

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

25th May to 1st June 2018 (1 week)

ESTONIA

Spring wildlife and orchids of the Baltic



NEW
ITINERARY
FOR 2018

Late spring on the Baltic is a busy time, with birds courting and the meadows bursting into flower.

This holiday is timed to catch the best displays of one of Europe's most flamboyant wild flowers, the spectacular Lady's Slipper Orchid. Other early orchids that we will be seeking out will include Military, Early Purple, Bird's Nest and Burnt-tip Orchids, Red and Sword-leaved Helleborine.

Along the coast, waders and wildfowl will all be heading north, while the summer visitors, birds like Blyth's Reed Warbler, Citrine Wagtail, Red-breasted Flycatcher and Common Rosefinch, should all be encountered as they set up their territories and get on with the busy, short-lived breeding season in Estonia's forests and marshes.

As well as the returning and north-bound migrants, we will be looking for some of the resident bird species of the extensive forests and wetlands of Estonia - all nine species of northern Europe's woodpeckers will be drumming and calling; quietly driving the forest tracks may bring us encounters with Capercaillie and Hazel Hen; White-tailed Eagles hunt along the coastal wetlands; and we will listen out for calling owls and churring Nightjars in the evenings.

Along the way, we will also be paying attention to the large mammals of Estonia - Elk and Roe Deer feed on the floodplain meadows of Matsalu National Park, where European Beavers are common along the wooded waterways. The forests of Estonia are famously one of the best places to spot European Lynx, although we would have to be very lucky to have such a sighting. We are more likely to come across Pine Marten, Red Squirrel or the endearing Raccoon Dog.



Price
£1,675

Single Room Supplement
£160

Full board

- Day 1** flight to Tallinn
- Day 2** Silma
- Day 3** Matsalu
- Day 4** Laelatu & Puhtu
- Day 5** Western Saaremaa
- Day 6** Eastern Saaremaa
- Day 7** Soometsa, S Estonia
- Day 8** Pikkla, back to Tallinn return to UK

Leaders
Charlie Rugeroni
and local guides

spring orchids,
easy birding

Wildlife and culture holidays



Our profits are donated to the **Wildlife Trusts**



ITINERARY

Please note that the itinerary may be changed to suit the weather or other practicalities or at the discretion of the leaders.

Day 1, 25th May Our flight takes us to Tallinn from where we travel to western Estonia and the extensive coastal meadows and floodplain forest and wetlands of **Matsalu National Park**. Our base will be the comfortable Altmoisa hotel on the edge of the national park. o/n Altmoisa

Day 2, 26th May Walking out from the hotel, we will explore the nature trails around Altmoisa, where Military Orchid will be in full bloom. Nearby, we head to Silma reserve, a complex of coastal meadows, lagoons and reedbeds where Bearded Tits, Slavonian Grebes, Little Gull and Black Tern will be amongst our targets. If time permits, we will also visit the historic town of Haapsalu, which sits on a shallow bay where Slavonian Grebe nest and White-tailed Eagle quarter the bay. o/n Altmoisa

Day 3, 27th May Today will be spent exploring the meadows and marshes of Matsalu, the most **famous wetland complex** in Estonia. Numerous wildfowl court in the shallow bays with north-bound waders in smart breeding plumage feeding along the shore line, which should include plenty of colourful Ruff. Blyth's Reed Warblers sing from the scrubby marshlands, with White-backed Woodpecker in the wet woodland and Lesser Spotted Eagle soaring overhead.

This evening we will take a boat trip on the Kasari River, the main river flowing through the national park, where we may see both Daubenton's and Pond Bats hawking low over the water, with plentiful signs of the local European Beavers along the banks, and a good chance of seeing Elk out in the meadows. o/n Altmoisa

Day 4, 28th May This morning we will drive to a species-rich wooded meadow in Laelatu where Lady Slippers, Red and Sword-leaved Helleborine abound, while the nearby broad-leaved forest of Puhtu is home to Early Purple Orchid and Bird-nest Orchid. Later in the afternoon we will take a ferry across to the large **island of Saaremaa**. We will visit the picturesque Koguva village and check for interesting birds along the Väike Väin strait before we arrive at our hotel for the next two nights. o/n Pihluse Manor

Day 5, 29th May We will spend the day in the westernmost part of Saaremaa known for limestone cliffs, scenic views, orchids and other rare plants and encounters with interesting birds. **Sörve peninsula** acts as a bottleneck for birds in migration time and hosts an almost permanently manned bird-station, which we will visit to learn more about the birdlife of the area.

The oak woodland at Loode is great both for a birdwatcher and a plantsman – when chasing a Wryneck or Barred Warbler, one has to take care not to step on a **Lady's Slipper, seen here in thousands**, and we also hope to find the early-flowering form of Burnt-tip Orchid.



