



Estonian Nature Tours

Trip	: Steller´s Eider Watching
Period	: Thu10Mar – Sun13Mar 2011 Thu17Mar – Sun20Mar 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 4-day fully-inclusive holiday in search flocks of Steller´s Eider in their wintering grounds and other wintering specialities of West-Estonia

Day 1 Arrive in Tallinn, to Saaremaa Island

Day 2 Saaremaa Island

Day 3 Saaremaa Island, to Nõva

Day 4 Departure

Highlights

Birds: Steller´s Eider, Purple Sandpiper, White-tailed Eagle, Goshawk, Black Grouse, Hazel Grouse, Hawk Owl, Eagle Owl, Ural Owl, Tengmalm´s Owl, Pygmy Owl, Rough-legged Buzzard, White-backed Woodpecker, Black Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Nutcracker, Great Grey Shrike, Crested Tit, Bearded Tit, Waxwing, Snow Bunting, Parrot Crossbill etc.

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

Estonia is a small and beautiful country near the Baltic Sea which has enjoyed moderate financial growth since gaining independence in 1991. The country has a long, indented and diverse coastline with more than 1000 islands and forests and woodlands cover almost half of the Estonian territory. Birdwatching in Estonia is wonderful as extensive undeveloped coastal areas with wide-spread reed-beds and grasslands as well as winding rivers, vast floodplains, mires, bogs and primeval forests in the central part of the mainland are habitats for thousands of migrating and breeding birds. There are also many species of mammals and rare plant species.

The most endangered seabird in Europe, Steller´s Eider, is good reason to visit Estonia even in the winter time. The coast of our biggest island, Saaremaa, is the most important wintering area for Steller´s Eider around the Baltic Sea. These eye-catching birds arrive in December and leave around the beginning of April. The best time to observe Steller´s Eider is January and February when congregations may reach 1000 birds or even more.

NB! *The beginning of winter offers good opportunities to observe Owls. A low number of rodents has forced Ural Owls to hunt during the daytime. Also with few rodents to the north, Estonia can expect a bigger invasion of Hawk Owls this winter. In October Hawk Owls have already been spotted in West-Estonia! The best time to observe owls is January-February.*

1 THU TALLINN, to Saaremaa Island

We will pick up you from Tallinn Airport at ... and drive to Virtsu (from Tallinn 160 km) where we take the ferry at 6.00pm. At half past 6 we arrive at Kuivastu harbour on Muhu Island and drive westward. After check-in and short rest we will eat our first dinner at the guesthouse (Jurna Tourism Farm or Pilguse Resort).

2 FRI SAAREMAA ISLAND

Today we will have the opportunity to scope Steller's Eiders. To see dense flock(s) of these magnificent birds we have to drive to the northwesternmost part of Saaremaa. The hot spot for Steller's Eider is located close to Cape Undva. Uudepanga Bay near Undva hosts up to 1000 Seller's Eiders each winter. Usually the numbers remain between 300 and 600, sometimes less. Birds form dense flocks where they behave synchronously, especially when diving. On Saaremaa island, often beautiful arctic waders - Purple Sandpipers can be seen.

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 Shrikes and Rough-legged Buzzard on short stops on our way to Undva or after that. After the lunch at the guesthouse and short rest we will go for an Owling session. If we are fortunate we can hear or even see Tengmalm's and Pygmy Owl in their habitats in Viidumäe Nature reserve (Jurna Tourism Farm or Pilguse Resort).

3 SAT PÕÖSASPEA & NÕVA FORESTS

After breakfast we will return back to the mainland. Depending on winter severity and weather in spring the Suur Väin Strait can be covered with ice, or host nice flocks of seaducks. At half past 10 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 situating at the migratory crossroad, where every Spring and Autumn masses of waterbirds coming from Bothnian and from the Finnish Bay direction meet. This place deserves to be mentioned as 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 is habitat for Crested Tit, Willow Tit, Goldcrest, Hazel Grouse and Black Woodpecker.

We will eat our lunch at the local restaurant. After a rest at the bungalows, in the afternoon, we will go for an Owling session before we have our evening meal. A low number of rodents has forced Ural Owls to hunt during the daytime. Also with few rodents to the north, Estonia can expect a bigger invasion of Hawk Owls this winter. In October Hawk Owls have already been spotted in West-Estonia! Dinner at the local restaurant (Roosta Bungalows).

4 SUN LEIDISSOO, to Tallinn, departure

Today we will visit the heathland forest environment in the early morning. We hope to hear Pygmy Owl or even see the Eagle Owl hunting for small mammals at the forest edge whilst other attractions in this area include Capercaillie, Hazel Grouse and some interesting woodpeckers. We will return to Tallinn by early afternoon and have some free time for shopping before we will drive to the Airport to catch your homeward flight at ...

PRICE:
Single.suppl.

495 Euro per person
65 Euro

Includes: English-Estonian speaking guide(s) throughout the journey. All meals (6) and coffee-breaks (2). All local transport. Entrance fees to protected areas and museums. All overnights in shared double:

www.pilguse.ee

www.saaremaa.ee/jurna/

www.roosta.ee

etc.VAT.

Excludes: Beverages and sauna. International tickets.

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.llk.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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