



Black Grouse

Birds & Mammals in spring

Destination: Oulu - Kuusamo - Suomussalmi - Lieksa - Joensuu
Focus: Wildlife photography
Grading: Moderate walks only – max 1000 meters one-way

Group size: 4 – 6 photographers
Time: 15 – 26 April 2019
Price: 5 595 € per person, single supplement 730 €

Brown Bear



Photograph birds and mammals in snow

Winter has yielded to the power of the sun, and the main cores of migratory birds are arriving to their breeding areas. Sixteen hours of daylight and an hour's twilight with half a meter of snow still in the forest and the lakes still partly covered with ice create excellent conditions for a keen wildlife photographer.

This photography tour to Finland in April is perfectly timed to photograph a full array of Finnish wildlife and birds! Black Grouse are actively lekking and huge Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles are in residence, and the Oulu and Kuusamo areas are ideal for photographing a spectacular variety of magnificent owls in some years, including Great Grey and Northern Hawk Owl.

In eastern Finland we will focus our lenses on Finnish Brown Bears, just awakened from their winter sleep. Finally, in Lieksa, our primary photographic target will be the elusive Wolverine. Join us for a photo safari with a difference and get to experience some of the best that Europe has to offer!

Highlights: Black Grouse lek, Whooper Swan, Golden and White-tailed Eagle, Brown Bear, Wolverine, Wolf, Elk, Wild Forest Reindeer

For more information:

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Day 1 Arrival at Oulu

Upon arrival at the airport, you will be met and welcomed by our guide, and transferred to cozy Villa Finnature. Time permitting, we begin our photographic adventure with an evening excursion to an area that sometimes holds a number of owl species and, if luck is on our side, the magnificent Elk.

Villa Finnature will serve as a base for the next 2 nights.

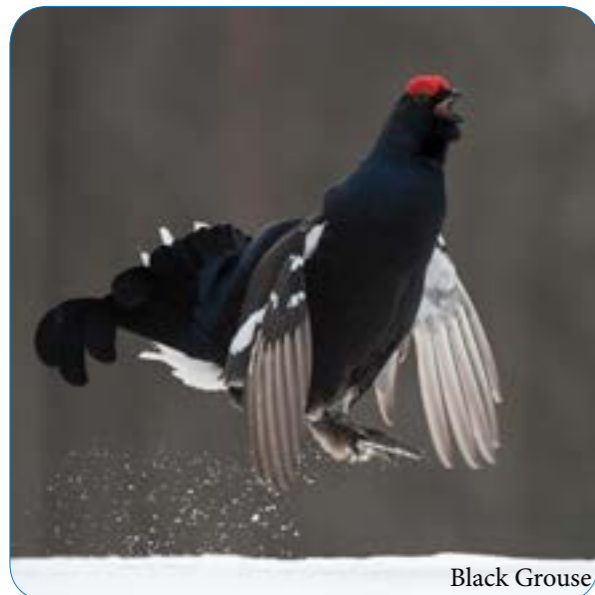
Day 2 Photographing in the Oulu region

We depart very early in the morning in order to arrive at our strategically placed hides in the Finnish wilds in time. Here, we spend time capturing the awe-inspiring display of Black Grouse with their lyre-shaped tails and striking red skin around the eye. While Black Grouse are spectacular birds in their own right, it is their amazing courtship display during the early spring that makes them all the more desirable for bird and wildlife photographers alike. This courtship behavior, known as lekking, begins soon after the long winter's cold embrace is finally broken and the snow begins to melt, exposing an arena of richly colored ground plants. Not only do these open arenas make for easy viewing and photography, but the early morning's first light blankets this stage and illuminates the large males as they call, leap, dance and even spar in full view of the hides.

At times, up to fifteen or more males compete for the chance to mate with a female who might be looking on from nearby! During our time in Oulu we also visit nearby Liminka Bay, where impressive numbers of Greylag and Taiga Bean Geese and other waterfowl can be found feeding and wheeling around in large flocks. In order to position ourselves for the best photographic opportunities, we once again use hides. Typically, we aim to spend only a few hours in the hides at any given time, affording us the opportunity to explore the surrounding areas and photograph some of the other local creatures that splash the Finnish countryside with color and form. Possibilities include various wonderful owls and even the delightful Snow Bunting.

