

FINLAND AND NORWAY



"The wild remote shores around Varanger Fjord and Hornøya have White-billed Diver, Brünnich's Guillemots and King Eiders - previous trips have turned up Snowy Owl, Killer Whale and Beluga - with the very best local guides, this will be a trip to remember." Darren Rees

Dates Mon 17 - Sun 30 May 2021

Price £5,895

Deposit £1,175 Single Supp £600

Leaders Darren Rees and local guide

Flights Finnair, scheduled
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Oulu
Inbound: Morning, Ivalo-Heathrow
(outbound and inbound via Helsinki)

Weather Mixture of sun and showers though difficult to predict given the area that we'll cover (-5°-15°C). Can be warm and sunny but certainly cold in the north with a chance of a shower and even some snow possible

Walking Some short easy walks on wide paths, with one or two over uneven terrain away from tracks

Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 14

Insects Biting insects are unlikely to be a problem until we return south on our last day, when at dusk and in forests mosquitoes can be a nuisance

Boats A short crossing to Hornøya

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Hawk Owl	Terek Sandpiper
Pygmy Owl	Black Woodpecker
Ural Owl	Three-toed
Great Grey Owl	Woodpecker
Tengmalm's Owl	Red-throated Pipit
Rough-legged Buzzard	Red-flanked Bluetail
Gyr Falcon	Siberian Tit
Hazel Grouse	Lapland Bunting
Temminck's Stint	Brünnich's Guillemot
Broad-billed Sandpiper	Siberian Jay

The magic of the Scandinavian Arctic - the ultimate tour of wild Lapland, with our favourite guides who seem to conjour up birds of myths and legend.

- A wishlist of birds in the Land of the Midnight Sun
- Owls, grouse, waders, Arctic specialities and Russian rarities
- Itinerary perfected after 12 trips with our Finnature friends
- Our best ever top-to-bottom holiday - see it all
- From Finland's forests and bogs in the middle.....
-to the top of Norway's famous Varanger Fjord and back again
- All before the mosquitoes spoil the fun!

1-4 We fly to Oulu where we meet our local guide and transfer to the nearby hotel, our base for four nights, where we can explore the landscape of sandy fields, dotted with lichen-covered pine forest. Icterine Warbler might be singing outside our window!

The beautiful boreal forests around Oulu hold Red-backed Shrike, Wryneck, Black Woodpecker and marvellous displaying Temminck's Stint. Rare Terek Sandpipers and Pallid Harriers occur; yet perhaps the most treasured birds will be the northern owls - in good vole years, Pygmy, Great Grey, Tengmalm's, Ural, Short-eared and Long-eared Owl can all be seen!

Within the forests, Ortolan Bunting and Common Rosefinch sing in beautiful meadows dotted with rustic barns. Colourful male Ruff lek here too and at the important wetland of Liminka Bay we'll see Common Crane, Garganey, Marsh Harrier and Whooper Swan



and above we'll enjoy displaying Wood Sandpiper, Greenshank and Black-tailed Godwit.

5-7 We travel north-east to Kuusamo, through forests and quaking bogs holding Black-throated Diver, Red-necked Grebe, Green Sandpiper and delightful Smew. Arriving at our hotel, local guides may have surprises in store, a Hawk Owl, Capercaillie or maybe a long-legged Elk?

The beautiful Kuusamo region at Oulanka and Valtavaara is a thrilling boreal wilderness, where birdlife is the stuff of legend - Rough-legged Buzzard, Rustic Bunting and Hazel Hen to name but a few!

Climbing higher, the pristine, narrow-shouldered Siberian Spruce forests are cloaked in beard-lichens and littered with snow patches. Siberian Jay can be quite tame here, whilst we search for elusive specialities such as Pine Grosbeak and Red-flanked Bluetail.





