

# WILDLIFE TRAVEL

29th May to 5th June 2027 (1 week)

## ESTONIA

### Spring wildlife and orchids of the Baltic

"excellent guides, a good variety of wildlife"

Estonia 2024

**Late spring on the Baltic is a busy time, with birds courting, the meadows bursting into flower and dragonflies emerging over the wetlands, including the delightful whitefaces.**

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 orchids we will be seeking out include Military, Bird's Nest and Burnt-tip Orchids, and Red and Sword-leaved Helleborine. During our time among Estonia's extensive woodlands, fens and bogs we should find a fine selection of other interesting plant species.

Butterflies will be on the wing with more familiar species alongside chances for 'northern species' such as Cranberry Blue, Bog Fritillary and Northern Chequered Skipper.

We hope to encounter many of the area's summer visitors, including Blyth's Reed Warbler, Citrine Wagtail, Red-breasted Flycatcher and Common Rosefinch, as they set up their territories and get on with the busy, short-lived breeding season in the forests and marshes. We will also be looking for some of the resident birds - with nine species of woodpeckers in the area, White-tailed Eagles hunting along the coastal wetlands; and chances to hear owls, Woodcock, Corncrake 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 in 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 Raccoon Dog.



**Price**  
£2,595

**Single Room Supplement**  
£235

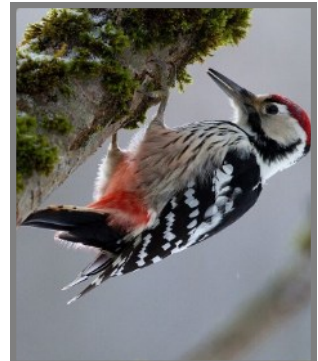
#### Full board

- Day 1** flight to Tallinn
- Day 2** Silma Nature Reserve
- Day 3** Matsalu National Park
- Day 4** Saaremaa
- Day 5** Viidumäe and Loode
- Day 6** Odalätsi and Tuhu
- Day 7** Kuresoo Bog
- Day 8** Tallinn, return to UK

**Leaders**  
Sarah Lambert  
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** Our flight takes us to Tallinn, where we will spend our first night. o/n Tallinn.

**Day 2** We travel across to western Estonia (c. 1 hour, 30 minutes) and head to Nõva Puhkeala, the north-western most corner of Estonia to explore some of the coastal vegetation and look for birds in the shallow bay.

We will also visit **Silma Nature Reserve**, a complex of meadows, lagoons and reedbeds where we hope to find Red-necked Grebe, Little Gull and Black Tern, alongside a range of interesting wild flowers and dragonflies, before we continue to our guesthouse in Altmõisa.

**Day 3** We will have a relaxed morning with an opportunity to explore the trails around Altmõisa, where Military Orchid will be in full bloom, with plenty of warblers joining the Common Rosefinch and Thrush Nightingale singing from the bushes.

The rest of our day will be spent exploring **Matsalu National Park** home to extensive coastal meadows, floodplain forest and wetlands. We will visit the renowned species-rich wooded meadow at Laelatu, home to numerous orchid species, including the wonderful Lady's Slipper Orchid, with a wealth of other interesting wild flowers to be uncovered.

Our day will finish with an **evening boat trip** on the Kasari River (~3 hours), the main river flowing through the National Park, where we will listen for Corncrakes, Bittern and Savi's Warblers along the banks. There are plentiful signs of the local Beavers and with luck we may see them on their way out for the evening, as well as Elk out in the meadows.

**Day 4** We visit **Tuhu Nature Reserve** looking for carnivorous plants amongst the carpets of Cranberry, Bogbean and Bog Myrtle. These open swamps and bogs are home to many interesting invertebrates and we may spot Cranberry Blue, white-faced darters or perhaps a raft spider, waiting at the water's edge for its next meal.

We will also stop in at Puhtu, home to broad-leaved forest and meadows, before taking a ferry across to the large **island of Saaremaa**. Depending on our ferry time, we may also visit the picturesque Koguva village before we arrive at our hotel for the next two nights in the west of the island.

**Day 5** We spend today in western Saaremaa exploring **Viidumäe Nature Reserve**, an area of wood meadows, bogs, spring-fed fens, pine and oak forest, as well as visiting **Loode Oak Forest**, a species-rich wood-pasture great both for butterflies, birds and plants alike - where Lady's Slipper Orchids can be seen in their thousands and the rare Scarce Heath is present.

Later in the evening, we will visit Viidumäe again, hoping for an encounter with churring Nightjar, Woodcock and owls, with Pygmy Owl present in the area.



**Day 6** We begin our return to the mainland today, stopping first for a walk in the woodland at **Odalätsi** where interesting plants such as Twinflower and One-flowered Wintergreen can be found among the trees.

After our return ferry journey we have a longer drive to the coast at Pärnu Bay. We will look for Citrine Wagtails, something of a local speciality in the coastal meadows here, along with Penduline Tit, as the song of Great Reed Warbler and Sedge Warbler rises around us.

Our accommodation for the rest of the trip is close to **Soomaa National Park**, an extensive landscape of raised bogs, forest and meandering watercourses in south-western Estonia.

**Day 7** Today will be spent exploring the beautiful bogs, pools and old-growth forests of Soomaa. This will include a visit to the Ingatsi Nature trail, which weaves us through floodplain woodland and onwards to the magnificent **Kuresoo Bog**, the largest bog in Estonia, an excellent place for many waders and raptors, along with a diverse dragonfly and plant community. There may be an opportunity for another evening exploration in search of the area's Ural Owls.

**Day 8** 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 and transport**

We stay at four comfortable 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 mostly be picnics but we may have lunch in a 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 car ferry. The boat trip on the Kasari River will be by small, open, traditional wooden fishing boat.

## **Weather**

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, as is warmer weather.

## **Health and fitness**

On several days, we are walking for much of the day, albeit at a relatively slow pace. It is necessary to walk on rougher ground and up some slopes, although none of the walking is strenuous, and this is a relatively flat area. Walking boots are essential. The pace will be relaxed with plenty of time to enjoy the surroundings and the wildlife along the way. There are steps at our hotels, with no lift.



## Leader

**Sarah Lambert** is an expert botanist and keen photographer with a good knowledge of other wildlife. She has led holidays for Wildlife Travel since 2019, including visits to Transylvania, Crete and Cyprus. Sarah 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.

29th May depart London Gatwick 18.50, arrive Tallinn 23.35  
5th June 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 27/02/2027**

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

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## WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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**Photos** Front: Scarce Fritillary, Lady's Slipper Orchid, Military Orchid, White-backed Woodpecker.  
Inside: Kuresoo Bog, Elk, Citrine Wagtail, Small Pasque Flower, Yellow Early Marsh Orchid.

A trip report and gallery of photos from our recent holidays to Estonia can be found on our website.