Day 3 Oulu to Kuusamo

After early morning photography session in Oulu we might leave to Kuusamo early, depending on a bird situation. In Kuusamo we spend the evening with photogenic Whooper Swans. Kuusamo is our base for the next three nights.



Black Grouse



Whooper Swans



Golden Eagle

Day 4 - 5 Kuusamo area

Once again, to take the full advantage of the long spring days, we depart for our hides in the stillness of the very early pre-dawn hours. After settling into our comfortable hides we then wait for our latest photographic quarry, the mighty Golden Eagle. These truly magnificent birds of prey are both a pleasure and an exciting challenge to photograph. We take on the challenge and photograph them as they perch against a range of different backgrounds as well as while they interact with one another.

Mating and occasional aggressive behavior will give us the opportunity to capture the eagles in action and we will no doubt leave with a whole range of interesting images! Not to be outdone by their counterparts, White-tailed Eagles may also put in an appearance, providing us a chance to photograph yet another very impressive marvel of the avian world. In order to maximize our photographic opportunities, much of our time in the area is spent in hides and it is not uncommon for us to remain in these from before sunrise until just before darkness sets in. However, to break the monotony we may also visit some nearby feeding stations where smaller birds will form the subject of our focus, including such gems as the Siberian Tit, Siberian Jay and Great-spotted Woodpecker.

Day 6 Kuusamo to Martinselkonen

After a final morning's photography in the Kuusamo region we continue our exciting photographic adventure to the Brown Bear country! After lunch in Kuusamo we head to Martinselkonen to our accommodation for the following three nights. After arriving and settling into our rooms, we then undergo a photo workshop on the basics of how to photograph from a Brown Bear hide. Several of these professional hides will be used in order to obtain the best possible pictures of these impressive animals.

Days 7 - 8 Martinselkonen area

Following a long hibernation through the mind: an almost insatiable hunger and a fervent desire to mate! Fortunately for us, this brings these normally solitary bears into close contact with one another, providing photographers with the rare opportunity to photograph a number of bears and, more importantly, some exciting interactions between them. In particular, photographing male Brown Bears expressing their naked aggression toward one another has got to be one of the most thrilling experiences in any wildlife photographer's career! As on our previous days in Finland, we make use of the area's hides; however, in contrast to previous days, we will spend most of our time positioned in the hides during darkness as a result of the bear's largely nocturnal/crepuscular habits. Fortunately, with the spring daytime exceeding sixteen hours, there will be plenty of opportunities to photograph and observe these bears in the golden light of early morning and late afternoon. Once again, bears will not be the only subjects of our attention during our stay in the area and we can expect to photograph several other smaller denizens of the surrounding forest.



Brown Bear

Day 9 Martinselkonen to Lieksa

After filling our memory cards with unforgettable images of Brown Bears and other animals, we move on to our final stop on this photographic extravaganza, the Lieksa area.

Days 10 - 11 Lieksa area

While Lieksa may be the last stop on our journey, it certainly is not the least. With a density of Wolverines matching that of just about any other area in the world, Lieksa will no doubt be one of the major highlights on our tour! Our hides here provide us with the perfect vantage point from which to photograph these ferocious and charismatic little beasts as they come to feed on scraps of food. In an effort to keep these scraps out of reach of various scavenging birds, only small portions are scattered around the area in front of the hides. This also serves to ensure that when wolverines do enter the area, they remain there for longer periods of time in search for further food, allowing us to photograph them in the open while climbing trees and searching among fallen logs.

Day 12 Departure from Joensuu

After a final morning of photography our tour comes to an end around midday. A last drive to Joensuu airport where we say our final goodbyes.

For more pictures: [Finnature's Flickr Gallery](#)

Price includes: Finnature guiding throughout the journey, land transportation from Oulu airport to Joensuu airport, accommodation, use of professional hides, half board

Accommodation: Clean and comfortable hotel and lodge accommodation with double occupancy and with shared facilities

Food: Local restaurants

Leader: Finnature guide

Booking: www.shop.finnature.com

Recommended flights: We recommend to arrive to Oulu in the afternoon and to depart from Joensuu around midday.

Please notice: The itinerary might change due to weather conditions or bird situation. Unfortunately we cannot guarantee any of the species, but our expert Finnature guides do their utmost to ensure the best possible photography opportunities during the tour.

Official Package travel trader (Organiser) and Travel agent

Registration number: 1193/05/MjMv

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Wolverine



Brown Bear



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