

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



25th April to 2nd May 2020

POLAND

Bierbrza Marshes and Bialowieza Forest

"excellent holiday... better than I had expected!"

"Mike an excellent leader... Marek extremely knowledgeable about wildlife in Poland"

Poland 2013

North eastern Poland is the location of some of the richest wildlife habitats remaining in Europe. The main focus of this two-centre holiday will be on birds, but we will also be looking at other aspects of natural history, particularly mammals.

This holiday will take us first to the vast wetland complex of the **Bierbrza Marshes**. Here, peat bogs, flooded meadows and seemingly endless marshes of the floodplain of the River Bierbrza form what is believed to be the most natural inland wetland in Europe. More than 180 species of breeding bird include Aquatic Warbler, Black Stork, Corncrake, White-winged Terns and one of the highlights of this area, the **Great Snipe**. We will be visiting a lek site one evening to watch as the males gather at dusk for their bizarre courtship display, leaping into the air with a flap of their wings to impress the females.

From here, we will travel south-eastwards towards the border with Belarus and the **Bialowieza Forest**. This is one of the last great tracts of the original 'wild wood' left in Europe, an unmanaged primeval forest home to some of the iconic beasts of the forest: European Beaver, Elk, Wolf, Eurasian Lynx and one of the last remaining **European Bison** herds. Nine of the ten European species of woodpecker make their home in the forest, alongside other exciting forest species: Pygmy Owl, River Warbler, Collared Flycatcher and Hazel Grouse will all be possibilities during our time amongst the ancient oaks, poplars and spruce of this untouched wilderness.

Our local guide is Marek Borkowski of Wildlife Poland, one of Poland's leading conservationists who has dedicated his life to protecting the wildlife of the region.



Price
£1,995

Single Room Supplement
£195

Full board

Day 1 UK to Warsaw
Day 2-3 Bierbrza Marshes
Day 4 Masurian Lakes
Day 5-7 Bialowieza Forest
Day 8 return to UK

Leaders
Mike Russell
and Marek Borkowski

Group size
min 6, max 12

easy birding
Polish specialities:
Aquatic Warbler,
Great Snipe,
European Bison

Wildlife and culture holidays



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



Focus of interest

This is one of our 'Easy birding and wildlife' trips which means that the itinerary is based mainly on birds and/or other animals (rather than plants or general wildlife) and this also reflects the knowledge of the leaders and guides. However, as with all of our trips, the pace is comfortable with time to enjoy other aspects of the natural history, rather than rushing from one place to another for specific species.



ITINERARY

Please note that the itinerary may be changed to suit the weather or other practicalities, including where we have the best chances of finding the large mammals that we will be looking for, at the discretion of the leaders.

Day 1 Flight from UK to Warsaw and **transfer to our hotel** near the famous Biebrza Marsh. We should arrive at our hotel in plenty of time to settle in and have a brief introduction to the holiday before dinner.

Days 2-4 We will spend three days birding in and around the **Biebrza Marsh**, looking for the Polish specialities: **Aquatic Warbler, Great Snipe** and **White-backed Woodpecker**.

We will start early one morning to visit a Black Grouse lek and another morning to visit the Ruff leks. One evening, we will take time to visit a Great Snipe lek reserve (the first non-governmental one in Eastern Europe).

Both White and Black Stork are possible soaring overhead during our relaxed *al fresco* lunches or afternoon teas in the garden, along with any of up to 20 species of raptor breeding nearby including both Lesser and Greater Spotted Eagle. Up to 19 species of warbler have been found in the area, including Savi's, River, Great Reed and Marsh Warblers. During the day, we are likely to find all three species of marsh terns: Whiskered, Black and White-winged Terns. Nightjars hunting and breeding nearby are possible in the evening (after early dinner) as well as Spotted Crake and Corncrake, both often heard from our dinner table!

Wolf, Eurasian Lynx, Raccoon Dog and both Beech and Pine Marten are all present in the area, although we would be extremely lucky to catch a glimpse of them.

Day 5 Today we will transfer to **Bialowieza Forest** on the border with Belarus, for three nights' stay. We will make several stops for birding on the way, including at the Siemianówka Reservoir where we may be lucky enough to find Citrine Wagtail. Our hotel is located on a clearing in the forest.