Later in the evening, we will visit Viidumäe, hoping for an encounter with churring Nightjar and singing owls, with several species present here. o/n Pilguse Manor

Day 6, 30th May Saaremaa is home to the amazing **meteorite crater field** in Kaali, which we will visit this morning. We will also visit Laidevahe nature reserve, a diverse RAMSAR-listed wetland with lots of inlets, coastal lagoons, reedbeds and coastal and wooded meadows where Osprey, Caspian Tern and Red-necked Grebe are a common sight. Later in the afternoon we will take the ferry to the mainland. o/n Kosmonautika

Day 7, 31st May Early in the morning we will visit Nigula Nature reserve – a beautiful bog with mineral islands covered with **old-growth forests** and bog pools. It is an excellent place for many waders, raptors, grouses and Black Stork.

In the afternoon we will visit Soometsa-Rannametsa nature reserve, where amongst the coniferous forests, bogs and heathland we will look for Black Stork, Lesser Spotted Eagle and the spectacular Capercaillie. In coastal meadows we will look for the smart **Citrine Wagtail**, something of a local speciality, and also look for Wild Gladiolus, *Gladiolus imbricatus*. In the evening there will be another opportunity to visit the forest hoping to hear and see Nightjar and owls. o/n Kosmonautika

Day 8, 1st June We will head west a little way this morning, to visit the fish ponds at Pikla. Here we will listen for booming Bitterns and the wooden song of Thrush Nightingale, while Penduline Tits nest amongst the reeds. Then all too soon, it is time to make our way back to Tallinn for our flight home.

Accommodation, meals, travel and weather

All rooms have en-suite facilities with bath and/or shower. Meals provided during the stay will have an emphasis on local cuisine. Lunches will be a mixture of picnics and café/restaurants. Requests for special diets can be accommodated.

Transport will be by small bus or smaller 'people carrier'-type vehicles if necessary. The ferry to Saaremaa is a passenger/car ferry. The boat trip on the Kasari River will be by small, open, traditional wooden fishing boat.

The weather should be spring like; between 10 and 20 degrees. We hope for dry weather, but rain, wind or cold weather and even snow are always a possibility at this time of year.

Health and fitness

Please see the General Information leaflet for health and fitness requirements. On most days, we are out and about for much of the day, albeit walking a relatively slow pace and making several stops each day. It is necessary to walk on rougher ground and up some **slopes**, although **none of the walking is strenuous**. Walking boots are essential.

There are steps at our hotels, with no lift, as well as up/down into the vehicles and boats. One or two early starts and/or late finishes may be necessary, to maximise our chances to see the wildlife.



Leaders

Charlie Rugeroni is a landscape and garden designer who has previously worked for English Nature, Butterfly Conservation and Marinelife. Charlie has led many previous Wildlife Travel holidays, from Wiltshire to Costa Rica, via Gibraltar, the Vercors, Morocco and Romania.

Our leader will be joined by local guides from **NatourEst**, who have guided our previous four visits to their country. Between them, our guides and leader will provide you with an excellent introduction to the wildlife of Estonia and ensure you have a relaxing, enjoyable holiday.

Flights

The group flight is with Easyjet from London Gatwick.

25th May depart London Gatwick 11.00, arrive Tallinn 15.50

1st June depart Tallinn 16.20, arrive London Gatwick 17.20

Estonia is 2 hours ahead of the UK

It may also be possible to travel to Tallinn from Manchester, flying with Lufthansa via Frankfurt. Ask us for details and costs.

Passport and visas

You must have a valid passport for this trip (recommended valid for at least six months after the end of the holiday). Visas are not required by holders of British and European Union Passports. For holders of other passports it is essential that you check with the Estonian embassy or consulate and obtain the necessary documents prior to travel.



TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

DEPOSIT £500 PER PERSON, BALANCE DUE BY 23/02/2018
SEE GENERAL INFORMATION LEAFLET ON HOW TO BOOK

INCLUDED: Return flight to Estonia from Gatwick. Local transport as specified in itinerary, including entry fees. Seven nights' accommodation, all meals. Services of leaders and guides. **NOT INCLUDED:** Refreshments. Gratuities. Insurance. Entry to optional tourist sites.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

The Manor House, Broad Street,
Great Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6DH

Tel: 01954 713575 email: wildlifetravel@wildlifebcn.org

www.wildlife-travel.co.uk



*Directors: Christine Donnelly, Brian Eversham, Philip Precey, Michael Russell, Dr Tim Upson
Wildlife Travel Ltd. Reg. No 2237697; (for Registered Charity numbers, please contact us)*

Photos. Front: Map Butterfly, Lady's Slipper, Military Orchid, Orchid White-backed Woodpecker. Page 2: Estonian scenery, male Elk. Page 3: Citrine Wagtail, Siberian Iris, Burnt-tip Orchid. Back: Red Helleborine, White Stork.