



Estonian Nature Tours

Trip	: Birding in Estonia
Period	: March – October
Group size	: 2/8 pax
Accommodation	: Hotels / Guesthouses / Holiday Houses
Vehicle	: Hertz rental car or minivan
Extensions	: Local field ornithologist available on request
Local organizer	: Estonian Nature Tours

An 6-day holiday for individuals focusing on the spectacular bird migration, breeding birds and also wintering specialities in the West region of Estonia

Day 1 Arrive in Tallinn, to Haapsalu
Day 2 Leidissoo, Silma & Haapsalu
Day 3 Põõsaspea & Matsalu National Park
Day 4 Saaremaa Island
Day 5 Soometsa forests & Kabli
Day 6 Departure

Pickup of rental car is available on arrival at Tallinn Airport Hertz office (arriving information required). In the vehicle there is all general information, map of Estonia, rules of protected species and areas, brochures of Western Estonia nature reserves and directions how to find overnight places confirmed and paid before. Rental car return will be specified at the time of pickup.

VEHICLES:

Group W (IWMR) Mazda 6 Station Wagon or similar: intermediate, manual, air conditioned.

Rent includes: unlimited mileage, collision damage waiver and theft protection (non waivable excess is 605 Euro), third party liability insurance in Estonia, airport fee and tax. For collection from the hotel Hertz charges the fee of 12 Euro.

Grupp K (FVMR) VW Transporter or similar: fullsize, 1 + 8 minivan, manual, air conditioned.

Rent includes: unlimited mileage, collision damage waiver and theft protection (non waivable excess is 765 Euro), third party liability insurance in Estonia, airport fee and tax. For collection from the hotel Hertz charges the fee of 12 Euro.

Method of payment: Estonian Nature Tours voucher.

Guarantee: Deposit from Customer credit card - Visa, Mastercard, Amex or Diners.

HOTELS:

www.altmoisa.ee
www.roosta.ee
www.promenaadi.ee
www.saaremaa.ee
www.wesset.ee
www.pilguse.ee

GUESTHOUSES:

www.hot.ee/pihla
www.saaremaa.ee/jurna

HOLIDAY HOUSES:

www.dagen.ee
www.maetalu.ee
www.tuulingu.ee

PRICES:	Hotel	Guesthouse	Holiday house
2-4 pax	720 EUR per person	670 EUR	725 EUR
5-8 pax	475 EUR	495 EUR	350 EUR

Single suppl.

Includes:

Rental car or minivan. General information and the Map of Estonia. Rules, directions and brochures. Overnights in shared double or holiday houses. VAT.

Excludes:

Beverages and sauna. Local guide. Lunches and dinners. International tickets.

For friendly recommendation, expert advice from a local birdguide for searching for rare species, available on request.

The price is **170 Euro per day**.

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

CANCELLATIONS

Less than 15 days prior, 50 percent charge of movable cost fee per person. Cancellation on the day of arrival or no-show, full cost applies.

Cordially
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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.

Spring birdwatching in Estonia begins in late March when woodpeckers start their drumming, Capercaillies become very active under the old pine forests at dusk and all the swamps and bogs resound with Black Grouses at sunrise. Steller's Eider is easily observed in their wintering grounds and when it gets dark you can hear the calls of owls in the forest and observe Woodcocks flying above you. On shallow bays, their traditional feeding sites, there are thousands of Whooper and Bewick's Swans and different duck species, on the fields gather tens of thousands of geese.

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. The last week of September is the best time to explore this exiting performance, as this is the peak time of migration of both water- and landbirds, combined with the most vibrant autumn colours.

SHORT INFORMATION ABOUT HOT SPOTS:

Hiiumaa Island

RISTNA

Ristna is the most western point of Hiiumaa Island and it is one of the most windy regions in Estonia. Together with Cape Põõsaspea and Sõrve Bird Station, Ristna is one of the best places for birdwatching. Ruins of Soviet Union Army buildings now offer shelter from the wind for birdwatchers. Ristna is a good birding area all year round but the best time to watch arctic wildfowl migration is during last two weeks of May. The surrounding landscape provide good areas to search for different passerines, especially during autumn migration in September and October. Watch out for migrating Divers, Brent Geese, Razorbill, but also Arctic Skua, Black Guillemot, Steller's Eider and Purple Sandpiper. Here birdwatchers have found rarities like Yellow-billed Diver, Great Northern Diver, Gannet, Cory's Shearwater, Dotterel, Kittiwake, Crested Lark, Tawny Pipit, Richard's Pipit, Rock Pipit and Grey Wagtail.

