



Estonian Nature Tours

Trip	: GREAT SNIPE AND WOODPECKERS
Period	: Wed30Apr – Sun04May 2014
Group size	: 6/8 pax
Focus	: Birds
Grading	: Day walks only, for all ages
Accommodation	: Comfortable hotel with private facilities
Food	: Restaurants and local farms
Leader	: Tarvo Valker
Extensions	: Cultural/sightseeing extensions available on request
Agent/Organizer	: Estonian Nature Tours, e-mail: info@naturetours.ee

A 5-day fully-inclusive holiday in search for the impressive selection of woodpeckers (in all, eight species can be found in Estonia!) and a Great Snipe

Few places in Europe can match the excitement of watching Estonia's amazing wildlife, at almost any time of year. Spring in Estonia begins in late March when woodpeckers start their drumming, Capercaillies become very active under the old pine forest at dusk and all the swamps and bogs resound with displaying Black Grouse at sunrise. During this birding trip, often there are mornings when 4-6 different species of woodpeckers can be found in one small woodland! Being widespread, Hazel Hen can surprise you near the roadsides while driving in forested areas. You can hear the calls of Ural, Pygmy and Tengmalm's Owls in the forests when it gets dark, or observe roding Woodcocks flying above you. From late April to late June, after sunset, the meadows resound with the bubbling of Great Snipes – a breeding species for which Estonia is internationally important. Up to 600 males have been estimated.

Day 1 Arrive in Tallinn, to North-East

Day 2 Alutaguse forests

Day 3 Alutaguse forests, to Tartu; Great Snipe

Day 4 Järvselja forest & Aardla

Day 5 Departure

Highlights

Birds: Bittern, Black Stork, White Stork, Lesser Spotted Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Rough-legged Buzzard, Black Grouse, Capercaillie, Hazel Grouse, Great Snipe, Ural Owl, Tengmalm's Owl, Pygmy Owl, White-backed Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker, Black Woodpecker, Middle and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Nutcracker, Crested Tit, Penduline Tit, Citrine Wagtail, Great Grey Shrike etc.

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

1 Wed (30th April) TALLINN, to North-East

We will pick up you from Tallinn Airport and drive to the north-east region of Estonia called Alutaguse. After check-in at the hotel (or guesthouse) we will go for an optional excursion to listen to the night sounds of the western taiga forests before we have our evening meal (Wesenbergh Hotel).

2 Thu (1st May) ALUTAGUSE FORESTS

Early morning takes us to the one of the most densely forested corners of Estonia - it is similar in appearance to taiga and is called Alutaguse. This area is probably one of the best places in Estonia for searching for forest bird species. A large storm in 2001, and forest felling after that, have changed the look of this landscape dramatically. Regenerating forest is the best habitat to find Roe Deer and Elk who in turn are prey for carnivores. Many old dead trees in the woodland offer great feeding and nesting sites for woodpeckers. We hope to find many of the special birds that inhabit this fascinating area including Three-toed, Grey-headed, White-backed and Black Woodpecker as well as Black Grouse, Capercaillie and Hazel Grouse.

Alutaguse is situated near the Russian border and forms a natural forest corridor through to St.Peterburg Oblast's forests and bogs. This Alutaguse habitat holds a large number of Bears and now – after hundreds of years – is also known as the heart of Estonian "bear culture". The rest of the day will be spent exploring on foot and by vehicle in one of Estonian's best known Brown Bear regions where you will have a chance of seeing one of the more elusive residents such as Wolf, Lynx and Brown Bear! Even if you don't see any of these animals, you will have plenty of fun deciphering the many mammal tracks we find along the way! After a rest at the guesthouse and dinner we will head out into the forest again to search for Ural, Pygmy and Tengmalm's owls (Wesenbergh Hotel).

3 Fri (2nd May) ALUTAGUSE, to Tartu; GREAT SNIPE

Today we will travel out in the early morning 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 and Black Grouse. Whether or not you were in luck a day before, it is always fantastic to watch (and hear) the forest come alive with the first rays of the morning sun. Forest tits, Crossbills and other passerines are at their most active, restlessly flitting about in search of food. After taking a rest at the guesthouse and a lunch we move to Tartu region where we offer an excursion to the area where we can watch displaying Great Snipe at one of their best lekking sites in the Baltic (Mooste Viinavabrik Guesthouse).

4 Sat (3rd May) JÄRVSELJA & AARDLA

Today we will travel out in the early morning and enjoy birdwatching in one of the oldest protected areas in Estonia, Järvselja forest, to see selection of woodpeckers as well as Nutcracker, Pygmy Owl and other forest bird species. Although the size of the primeval forest area of Järvselja is not remarkable it still has significant value. In 1924 it was decided to maintain a part of the intact forest area as a sample of virgin forest. Within a small area the diversity of the woodland is very high. In the southeastern part the most impressive trees grow. They include up to 40 m-high and over 200 years-old giant spruces. Also some huge birches, aspens, lindens, ashes and maples can be seen here. In some places moving around is complicated due to the debris and old tree trunks lying on the ground, therefore a special wooden track has been constructed in the primeval forest quarter. After a rest at the guesthouse and 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. We will hope to find a wonderful diversity of species including Black Stork, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Penduline Tit, Citrine Wagtail, thousands of arctic Geese etc. Dinner at the guesthouse (Mooste Viinavabrik Guesthouse).

5 Sun (4th 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:
Single.suppl.

695 Euro per person
150 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.wesenbergh.ee

www.fototurism.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:

The name of a company: Kumari Reisisid OÜ

Address: 90305 Penijõe, Lihula vald, Läänemaa, 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