



Estonian Nature Tours

Trip	: ESTONIA IN SPRING
Period	: Thu16May – Thu23May 2013
Group size	: 6/10 pax
Grading	: Day walks only, for all ages
Accommodation	: Comfortable hotel with private facilities
Food	: Restaurants and local farms
Leader	: Local field ornithologist
Extensions	: Cultural/sightseeing extensions available on request
Agent/Organizer	: Estonian Nature Tours, e-mail: info@naturetours.ee

An 8-day fully-inclusive holiday focusing on the spectacular bird migration and breeding birds in Estonia.

Although not widely discovered yet, Estonia is the ideal country for observing one of the most spectacular natural shows - massive bird migration. This smallest and northernmost Baltic country lies at the crossroads of the Eastern Atlantic migratory flyway: Estonia is locked between the Finnish Gulf, the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea and Lake Peipsi near the Russian border. Geographically the Estonian waters and coastline are stepping-stones along the flyway between breeding and wintering areas for millions of Arctic waterbirds making birdwatching in Estonia fabulous at this time of year.

- Day 1 Arrive in Tallinn, to Haapsalu
- Day 2 Põõsaspea, Silma & Nõva
- Day 3 Leidissoo & Matsalu
- Day 4 Matsalu National Park, to Pärnu
- Day 5 Soometsa forests & Häädemeeste
- Day 6 To Tartu, Kärevere
- Day 7 Alam-Pedja & Aardla
- Day 8 Departure

Highlights

Birds: Bittern, Black Stork, peak spring migration of waterfowls, Golden Eagle, Lesser Spotted Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Black Grouse, Capercaillie, Corncrake, Great Snipe, Whimbrel, White-backed Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Citrine Wagtail, Savi's Warbler, Penduline Tit, Golden Oriole etc.

Mammals: Wild Boar & Raccoon Dog (probably), Red Fox, Elk, Roe deer, European Beaver, tracks of Brown Bear, Wolf, & Lynx (probably) etc.

1 Thu (16th May) TALLINN, to Haapsalu

We will pick up you from Tallinn Airport and drive to west Estonia. After check-in at Roosta and a short rest we will go for an optional excursion to listen to the night sounds of the wetlands and western taiga forests near Nõva, before we have our evening meal (Promenaadi Hotel or similar).

2 Fri (17th May) PÕÕSASPEA, SILMA NATURE RESERVE & NÕVA

At first light we offer an optional excursion to watch migration on the Põõsaspea Peninsula. This small north-stretching spit is one of the best place for observing Artic waterbird migration. Tens and hundreds of thousands of Long-Tailed Ducks, Common Scoters and Geese species can be seen during the peak of migration, diver species as well. Our next destination is Silma Nature Reserve with its large lagoons and reedbeds. After a picnic-lunch and short break we will drive to Haapsalu town and visit the birdtower on the edge of the lake where we have a fantastic view from the top - several White-tailed Eagles, Goosander, Gadwall, Great Crested Grebes, groups of waders etc. After dinner at the guesthouse we will go for an owling session. If we are fortunate we may hear and hopefully see Ural or Eagle Owls hunting for small mammals at the forest edge (Promenaadi Hotel or similar).

3 Sat (18th May) LEIDISSOO & MATSALU NATIONAL PARK

Today we will travel out in the early morning to enjoy wetlands and heathland forest environment. We hope to be entertained by the bubbling display calls of lekking Black Grouse, whilst other attractions in this area include Capercaillie, Hazel Grouse, Wryneck, and some interesting woodpeckers. We will eat our lunch at a restaurant and move to the northern shore of Matsalu Bay where we once again visit Haeska watching tower. The record for the highest day list of bird species in Northern Europe was achieved in this region – more than 100 species by nightfall. We will drive to the Puise Peninsula and explore a variety of Põgari-Sassi coastal habitats, then enjoy a fantastic picnic-dinner at a local farm (Promenaadi Hotel or Roosta Bungalows).

