

# WILDLIFE TRAVEL

18th to 25th September 2027 (1 week)

## ESTONIA

autumn wildlife and migration

"the night in a bear hide was unforgettable"  
"the local guide was superb... and knew where to find the wildlife"  
Estonia 2017

**A week on the Baltic, during the peak of the south-bound bird migration.**

This holiday is timed to catch the best of the south-bound bird migration, with thousands of Common Cranes passing through, several species of wild geese arriving to spend the winter and large numbers of sea duck and passerines moving along the coast. As well as the southbound migrants, we will also be looking for residents of the extensive forests and wetlands of Estonia: woodpeckers could include White-backed and Black Woodpecker, driving the forest tracks may bring us encounters with Capercaillie or Hazel Grouse, White-tailed Eagles and Hen Harrier hunt along the coastal wetlands and we will listen out for calling owls in the evenings.

As well as the bird life, Estonia is home to some of the healthiest populations of large mammals in Europe, with an estimated 700 Brown Bears, 200 Wolves and 600 Eurasian Lynx, 12,000 Elk and the southern-most population of Ringed Seals in the world.

In the forests near the Russian border we will spend the night in a hide, waiting to be visited by Brown Bear and Raccoon Dogs, while throughout the country there is always a chance of stumbling upon a stalking lynx or hearing the howling of wolves. Elk may be spotted on the meadows of Matsalu, and we will take a boat trip to look for Baltic Ringed Seals as they haul out at their favoured spots. Along the way, we will watch out for any late butterflies, dragonflies and wild flowers that we may come across.

On our last day, we will pay a visit to the attractive medieval city of Tallinn, with a guided tour of the old town.



**Price**  
£2,595

**Single Room Supplement**  
£215

**Full board**

**Day 1** flight to Tallinn  
**Day 2** Matsalu National Park  
**Day 3** Põõsaspea Peninsula  
**Day 4** Hiiumaa island  
**Day 5** Alutaguse bear hide  
**Day 6** Lahemaa National Park  
**Day 7** Käsnu Peninsula  
**Day 8** Tallinn city tour  
return to UK

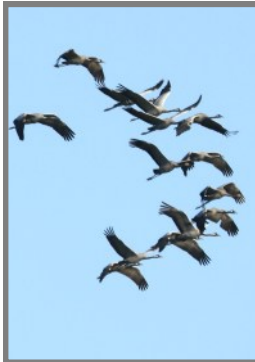
**Leader**

Laurie Jackson

**Group size**

min 5, max 14

exciting bird migration,  
interesting mammals,  
overnight stay in a brown  
bear hide



## 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** Our flight takes us to Tallinn from where we travel across to western Estonia (c. 1 hour 30 minutes) and the extensive coastal meadows and floodplain forest and wetlands of Matsalu National Park. Here huge flocks of Common Crane and several species of geese gather as they head south for the winter, while this is also the time of the Elk rut, with groups gathering on Matsalu's meadows. o/n Altmõisa

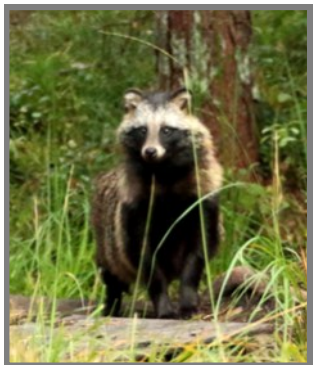
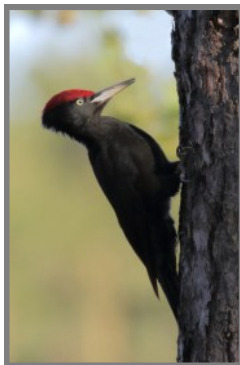
**Day 2** Today will be spent exploring the bogs and meadows of the area. We have chances of finding Hazel Grouse and woodpeckers, and around the bog, we could spot Black Grouse and birds of prey, such as harriers or Great Grey Shrike. We may also visit an area of meadows to see the extent of the autumn migration, with hundreds of wildfowl and waders, while raptors scan the flocks for their chance of a meal. o/n Altmõisa

**Day 3** We will visit the Põõsaspea Peninsula, one of the best spots in Estonia to observe the migration of Arctic waterfowl, passerines and raptors as they make their way south from Finland and Arctic Russia. The afternoon will be spent at Leidissoo Forest, home to Ural and Pygmy Owls, Black and Grey-headed Woodpecker, where the Nutcrackers, which become more vocal in autumn may also be spotted. o/n Altmõisa

**Day 4** Today we take a day trip out to Hiiumaa island, from where we will take a boat around a series of islets where the **Ringed Seal**, a usually shy and solitary animal gathers at its favoured haul out sites, the southernmost population of this high Arctic species. We will also keep our eyes peeled for the much larger Grey Seal, as well as sea duck, and the possibility of a passing White-tailed Eagle. o/n Altmõisa