Days 6-7 We will have two days for our explorations in the Bialowieza Forest. This famous forest lies in the extreme east of Poland and continues across the border into Belarus. It is the home of the largest wild herd of European Bison, once driven to the verge of extinction



across Europe, and is the largest surviving remnant of 'wild wood' in the continent, covering some 1200km². Our time here will include a visit to a restricted access reserve where nine of the ten European species of woodpecker breed, as well as four species of flycatchers: Spotted, Pied, Collared and Red-breasted.

We will spend time exploring the trails in the forest, searching for the elusive Hazel Grouse and the re-introduced **European Bison**. Eight species of owl breed here and we will spend one evening 'owling', looking in particular for **Pygmy Owl**, Europe's smallest.

Day 8 We will enjoy a final hearty breakfast and some morning bird watching before travelling back to Warsaw and then on home.

Local guides

Marek Borkowski, our local guide, is one of Poland's leading conservationists and runs a local guiding company, **Wildlife Poland**. He has devoted his life to saving the wildlife in the region, and his expert local knowledge and experience will be a key part of the success of this trip, in tracking down the wildlife that we are so keen to find.

Marek's conservation work includes a breeding programme for the **Konik** ponies: he was the first person to recognise the suitability of this local breed of horse for habitat management, and his herd has been the source of the animals now used widely across Europe, including British National Nature Reserves such as Wicken Fen and Hickling Broad.

Accommodation, meals and transport

Our accommodation will be at good three-star local hotels, all with en-suite accommodation: four nights in Raigrod (Biebrza Marsh) and three nights in Białowieża. Meals provided during the stay will be a mixture of **local and International dishes**, with an emphasis on local cuisine. We will have a barbeque on one evening and a reception at Marek's farm. Requests for special diets can be accommodated.

Transport will be by minibus or small coach.

Weather

The weather should be pleasantly warm and spring like, even hot at times. However, rain is always possible, as is cooler weather, particular in the evenings.

Health and fitness

We are out and about for much of the day as we travel around the countryside looking for the special wildlife of the area. Walking boots (light weight) are essential, and wellies can be useful at Biebrza Marsh. There are likely to be steps at our hotels, with no lift, and we are likely to be climbing in and out of the vehicle fairly often.

Mosquitoes and biting insects aren't usually a problem until late May.



Leaders

Mike Russell is a Director of Wildlife Travel who has led many birdwatching and wildlife holidays for us since 2001, from Guyana and Botswana to the Algarve and the Danube Delta. Mike led our previous visits to Poland, with Marek.

Our local guides are from **Wildlife Poland** a company with direct links with local conservation. Marek and Wildlife Poland guided our previous trips to the country and we are very pleased to be travelling with them again.

Passport and visas

If you hold an EU passport, you do not currently need a visa to travel to Poland. Your passport should be valid for the proposed duration of your stay; you do not need any additional period of validity on your passport beyond this.

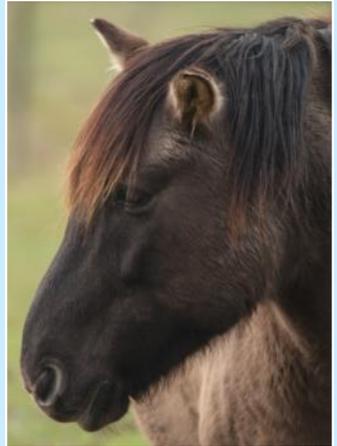
Should we leave the EU without a deal in place before April 2020, you should have at least six months left on your passport from your date of arrival.

Flights

Group flights are with LOT from London Heathrow.

25th April depart Heathrow 10.25, arrive Warsaw 13.55
2nd May depart Warsaw 15.30, arrive Heathrow 17.20

Poland is one hour ahead of the UK



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 25/01/2020
SEE GENERAL INFORMATION LEAFLET ON HOW TO BOOK

INCLUDED: Return flights from London to Warsaw. Local transport as specified in itinerary, including entry fees. Seven nights' accommodation, all meals. Services of leaders.

NOT INCLUDED: Refreshments. Drinks with meals. 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 (courtesy Marek Borkowski (MB), Dave Green (DG) and Philip Precey (PP):

Front (clockwise): European Bison (MB), Pygmy Owl, Bialowieza and Aquatic Warbler (all DG)

Inside: birding in Bialowieza (DG), Biebrza Marsh (DG), Red-backed Shrike and White Stork (both PP).

Back Konik Pony (PP), Barred Warbler (DG)