



Estonian Nature Tours

Trip	: ESTONIA IN EARLY SPRING
Period	: Mon 8th Apr – Sat 13th Apr 2019
Group size	: 6/7 pax
Focus	: Birds
Grading	: Day walks only, for all ages
Accommodation	: Comfortable hotel with private facilities
Food	: Restaurants
Leader	: Kaarel Võhandu
Extensions	: Cultural/sightseeing extensions available on request
Organizer/Agent	: Estonian Nature Tours, e-mail: info@naturetours.ee

A 6-day fully-inclusive holiday in search of in search flocks of Steller's Eider, woodpeckers, grouse and other wintering specialities of Estonia.

Few places in Europe can match Estonia's amazing birdlife at almost any time of year. The most important wintering area for Steller's Eider, Europe's most endangered seaduck, is off the coast of our biggest island, Saaremaa. These eye-catching birds arrive in December and leave around the beginning of April. Come in January and February when congregations may reach 700 birds or more. This is also a great time for Hawk Owls, an uncommon but regular winter visitor in Estonia.

Estonian Western Taiga forests has an extraordinary richness of species. Up to 40,000 pairs of Hazel Grouse nest here while the number of Capercaillie has stabilised around at 2-3,000 pairs. Spring in Estonia begins in late March when woodpeckers start their drumming and all the swamps and bogs resound with displaying Black Grouses at sunrise. Hazel Grouse can surprise you near the roadsides while driving in forested areas. You can hear the calls of Ural, Pygmy and Tengmal's Owls as it gets dark, or observe roding Woodcock above the trees. In one national park in Estonia more White-backed Woodpeckers may nest than in the whole of Sweden!

Day 1 Arrive to Tallinn, to Saaremaa

Day 2 Saaremaa Island

Day 3 To North-West Estonia, Põõsaspea & Nõva forests

Day 4 Leidissoo, to central Estonia

Day 5 Soomaa National Park

Day 6 To Tallinn, departure...

Highlights:

Birds: Steller's Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Bewick's and Whooper Swans, Purple Sandpiper, White-tailed Eagle, Goshawk, Black Grouse, Hazel Grouse, Ural Owl, Pygmy Owl, Rough-legged Buzzard, White-backed Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker, Black Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Nutcracker, Great Grey Shrike, Crested Tit, Bearded Tit, Waxwing, Snow Bunting, Parrot Crossbill etc.

Mammals: Grey Seal, Raccoon Dog (probably), Red Fox, Elk, Roe deer, tracks of Wolf, & Lynx (probably) etc

1 Mon (8th April) TALLINN, to Saaremaa

We will pick you up from Tallinn Airport and drive to Virtsu (from Tallinn 160 km) where we take the ferry at ... to Muhu island and drive westward, to Saaremaa island. After check-in and a short rest we will eat our first dinner at the guesthouse (Loona Manor Guesthouse).

2 Tue (9th April) SAAREMAA ISLAND

Today we will have the opportunity to scope Steller's Eiders. To see dense flocks of these magnificent birds we have to drive to the north-westernmost part of Saaremaa. The hot spot for Steller's Eider is located close to Cape Undva. Uudepanga Bay near Undva hosts up to 1000 Steller's Eiders each winter, though often numbers are between 300 and 600. Birds form dense flocks where they behave synchronously, especially when diving. Other sea-ducks will be seen with a chance of divers and waders including Purple Sandpiper. Because of biogeographic reasons Saaremaa is not rich in rarer woodpecker and owl species, but we can see or hear Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Nutcracker, Great Grey Shrike and Rough-legged Buzzard on short stops on our way to Undva or after that. After lunch at the guesthouse and a short rest we will go for an owling session. If we are fortunate we can hear and hopefully see Tengmalm's and Pygmy Owl in Viidumäe Nature Reserve (Loona Manor Guesthouse).