**Day 5** After one last visit to Matsalu's goose flocks, we drive to Alutaguse, the wildest corner of Estonia and an area with the lowest population density, with vast bogs and forest that are home to many iconic forest species. Along the way, we will stop to buy a picnic dinner to have in the hide (price not included). Alutaguse has always been the core area for the local bear population and we hope to be visited by one as we stay **overnight in a comfortable Brown Bear hide**. The hides are equipped with bunk beds, sleeping bags, and pillows. As well as Brown Bear, there is a good chance of seeing Raccoon Dogs. o/n Alutaguse

**Day 6** After leaving the hide in the morning, we drive tracks around the surrounding forest to look for Capercaillie and Black Grouse, before continuing to the town of Rakvere, for breakfast (price not included). We then head to **Lahemaa National Park**, the oldest and largest National Park in the country, offering a beautiful coastline, old growth forests, peat bogs and wonderful manor parks. In the afternoon, we will explore local parklands, where Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Hawfinch and the lovely white-headed form of Long-tailed Tit will be amongst our target species. o/n Lahemaa



**Day 7** Today we will explore the forests of the Lahemaa and the Käsnu Peninsula, a beautiful coastline of ancient pines and erratic boulders, where we will look for sea duck, White-tailed Eagle and a variety of woodpeckers. The forests are also home to good numbers of Red Squirrel and Pine Marten, both of which may cross our path as we quietly walk the forest trails. We will keep our ears peeled for the dog whistle call of the male Hazel Grouse, as he feeds high in the birch trees, and for the tapping of woodpeckers: both White-backed and Three-toed Woodpecker are present in these forests, although it may take some searching to track them down.



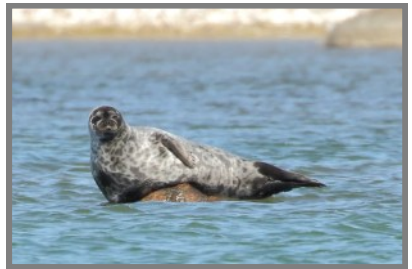
After a visit to the historical **captain's village** of **Käsnu** and its eccentric local museum, where we will get an overview of the area's maritime history, we still have time for a last evening drive to look for owls or mammals in the nearby forests. o/n Lahemaa

**Day 8** After breakfast we drive back west, to Tallinn for a guided tour of the attractive old town, and lunch in a local restaurant (price not included). Our time will soon be up, and we must head to the airport and our flights home.



## **Accommodation, meals and travel**

The hotels used are of a very good standard and all rooms have en-suite facilities with bath and/or shower. Meals provided during the stay will have an emphasis on local cuisine. We will have a mixture of picnic lunches and lunches in local cafes/restaurants. Transport will be by small bus or smaller vehicles if necessary.



## **Weather**

The weather should feel distinctly autumnal: we expect it to be cool and dry, between 5 and 15 degrees, although rain (even snow), wind or considerably cooler weather are certainly possible.

## **Health and fitness**

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, as well as up/down into the vehicles and boats. Some early starts and/or late finishes may be necessary, to maximise our chances to see the wildlife.

## Leader

**Laurie Jackson** is an excellent all-round naturalist and experienced Wildlife Travel leader who has led almost 50 of our holidays in recent years, including two previous visits to Estonia. Laurie will be joined by a local guide from **NatourEst**, who have guided our previous eight visits to their country. Between them, our guide 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.

18th September depart London Gatwick 18.50, arrive Tallinn 23.35  
25th September depart Tallinn 17.00, arrive London Gatwick 18.00

It is also possible to fly with Lufthansa from Manchester, Birmingham and Edinburgh, with a connection in Frankfurt. Contact us to discuss options and price implications.

Estonia is two hours ahead of UK time.

## Passport and Entry Requirements

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

British passport holders will need to apply for the ETIAS European Travel Authorisation to visit Schengen countries. This must be applied for online prior to travel. Once granted, your ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

For up-to-date information, check [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/estonia](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/estonia)

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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 £350 PER PERSON, SECOND INSTALLMENT ON CONFIRMATION OF HOLIDAY £500 (to cover committed costs) BALANCE DUE BY 19/06/2027

**INCLUDED:** Return flight to from London Gatwick to Tallinn . Local transport and entry fees as specified in itinerary. Seven nights accommodation, all meals from breakfast day 2 to breakfast day 8 EXCEPT picnic dinner day 5, breakfast day 6. Guided tour of Tallinn. Services of leaders and guides. **NOT INCLUDED:** picnic dinner day 5, breakfast day 6, lunch day 8. Refreshments. Gratuities. Travel insurance. ETIAS and associated costs.

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## WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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**Photos** (Mike Symes and Philip Precey) Front: Camberwell Beauty, Tallinn, Common Cranes, Red Squirrel. Inside: Barnacle Geese at Matsalu, Black Woodpecker, Raccoon Dog, Brown Bear, Viru Bog, Ringed Seal, Elk.

Trip reports and galleries of photos from our recent holidays to Estonia can be found on our website.