

# WILDLIFE TRAVEL

28th May to 4th June 2024 (1 week)

## ESTONIA

### Spring wildlife and orchids of the Baltic

"very good  
knowledgeable guides"  
Estonia 2019

**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 Grouse; 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 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

£1995

**Single Room  
Supplement**  
£175

#### Full board

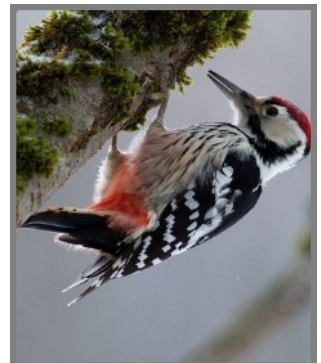
**Day 1** flight to Tallinn  
**Day 2** Matsalu National Park  
**Day 3** Matsalu National Park  
**Day 4** Laelatu and Saaremaa  
**Day 5** Saaremaa  
**Day 6** Kaali  
**Day 7** Kuresoo Bog  
**Day 8** Tallinn, return to UK

#### Leaders

Laurie Jackson  
and local guides

**Group size**  
min 5, max 14

wild flowers,  
relaxed birding



## 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, Tuesday 28th May.** Our flight takes us to Tallinn, where we will spend our first night. o/n Tallinn.

**Day 2, Wednesday 29th May.** We travel across to western Estonia (c. 1hour, 30 minutes) and the extensive coastal meadows, floodplain forest and wetlands of **Matsalu National Park**. 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 we hope to find Bearded Tits, Slavonian Grebes, Little Gull and Black Tern, alongside a range of interesting wild flowers. 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, Thursday 30th 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 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 Beavers along the banks, and a good chance of seeing Elk out in the meadows. o/n Puise.

**Day 4, Friday 31st 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 Loona Manor.

**Day 5, Saturday 1st June.** We will spend the day in the westernmost part of Saaremaa known for its limestone cliffs, scenic views, orchids and other rare plants, and encounters with interesting birds. **Sõrve peninsula** acts as a bottleneck for birds during migration time and hosts an almost permanently manned bird-station, which we will visit to learn more about the birdlife of the area.

The woodland at Loode is great both for birds and plants alike - while watching a Wryneck or Barred Warbler, one has to take care not to step on a **Lady's Slipper, seen here in their 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 owls, with several species present here. o/n Loona Manor.



**Day 6, Sunday 2nd June.** 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.

We drive back to the mainland this afternoon, where our accommodation will be close to **Soomaa National Park**, an extensive landscape of raised bogs, forest and meandering watercourses in south-western Estonia. o/n Klaaramanni.

**Day 7, Monday 3rd June.** We will pay an early morning visit to Ingatsi Nature trail in 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 and Lesser Spotted Eagle. In coastal meadows we will look for the smart **Citrine Wagtail**, something of a local speciality, and also look for Wild Gladiolus.

In the evening, we will go in search of corncrakes, hoping to also hear River Warbler. o/n Klaaramanni.

**Day 8 Tuesday 4th June.** 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



## Leader

**Laurie Jackson** is an excellent all-round naturalist and experienced Wildlife Travel leader who has led more than 30 of our holidays in recent years.

Laurie will be joined by a local guide from **NatourEst**, who have guided our previous seven 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

Group flights are with Air Baltic from London Gatwick to Tallinn.

28th May depart London Gatwick 17.45, arrive Tallinn 22.30

4th June depart Tallinn 15.55, arrive London Gatwick 17.00

Estonia is two hours ahead of UK time.

## Passport, Visas and Covid-19 Entry Requirements

These rules are correct as of 10th September 2023. Please note that Covid-related travel rules may be changed at any time. For up to date information, check [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/estonia](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/estonia).

If you hold a British passport, you are able to travel to the Schengen area (which includes Estonia) for up to 90 days in total in any 180-day period without a visa. Your passport must be issued less than 10 years before the date you enter Estonia and valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave.

All COVID-19 travel restrictions for travellers from the UK to Estonia have been lifted.

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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 £650 PER PERSON, BALANCE DUE BY 27/02/2024

**INCLUDED:** Return flight from London Gatwick to Tallinn as above. Local transport as specified in itinerary. 7 nights accommodation, all meals from breakfast day 1 to lunch day 8. Services of leaders. **NOT INCLUDED:** Drinks with evening meal and refreshments. Gratuities. Travel insurance. Covid tests and associated costs.

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## WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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

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

A trip report from our 2019 Estonia holiday can be found on our website.