KÄINA-KASSARI

This fragmented inner bay area surrounded with reedbeds is an important stop-over site for many wetland birds. The best areas for searching are Orjaku birdwatching tower and platvorm near Vaemla. Both are clearly marked with 'Linnuvaatlustorn' -signs. It is worth a visit to Käina Bay from April to December but the best periods for birdwatching are in spring in April and May and in autumn in September and October. Birdwatchers have found from Käina Bay rare birds like Surf Scoter, Barrow's Goldeneye and Little Egret.

TAHKUNA

Near the lighthouse situated at the tip of the Tahkuna peninsula you can observe migrating birds flying over the sea as well to find some rarities. The lighthouse territory is closed and you are not allowed to walk in the garden area without permission. Best time for birdwatching is April and May and from August to November. Rare birds at Tahkuna has included Pomarine Skua, Sabine`s Gull, Ring Ouzel and Yellow-browed Warbler.

Saaremaa Island

SÖRVE

The tip of Sõrve peninsula and the bird station nearby are the most popular birdwatching places in Estonia. The coastline in this area is good in spring and autumn for waterfowl migration but also many raptors and passerines cross the sea in this area. The best place for observing birds is near the lighthouse and amongst the Junipers near the coastline. There is car parking near the lighthouse. Previous military buildings can be used as platforms or shelter from the wind. Sõrve Bird Station is working all year around and every evening birds counted in this area are added to the database. Observations can be found from website www.vironlintuseura.fi . It is suggested that you ask for information from the bird station team and also you may like to visit the war history museum marked by „ajalootuba“ sign just next to bird station. Small money donations for the project are welcome.

HARILAIID, UNOVA & TAGALAHT

The sea surrounding Tagamõisa peninsula is an important stop-over site and wintering grounds for many waterbirds. Harilaid can be reached by Kihelkonna-Veere road. It is forbidden to drive with car further than the parking place. The most interesting wintering bird in Tagamõisa is Steller`s Eider. Here there may be up to 2000 individuals and the best period to observe them is from December to March.

KURESSAARE TOWN

This bay near Kurressaare is an excellent birding place where waterbirds can be found all year around. The best places for birdwatching are the area at the back side of the Spa hotels and the watching tower in the southeastern part of Loode Tammik. Again rules must be followed and your car must be left always to the parking area. The best period to observe passing migration is at the end of September and early October. Here rare wintering birds like Gadwall, Teal, Pochard, Little Grebe, Bittern, Water Rail, White Wagtail and Reed Bunting can be found. Rare vagrants in this area have included Red-crested Pochard and Leach`s Storm Petrel. Another watching tower is also in Roomassaare which can be reached from Roomassaare harbour by foot (1,5 km).

Läänemaa

VIRTSU & PUHTULAIID

The water area between mainland and Muhu called Suur väin is one of the most important migration routes in Europe for migratory wildfowl. In some days over a million passing migratory birds has been counted. Birdwatching is best from southern part of Puhtulaid and from Virtsu harbour. During migration – tens of thousands passing Long-tailed Ducks, Common and Velvet Scoters, Geese, Divers, Ducks and Divers can be seen. Arctic Skua are frequent here and King Eider have been seen.

MATSALU NATIONAL PARK

Matsalu National Park is the most well known protected bird area in Estonia and is very well known in other European countries. In 1976 this area was designated as a Ramsar site. Birdwatchers favourite places in the northern part is Haeska, Põgari-Sassi and Puise and in the southern part Keemu, Salmi, Kloostri and Penijõe. The visitor center of the

Matsalu National Park is in Penijõe and from there you can ask for brochures or additional information for hiking. Rare vagrants has included Purple and Night Heron, Snow and Red-breasted Goose, Kentish Plover, Whiskered Tern and others.

