ruggedness of the blackened steel case.

RALPH LAUREN RL67 CHRONOMETER

ARTYA  
BACKES & STRAUSS  
BALL  
BELL & ROSS  
BREGUET  
BREMONT  
CARTIER  
CITIZEN  
CLERC  
CVSTOS  
DIOR  
F.P. JOURNE  
FRANCK MÜLLER  
FRÉDÉRIQUE CONSTANT  
GIULIANO MAZZUOLI  
GRAHAM  
GREUBEL-FORSEY  
GUCCI  
JAEGER-LECOULTRE  
JEAN DUNAND  
KRIEGER  
LOUIS VUITTON  
LUMINOX  
MIKI-ELETA  
MONTBLANC  
MOTOART  
MÜHLE GLASHÜTTE  
OCHS UND JUNIOR  
OMEGA  
ORBITA  
PANERAI  
PATEK PHILIPPE  
PERRELET  
PIAGET  
RALPH LAUREN  
REACTOR  
SEIKO  
TAG HEUER  
THOMAS PRESCHER  
ULYSSE NARDIN  
UNDERWOOD LONDON  
VACHERON CONSTANTIN  
VAN CLEEF & ARPELS  
WEMPE  
ZENITH

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# Five Days of Night

BY KEITH W. STRANDBERG

I GOT OFF THE PLANE IN KIRUNA, SWEDEN, in the fading light of day, even though it was only 11 a.m. I had come to this small city, miles above the Arctic Circle, to experience the Northern Lights and to try out some luminous watches in a Lapland setting, where it's important to be able to read a watch in darkness. You see, during the winter in this northernmost mining town, there are days when the sun never rises above the horizon and darkness fills the days as well as the nights. I had committed to five days of night.

## The Northern Lights

★ This year, 2013, was predicted to be one of the best of the past 50 years in terms of high solar activity, making this the ideal time to go in search of the Northern Lights, Aurora Borealis. According to experts, the multicolored lights that appear in the Northern sky are the result of a reaction between high-energy particles expelled by the sun and atoms high

in our atmosphere. Although they're said to be constantly occurring, they're not visible in daylight, even the light pollution from a small village renders the lights invisible, so the challenge is to find the right conditions for viewing. Known for its virtually cloudless sky, Kiruna's Abisko Aurora Sky Station is said to be one of the best places for catching a glimpse of the Northern Lights.

Luminous  
watches  
and the  
Northern  
Lights



## Lighting the Way

Because the nights are so long in Kiruna, it's important to have a watch that can go for hours without losing luminosity. I had brought along a selection of timepieces made by Ball, Bremont, Luminox, Reactor, Seiko and Artya and representing a variety of illumination strategies. Three of the watches use Super-LumiNova, a photoluminescent material that absorbs energy when exposed to light and then glows in the dark. Two of the watches use tritium-filled tubes on their hands and markers. Tritium is a radioactive gas that glows at a constant rate regardless of exposure to light, so there is no question that the watch will be visible, no matter how long the night lasts. Super-LumiNova glows more brightly than tritium when it's fully charged, but loses brightness over time. One of the watches, the Reactor Poseidon Titanium LE NeverDark combines the two technologies for a best-of-both-worlds result.

Some people prefer Super-LumiNova, while others like tritium better. I don't have a real preference as long as I can read my watch in the dead of night. Each of the watches I brought along performed perfectly during my arctic outing. The Super-LumiNova timepieces (Bremont, Seiko and Artya) were bright and stayed bright for several hours, and then began fading, but were generally still visible for at least eight hours. The Artya has its Super-LumiNova on the bezel surrounding the dial, as well as on the hands, which makes for a great effect. The tritium watches (Ball, Luminox and Reactor) remained at a constant brightness level 24/7. As a result, I was on time for all my arctic activities (snowshoeing, husky driving, cross-country skiing, ice fishing and more).



◀ Bremont Supermarine S2000 with Super-LumiNova [\$5,900]



▶ Artya Son of Earth Tribal Dream Catcher with Super-LumiNova [CHF 7,900]



▶ The Ball Fireman Storm Chaser DLC Glow with tritium gas tubes [\$3,599]



▶ Seiko "Orange Monster" Automatic Diver's Watch with Super-LumiNova [\$475]



▶ Luminox Navy SEAL Colormark LX 3187 with tritium gas tubes [\$675]



▶ Reactor Poseidon Titanium LE NeverDark with both tritium and Super-LumiNova [\$1,500]

## Seeking Aurora

The Aurora Sky Station is located at the top of Abisko Mountain, a 90-minute drive from Kiruna and then another 25 minutes by open chair lift, all in sub-zero temperatures. I bundled up in station-provided outerwear and boots and made the ascent in time for a dinner reservation. Toward the top of the chair lift, the fog and clouds rolled in. There is always the chance that the weather will clear at any time, I was told, but my disappointment was palpable. I ate my reindeer steak—served with cloud-berry garnish—all the while hoping for a reprieve from the clouds outside.

I stepped out onto the side of the mountain again and again to look for the Aurora, but only the smallest glimpses were visible, and only for seconds at a time. About 11:30 p.m., I decided to call it a night. I bundled up once again and boarded the chair lift, disappointed but perfectly aware of the time, thanks to my luminous watches. Once the lift started to move, however, things changed. The cloud cover lifted, the night was suddenly clear, and I was treated to the most amazing sight—the Aurora Borealis in all its glory.

As I descended the mountain, the heavens filled with incredible green, pink and purple lights, undulating across the clear sky. I could even see the stars through the Aurora. One particular Aurora seemed to be following me, stretching out to cover the sky immediately above. I turned from side to side and from front to back, amazed that the entire sky was decorated with these eerie yet amazingly gorgeous lights. Throughout my 25-minute descent, I was treated to the most incredible light show ever. When I got to the bottom and reluctantly exited the lift, the show continued above for another 10 minutes before the clouds rolled back in and it was over.

Long on my personal bucket list, seeing the spectacular Northern Lights can finally be crossed off. I left Swedish Lapland satisfied with my visit to the land of endless night and with the experience of the spectacular if maddeningly elusive Aurora. The luminous watches I traveled with performed flawlessly and continued to glow in the half light as I boarded my plane for home.