



Estonian Nature Tours

Trip	: Estonia in Spring
Period	: Sat30Apr – Sat07May 2011 : Sat14May – Sat21May 2011
Group size	: 6/16 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
Organizer / Agent	: 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

Day 1 Arrive in Tallinn, to Haapsalu
Day 2 Silma Nature Reserve & Haapsalu town
Day 3 Leidisoo, Põõsaspea & Matsalu
Day 4 Matsalu National Park
Day 5 to Pärnu, Luitema Nature Reserve
Day 6 Nigula Nature Reserve, to Tartu
Day 7 Alam-Pedja & Aardla
Day 8 Departure

Highlights

Birds: Bittern, Black Stork, 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.

Although not widely discovered yet, Estonia is ideal country for observing one of the most spectacular natural shows – massive bird migration. This smallest and northernmost Baltic country lies on the crossroad of the Eastern Atlantic migratory flyway: Estonia is locked between the Finnish Gulf, eastern coast of Baltic Sea and Lake Peipsi near the Russian border. In this respect, geographically the Estonian waters and coastline are the natural stepping-stones, the most natural flyway between breeding and wintering areas for millions of Arctic waterbirds, making birdwatching in Estonia fabulous at this time of year. But it is not just about non-stop passage: the country's long and indented coastline, shallow and sheltered bays, straits, coastal meadows, marshes, lagoons and over 1000 islands in good natural condition are crucial feeding and stopover sites. And this is not all - the long outstretching peninsulas, spits and narrow straits in coastal sceneries offer not only plenty of good sea-watching opportunities, but also concentrate large numbers of landbirds before their take-off and crossing of the sea.

During the migration season, the crowds of southward-rushing birds, can be seen in incredible numbers: several hundreds of thousands of waterfowl or passerine migrants can be seen passing per day at the best sites at the peak season. As many as one million of waterfowl and nearly three-quarters of passerines are observed per day as top figures. In total, over 50 million of waterbirds are estimated to pass the Estonian coast and marine territories annually.

1 SAT TALLINN, to Haapsalu

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

2 SUN SILMA NATURE RESERVE & HAAPSALU

At first light we offer an optional excursion for watching the migration on the Põõsaspea peninsula. This small north-stretching spit deserves to be mentioned as one of the best place for observing the Arctic waterbird migration. Tens and hundreds of thousands of Long-tailed Ducks, Common Scoters and Geese species can be seen during the peak of migration, divers species as well. Afterwards we will visit Silma Nature Reserve with its large lagoons and reedbeds. We will enjoy a nice picnic-lunch at Saare manorhouse and short break before we drive to Haapsalu town and visit the birdtower on the edge of the lake where we have a fantastic view from the top – and should see 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 Ural or Eagle Owls or even see themselves hunting for small mammals at the forest edge (Roosta Bungalows, Promenaadi Hotel or Altmõisa Guesthouse).

3 MON LEIDISSOO, PÕÕSASPEA & MATSALU NATIONAL PARK

Today we will travel out in the early morning and 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. After a short break and breakfast we will continue our birding at Haversi Bay and Põõsaspea once again. We will eat our lunch at Promenaadi Hotel 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 at a similar time of year – more than 100 species by nightfall. We will drive to the Puise peninsula and explore a variety of Põgari-Sassi coastal habitats, then enjoy the fantastic picnic-dinner at Nina farm (Roosta Bungalows, Promenaadi Hotel or Altmõisa Guesthouse).

4 TUE 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 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 move to Pärnu region late afternoon and eat our dinner at the hotel (Villa Wesset or Lapanina Hotel).

5 WED LUITEMA NATURE RESERVE & PIKLA

At first light, before breakfast, we are likely to find some of the typical species of Estonia's mixed forests and farmlands, including Lesser Spotted Eagle, Red-backed Shrike, Ortolan Bunting and Black, Grey-headed, Three-toed and White-backed Woodpeckers. As well as looking for 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 huge 18m high Helgoland type bird trap. In the bird station, there is a good chance that we will have a close look at the continental race of Long-tailed Tit, Willow Tit, Crested Tit, Nuthatch and other woodland passerines (Villa Wesset or Lepanina Hotel).

6 THU NIGULA NATURE RESERVE, to Tartu

Today we will reach the Nigula Nature Reserve which was established in 1957. Different wetlands, forests, natural grasslands and quite intensively used fields are combined mosaicly together by connecting brushwood strips, natural watercourses, roads and paths and sparse human settlements here. Black Storks occur here as do Black and Hazel Grouse, Lesser Spotted Eagle and many other exciting species, this area also inhabited by large mammals (Lynx, Wolf, Brown Bear). In early afternoon our itinerary takes us to Tartu. After lunch and a short rest in the hotel we will look at marshy areas nearby and visit an area known as one of the best spots for Great Snipe in the Baltic (Hansahotell or Trofee Guesthouse).

7 FRI ALAM-PEDJA, LAEVA & 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 (Hansahotell or Trofee Guesthouse).

8 SAT To Tallinn, 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 cobblestoned 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:
Single.suppl.

1150 Euro per person
170 Euro

Includes:

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

www.altmoisa.ee

www.roosta.ee

www.promenaadi.ee

www.wesset.ee

www.lepanina.ee

www.dorpat.ee

www.hansahotell.ee

www.trofee.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/>

And, don't forget, when you would like to travel with your friends – plan your dates, put together your group and book your own tour as soon as possible! Ask for our special price when your Group size is more than 10 people. There is a 40% discount for group leaders. We would be happy to give you more information or offer an extra tour whenever you find a suitable time.

Read more: www.lk.ee (homepage of Läänemaa Bird Club)
www.eoy.ee (homepage of Estonian Birding Society)
www.vironlintuseura.fi
www.estbirding.ee
www.estonica.org

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