

**Through the Lens: A guide to digital photography for computer enthusiasts.**  
*After the click of your camera, you're only half done!*

## Shoot for the Stars – Apps for photographing celestial bodies by Lynda Buske

With the restrictions on travel, I have embraced photography closer to home. It is never boring even when returning to old haunts because the light, the season and the plants are constantly changing. For my dawn and sunset shots, it is particularly helpful to know where the sun/moon are going to rise/set and at what time.

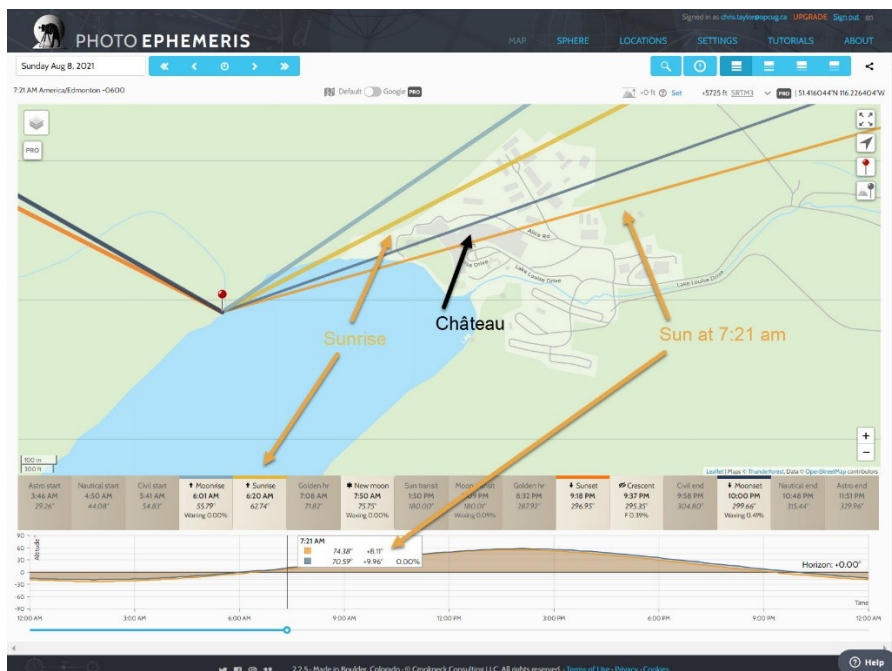
What if you are more adventurous and want to get a shot of the milky way diagonally across the sky above your cottage at the lake? What if you are dreaming of future travel and want to get a spectacular shot of the sun setting at Lake Louise next August 8th?

There are many free and premium web-based and phone or tablet apps to help photographers plan shots in relation to celestial bodies. Two well respected examples are below.

**The Photographer's Ephemeris** (<https://www.photoephemeris.com/>) is a free web-based app that also has a premium version available with additional features (\$40/year). They also have a phone app (Android and iOS) available for \$4 which gives you a few more features such as meteor and milky way tracking.

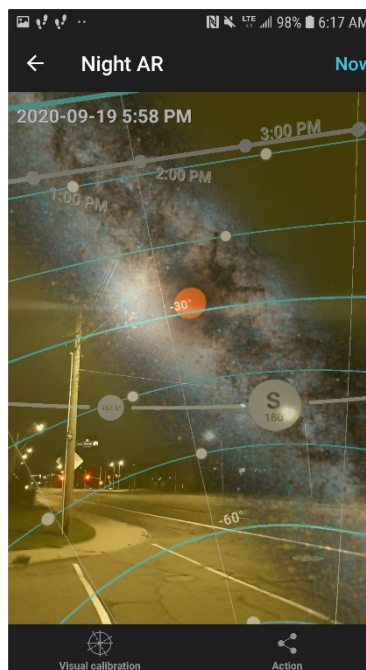
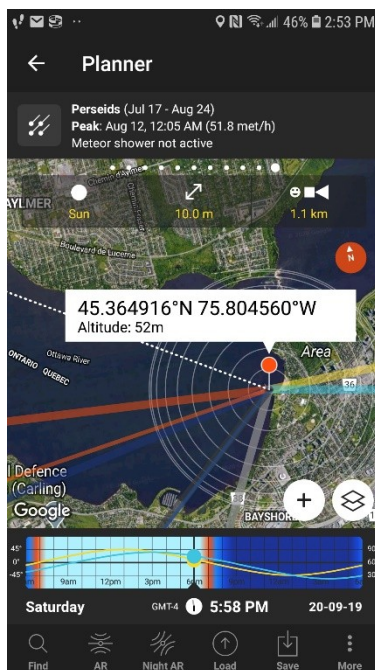
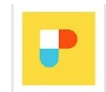
This app lets you choose any position on earth, on any day. It will show you celestial details such as the direction and time of sunrise, sunset, moonrise, moonset, etc. You can also see the direction and altitude of the sun and moon at any time on any day.

As an example, you could use The Photographer's Ephemeris to plan a photograph of the sun rising over the Fairmont Château Lake Louise when you plan to be there August 8, 2021. Wander down the trail on the north edge of the lake and position yourself at the red pushpin. The sun will rise at 6:20 just to the north of the hotel and at 7:20, it will be 8 degrees above the horizon directly over the hotel.



**PhotoPills** (<https://www.photopills.com/>) can do even more but is available only on Android and iOS phones and tablets. The cost of \$14 CDN provides you with a moon calendar, meteor shower tracker, depth of field calculator, exposure equivalents with filters, and hyperfocal distance calculator. It even has a function that shows how long star trails will be for any given exposure time (e.g. screen shot below shows estimate of 3 ¼ hours) or the maximum exposure time to ensure stars are pin-points rather than streaks.

The PhotoPills app has an added feature called “augmented reality” that enables you to see the celestial overlays through your phone’s camera. The photo below shows that when aiming your phone camera on the street where you live, the app can show, for instance, the position of the milky way at that moment or at any date and time in the future. It’s also going to give you the position of other celestial objects such as the moon.



## Bottom Line:

### The Photographer's Ephemeris

<https://www.photoephemeris.com/> - free web based, premium available, \$4 for iOS or Android

### PhotoPills

<https://www.photopills.com/> - \$14 for iOS or Android