

# WILDLIFE TRAVEL

26th May to 2nd June 2019 (1 week)

## ESTONIA

Spring wildlife and orchids of the Baltic



"an ideal leader...  
knowledgeable, interesting and  
interested in wildlife"

"magical... a profusion of  
Lady's Slippers"

**Estonia Spring 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**  
£1725

**Single Room Supplement**  
£140

**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** Kuresoo Bog
- Day 8** back to Tallinn  
return to UK

**Leaders**  
Charlie Rugeroni  
and local guides

spring orchids,  
gentle birding

**Wildlife and culture holidays**



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



## FOCUS OF INTEREST

*This holiday has a very general natural history focus including, birds, plants and other wildlife. Other aspects such as landscape and geology, habitats and ecology are also sometimes included – the topics covered are described in this leaflet. Cultural highlights are included as on most of our holidays.*



## 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, Sunday 26th** Our flight takes us to Tallinn from where we travel to western Estonia and the coastal meadows and floodplain forest and wetlands of **Matsalu National Park**. Our accommodation is near Puise close to peaceful Matsalu Bay. o/n Puise.

**Day 2, Monday 27th** Walking out from the hotel, we will explore the nature trails around Almoisa, 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 Puise.

**Day 3, Tuesday 28th** 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 and Lesser Spotted Eagle soar 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 Puise.

**Day 4, Wednesday 29th** 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 Loona Manor.

**Day 5, Thursday 30th** 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. **Sõrve 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 Loona Manor.

**Day 6, Friday 31st** 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. o/n Klaaramanni.

**Day 7, Saturday 1st** Early in the morning we will visit Riisa Nature reserve, a beautiful bog with mineral islands covered with **old-growth forests** and bog pools. It is part of Kuresoo Bog, the largest bog in Estonia, an excellent place for many waders, raptors, grouses and Black Stork. In the afternoon we will explore coniferous forests, bogs and heathland where 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*. o/n Klaaramanni.

**Day 8, Sunday 2nd** This morning we make our way back to Tallinn for a tour of the attractive old town before we must head to the airport and our flights home.

## Accommodation, meals, travel and weather

We stay at three hotels, all rooms having 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. Charlie led our 2018 visit to Estonia.

Charlie will be joined by a local guide from **NatourEst**, who have guided our previous five visits to their country. Between them, our guides and leader will give you an excellent introduction to the wildlife of Estonia and ensure you have an enjoyable trip.

## Flights

The group flights are with Easyjet from London Gatwick:

26th May depart London Gatwick 12.10, arrive Tallinn 16.55  
2nd June depart Tallinn 17.35, arrive London Gatwick 18.35

Estonia is 2 hours ahead of the UK

It is also 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.



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## 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 25/02/2019**  
**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.

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## WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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Wildlife Travel Ltd. Reg. No 2237697; (for Registered Charity numbers, please contact us)*

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