4 Sun (19th May) MATSALU NATIONAL PARK, to Pärnu

Today we will reach the Matsalu National Park which is the oldest Ramsar area in Estonia. At times of peak passage over a million diving ducks have been estimated along the coast here, whilst counts of wild swans and Barnacle Geese regularly number tens of thousands. A selection of waders also take advantage of the rich feeding grounds; Ruff, in particular, sometimes occurring in great abundance, the males resplendent in their breeding finery. Although these migrants offer some remarkable spectacles, Matsalu is much more than just an avian motorway service station and among the 170 breeding birds recorded from the reserve are species such as Red-necked Grebe, Bittern, Osprey, White-tailed Eagle and Caspian Tern. We will climb observation towers to scan over the marshes and also take a boat ride through the vast reed-beds, the largest expanse on the Baltic coast. We will enjoy another picnic-lunch at a local farm and move to Pärnu region late afternoon. We eat our dinner at the hotel (Wesset Villa or similar).

5 Mon (20th May) SOOMETSA FORESTS & HÄÄDEMEESTE

Today we will travel out in the very early morning and visit old grown coniferous and mixed forest in order to experience the spring calling of resident Black, Grey-headed, Three-toed and White-backed Woodpeckers as well as listen for the mating calls of Hazel Grouse. After a very nice picnic-lunch we will visit the Häädemeeste coastal dune systems and Kabli bird station near the Latvian border. This is our oldest bird station, equipped with a huge 18m high Heligoland type bird trap. In the bird station we may have the chance to have a close look at continental race of Long-tailed Tits, Willow Tits, Crested Tits, Nuthatch and other woodland passerines. Dinner at the hotel (Wesset Villa or similar).

6 Tue (21st May) To Tartu, KÄREVERE

In the morning we will have a short visit to the lookout tower and wooden pathway in the Tolkuse bog. We can enjoy the misty mystery of bog lakes and colourful patterns of peat mosses, which make a wonderful combination with crane and geese migration under a blue

sky. Our itinerary takes us next to Tartu area where we will look at marshy areas nearby and visit an area known as one of the best spots for Great Snipe in the Baltic. Late dinner at the guesthouse (Hansahotell or similar).

7 Wed (22nd May) ALAM-PEDJA & AARDLA

Early morning takes us to Alam-Pedja, an area of marsh with adjacent forest. This is a truly remote and wild region of undisturbed floodplains and winding rivers where it is claimed there are only 20 human residents on 260 square miles of wilderness! We will hope to find a wonderful diversity of species including Black Stork, both Great Spotted and Lesser Spotted Eagles, Penduline Tit, and Great Reed, Icterine, Marsh and Barred Warblers. After lunch we will drive to the vast expanses of wetlands near Aardla. This area with lakes and ponds usually holds a good selection of water birds and we will be hoping for a few surprises. Dinner at the guesthouse (Hansahotell or similar).

8 Thu (23rd May) To Tallinn, departure...

We will return to Tallinn by late morning where we have some free time. After the lunch at Tallinn Old Town we will drive to the Airport to catch your homeward flight at ...

Price: **1150 Euro per person**
Single.suppl. 200 Euro

Includes:

English-Estonian speaking guide(s) throughout the journey. All meals and all local transport. Entrance fees to protected areas and museums. All overnights in shared double:

www.promenaadi.ee

www.wesset.ee

www.hansahotell.ee

etc. VAT.

Excludes:

Beverages and sauna. International tickets. Insurance.

Booking and deposits can be made if you click on our Tour calendar. **BOOK HERE** will guide you to our booking system, where it is possible to insert data and also instantly pay by credit card (coming next week). Another possibility is to pay through bank transfer. Automatic invoice and confirmation will be sent to your email address.

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/terms-and-conditions/>

NB! There are many amazing holidays you can't afford to miss... When you would like to travel with your friends we would be happy to give you more information or offer an extra tour with special price whenever you find a suitable time.

Legal contacts:

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