"A trip into the Scandinavian Arctic is top of most British birders must-do wish-lists. The endless boreal forests of Finland and northern Norway, with their associated pools and bogs, hold a special place in the minds of birdwatchers. Near mythical birds hold summer territories here and their very names help define our meaning of wilderness - Great Grey Owl, Hawk Owl, Gyrfalcon, Long-tailed Skua, Rough-legged Buzzard, Three-toed Woodpecker and Red-flanked Bluetail - I can't wait to go!" Darren Rees

8 Farther north still, at our hotel in Ivalo, Redwing herald the start of summer. In the lichen-clad spruces at Saariselkä, parties of Siberian Tit occur and there may be scarce Three-toed Woodpecker. Waxwing and Brambling are two of the regular breeding birds and the vast bogs hold gems such as Bluethroat, black velvety Spotted Redshank and Wood Sandpiper.

9-10 Travelling north towards the Norwegian border, the lakes, rocky islands and stunted spruces and birches look like a troll's playground - we'll look for the Rough-legged Buzzards, Golden Eagles and Long-tailed Skuas that hunt here. Barren hilltops hold Dotterel and Snow Buntings and we'll follow the River Tana that carves through dramatic cliffs and snow-clad mountains to reach the fjord seashore - we'll check the Eider flocks for scarce King Eider; sadly now a declining species. In the far north we reach Båtsfjord, our base for two nights, where regular birds include Arctic Redpoll and Lapland Bunting. Low, rolling tundra has Rough-legged Buzzard and Short-eared Owl on the wing. Willow Grouse are here and unmade tracks take us into the barren fjells of snow and scree, the home of Ptarmigan where, in good lemming years, an elusive Snowy Owl can be a prize for careful scanning.

11-12 We drive south then east, with Russia appearing on the skyline and the famous Varanger Fjord around us. Here, in the bleak-yet-beautiful high Arctic, the waves of the Barent's Sea wash against rocky shores, where rare Steller's Eider might be among the Common Eider and Velvet and Common Scoter. Long-tailed and Arctic Skuas, plus Arctic Tern and Glaucous

Gulls drift by and divers include Red-throated and Black-throated, uncommon Great Northern and, the special prize, White-billed Diver - in breeding plumage. Small lakes have pairs of Long-tailed Duck and Scaup and the barren, treeless landscape is broken by colourfully painted timber fishing villages, where old wooden racks are adorned with fish drying in the dry Arctic air. Finally, we arrive at the small fishing port of Vardø.

To the north and west the scenery is wild and dramatic with snowy mountain peaks, steep fjords and sea cliffs, with rocky pinnacles sculpted by glacial ice. The village of Hamningberg seems to be at the very end of the world, where stony desert moraines are dotted with arctic-alpine plants at sea level and Shorelark and Snow Bunting nest. There might be White-tailed Eagles and Gyrfalcon on the prowl!

Weather permitting, our boat trip to Hornøya island is a treat - 7,500 pairs of Kittiwake throng here and amongst nesting Guillemot, Puffin, Black Guillemot and Razorbill, the prize is the true arctic auk, Brünnich's Guillemot - we've seen Orcas here in the past as well!

13 We make the long drive back to Ivalo, looking on high tundra areas for Dotterel and savouring the scenery - late evening in the vast forest bogs here is magical and as the sun finally dips towards the horizon, we'll look for Broad-billed Sandpiper and dainty Red-necked Phalarope, whilst Jack Snipe give their amazing 'galloping horse' display flight high in the sky.

14 We fly back to the UK, via Helsinki.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Morning flight to Helsinki, then onward flight to Oulu
4 nights Hotel Airport Oulu, Finland
- Days 2-4** Wildlife and birdwatching exploration
- Days 5-7** A day's transfer to Kuusamo
3 nights Holiday Club Kuusamon Tropiikki, Finland
- Day 8** Transfer to Ivalo, birdwatching enroute
1 night Hotel Ivalo, Finland
- Days 9-10** Transfer to Båtsfjord
2 nights Polar Hotel, Norway
- Days 11-12** Transfer to Vardø
2 nights Hotel Vardø, Norway
- Day 13** Transfer back to Ivalo
1 night Hotel Ivalo, Finland
- Day 14** Morning flight via Helsinki, arriving in the UK in the afternoon

Jari Peltomäki: Great Grey Owl
Roy Atkins: Ural Owl, Tengmalm's Owl
Tim Jones: Red-flanked Bluetail
David Braddock: Siberian Tit
Harri Taavetti: Hazel Grouse