3 Wed (10th April) To North-West Estonia, PÕÕSASPEA & NÕVA

After breakfast and scoping Stellers again we will return to the mainland. Depending on winter severity and weather in spring the Suur Väin Strait can be covered with ice, or host large flocks of seaducks. At 10:30am we arrive at Virtsu Harbour and drive to Roosta. After check-in our itinerary takes us to the most north-easterly point, the Põõsaspea. This small north-stretching spit is situated at the migratory crossroad, where every spring and autumn masses of waterbirds coming from Bothnian and the Finnish Bays meet. This is one of the best place for observing the Arctic waterbird migration. Even, in winter, this area usually remains unfrozen and holds flocks of different waterbirds – thousands of Long-tailed Ducks, Goldeneyes, Goosanders and often White-tailed Eagles nearby. Atmospheric pine forests nearby hold Crested Tit, Willow Tit, Goldcrest, Hazel Grouse and Black Woodpecker. In the afternoon we will go for an owling session before we have our evening meal. Dinner at the restaurant (Roosta Holiday Village).

4 Thu (11th April) LEIDISSOO, to central Estonia

Today we will visit the heathland forest environment in the early morning. We hope to hear Pygmy Owl or even see Ural Owl hunting for small mammals at the forest edge whilst other attractions in this area include Black Grouse, Hazel Grouse and some interesting woodpeckers. We will visit also Noarootsi peninsula where we scan over the area of mixture woodlands, fields and agricultural landscapes.

We will move to South-West Estonia Estonia later in the afternoon. After check-in we eat our dinner at the hotel (Rannahotell).

5 Fri (12th April) SOOMAA NATIONAL PARK

Early morning takes us to the Soomaa National Park in southwestern Estonia. With the territory of 390 km², Soomaa is our second biggest national park and one of the biggest nature protection areas in general. The national park is created to protect raised bogs, floodplains and paludifield forests. The territory of natural park is mostly covered with large mires, separated from each

other by the rivers. The natural woodlands mixed with swamps and rivers, makes it perfect habitat for many Western Taiga forest specialities. With the great network of hiking trails, Soomaa is really enjoyable birding place for any nature lover. Early morning we will be looking for Capercaillies. As Soomaa NP has one of the strongholds for this endangered species, Capercaillie hens are fairly often found at the roadside when they pick gravel. With some luck one can spot males nearby trees or sometimes even lekking on the road. As the sunrise continues we will take few forest walks to search for Woodpeckers. Soomaa National Park is probably the best place to spot Grey-headed Woodpeckers, while Black and White-backed Woodpeckers are also regularly spotted. The same forests are also perfect habitat for another gamebird – Hazel Grouse. After refreshing lunch and some rest, late evening will be spent to look for the Owls. Pygmy and Ural Owl has both good breeding population here. Beside birds it is also worth to keep your eyes open for the mammals. Early morning drives are good to spot Elks, while night drives usually provide sightings of Raccoon Dogs ([Rannahotell](#)).

6 Sat (13th April) _____ Departure...

We will return to Tallinn by late morning and have a pleasant guided tour of Tallinn Old Town. Tallinn was made a UNESCO World heritage Site in 1997 due to the medieval city centre, the finest in northern Europe, with cobbled streets & buildings that date back to the 15th century. We have some free time for shopping before we will drive to the Airport to catch your homeward flight at ...

PRICE: **1225 € per person**
Single suppl. 180 €

Includes:

English speaking guide throughout the journey.. City guide in Tallinn. All meals and all local transport. Ferry tickets. Entrance fees to protected areas and museums. All overnights on a twin/double shared basis (5 nights):

www.loonamanor.ee

www.roosta.ee

www.rannahotell.ee

VAT.

Excludes:

Beverages and sauna. International tickets. Insurance.

CANCELLATIONS

More than 70 days	deposit (20%) only
70-15 days before departure	50% of total tour cost
15 days or less before departure	100% of total tour cost

INSURANCE

It is a condition of joining one of our holidays that you must be fully insured against medical and personal accident risks. Please send to us the name of your insurance provider, the contact telephone number, your policy number, expire date and details of the medical and repatriation cover provided.

Terms and Conditions Instruction:

<http://www.naturetours.ee/?page=29&text=travel%20estonia#terms>

Legal contacts:

The name of a company: **Kumari Reisid OÜ**

Address: 90305 Penijõe, Lääneranna vald, Pärnumaa, ESTONIA

Reg. nr. 10951423

VAT: EE 100832107

Tel. +372 477 8214, +372 5349 6695

e-mail: info@naturetours.ee

www.naturetours.ee

Bank details:

The name of bank: **SEB**

Address: Tornimäe 15010, Tallinn, ESTONIA

IBAN code: EE85 1010 2200 3126 1015

SWIFT: EEUHEE2X