HAAPSALU TOWN

Shallow bays surrounding Haapsalu are one of the most interesting birdwatching areas in Estonia. Birdwatching is easy walking the Promenade or using the watch tower. The best period for birdwatching is April and May and September and October. Rare breeders like Avocets can often be seen. Rare vagrants seen in Haapsalu included Green-winged Teal, Ferruginous Duck, Spoonbill, Black-winged Stilt, Ross`s Gull and others. Seeing Canada Goose or Great White Egret is often possible.

SILMA NATURE RESERVE

Small innerbays and fragmented reedbed and coastal meadow areas in Silma Nature Reserve can be compared with Matsalu and some species are even easier in Silma. The best birdwatching points are at Lake Sutlepa. Here there is a hiking trail and watching towers which can be reached from Saare village. Reedbeds around Lake Sutlepa are good places to hear night-time bird calls and songs. Here, Greylag Goose, Slavonian Grebe, Crested Grebe, Red-necked Grebe, Pochard, Bittern, Marsh Harrier, Spotted Crake, Water Rail, Black Tern, Savi`s Warbler, Great Reed Warbler, Penduline and Bearded Tit can be seen. Often White-tailed Eagle or Osprey are here and at Saunja Bay – thousand of Cranes and Geese are gathering before sunset.

CAPE PÕÕSASPEA

The most northwestern point of the Estonian mainland is one the best places to observe arctic wildfowl migration in North Europe and you will often see foreign birders here. Cape Põõsaspea can be reached by the Linnamäe-Dirhami road. From Tuksi village you turn right and drive through Spithami village. At the tip of the peninsula is a small birdwatching hide which offers shelter from the wind. Põõsaspea is worth visiting all year around but the best time to observe spring migration is from March to May and in autumn from July to November. Here can be found almost anything – Divers, Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, Mergansers, Geese, Razorbills and Black Guillemots. In the peak time of migration over 100 000 Geese, 250 000 Long-tailed Ducks, tens of thousands of Scaups and Scoters have been counted in one day. Interesting findings can include Purple Sandpiper, Arctic Skua, Shore Lark, Rock Pipit, Red-throated Pipit and Lapland Bunting. Rare vagrants has been Pink-footed Goose, Snow Goose, Surf Scoter, Great Northern Diver, Red-footed Falcon, Hume`s Warbler, Rosy Starling, Steppe Eagle and many others.

LEIDISSOO FORESTS

Roads in forested areas around Leidisoo bog are one of the best places to search for forest birds in Läänemaa county. Birding trips can be started in March to search for woodpeckers and owls. Here can be found Ural Owl, Pygmy Owl, Grey-headed Woodpecker, White-backed Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker and Nutcracker. Often Hazel Grouse or Capercaillie can be seen from the roads. Black Grouses are very common and often mammals like Elk and Wild Boars can be seen.

Pärnumaa

SOOMETSA FORESTS

The Soometsa forests hide many highlights among forest birds. The six most common woodpecker species – Great Spotted, Lesser Spotted, White-backed, Black, Grey-headed and Three-toed Woodpecker can all be found during one single morning. Beside woodpeckers, Ural or Pygmy Owl and also Tengmalm`s Owl can be heard. Hazel Grouse is common, and Capercaillie can be found sometimes. It is allowed to use the roads in the forests. The best time to visit forests in Soometsa is from March to May and in October and November.

PIKLA

The old fish-ponds in Pikla, south from Võiste, are now mostly covered by reed and have become excellent places for birds. Many birds can be heard at night during a visit to Pärnumaa from May to June and Citrine Wagtail and Penduline Tit can be found here.

KABLI BIRD STATION

Because most bird species arrive in spring in South West Estonia many birdwatchers search this area for their first sightings of the year. The best place for birdwatching is Kabli birdwatching tower near the bird ringing station. During autumn migration, from August to early November, active bird ringing is going on here. It is important not to disturb bird ringers during that time. The most numerous birds which are ringed are Coldrests and Tits, but sometimes Owls are caught or even rarities. These have included five first records for Estonia - Woodchat Shrike, Isabelline Shrike, Siberian Tit, Yellow-browed Warbler and Palla`s Leaf Warbler.