



Estonian Nature Tours

Trip	: MATSALU – A PARADISE FOR BIRDS
Period	: Mon 16th May – Fri 20th May 2016
Group size	: 6/7 pax
Focus	: Birds
Grading	: Day walks only, for all ages
Accommodation	: Comfortable hotel with private facilities
Food	: Restaurants
Leader	: Local guide
Extensions	: Cultural/sightseeing extensions available on request
Organizer/Agent	: Estonian Nature Tours, e-mail: info@naturetours.ee

A 5-day short break in Matsalu National Park focusing on the spectacular landscapes, migrating and breeding birds

Matsalu National Park covers 486 square kilometers and is one of the most important bird wetlands in Europe. It boasts plenty of habitats suitable for use as staging posts or for breeding, including one of Europe's largest wet meadow and 3,000 hectares of reedbeds, and the shallow, brackish, nutrient-rich waters of the bay whose name bears has a 165-kilometre coastline. It is easy to see why more than 170 species breed here – and why the northern European day-list record of 194 was set in May 2007. Matsalu National Park covers 486 square kilometers and is one of the most important bird wetlands in Europe. It boasts plenty of habitats suitable for use as staging posts or for breeding, including one of Europe's largest wet meadow and 3,000 hectares of reedbeds, and the shallow, brackish, nutrient-rich waters of the bay whose name bears has a 165-kilometre coastline. It is easy to see why more than 170 species breed here – and why the northern European day-list record of 194 was set in May 2007.

Day 1 Arrive in Tallinn, to Western Estonia

Day 2 Matsalu National Park

Day 3 Leidissoo, Põõsaspea & Haapsalu

Day 4 Matsalu National Park

Day 5 Departure

Highlights

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

Mammals: Wild Boar & Raccoon Dog (probably), Red Fox, Elk, Roe deer, European Beaver etc.

1 Mon (16th May) TALLINN, to Western Estonia

We will pick up you from Tallinn Airport at ... and drive to western Estonia. After check-in at the guesthouse and a short rest we will go for an optional excursion to listen to the night sounds of the wetlands, before we have our evening meal (Tuulingu Guesthouse).

2 Tue (17th May) MATSALU NATIONAL PARK

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. Dusk is the time that Beavers leave their lodges to spend an industrious night felling riverside trees and saplings. A little quiet patience is required here, but with luck you are likely to see several individuals going about their nightly construction work and swimming about, with background sounds by Bittern, Water Rail, Spotted Crake and Savi's Warbler. We eat our dinner in the boat (Tuulingu Guesthouse).

3 Wed (18th May) LEIDISSOO, PÕÕSASPEA & HAAPSALU

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 continue our birding at Põõsaspea peninsula. This small north-stretching spit is situated at the migratory crossroads where masses of waterbirds coming from the Bothnian and the Finnish Bays meet. This is one of the best places to observe Arctic waterbird migration. Tens and hundreds of thousands of Long-tailed Ducks, Common Scoters and goose species can be seen during the peak of migration. This place is famous for its diver migration: up to a couple of thousand Black-throated and Red-throated Divers can be seen daily, and Yellow-billed Diver is frequently seen. After a lunch we will take a walk on Haapsalau promenade 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. Dinner at the guesthouse (Tuulingu Guesthouse).

4 Thu (19th May) MATSALU NATIONAL PARK

Today we will move to the northern shore of Matsalu Bay and explore a variety of Põgari-Sassi coastal habitats. We also visit Haeska watchtower. The record for the highest day list of bird species in Northern Europe was achieved from this tower in May – 128 species by nightfall. After lunch we drive around in more agricultural landscape where we hope to improve our bird list with several raptors, such as Rough-legged Buzzard and Spotted Eagle. Later in the afternoon, we shall watch from viewing platforms and while enjoying the geese or late Cranes we'll also look out for White-tailed Eagles, harriers – and Elk. Fantastic BBQ at the guesthouse (Tuulingu Guesthouse).

5 Fri (20th May) 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 cobbled 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: **755 Euro per person**
Single.suppl. 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:

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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.

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