

BEST OF FINLAND & ARCTIC NORWAY CAPERCAILLIE TO OWLS

MAY 14-27, 2021

BROWN BEARS & WOLVERINES PRE-TRIP

MAY 8-15, 2021

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Pristine taiga forest with many exciting Siberian specialties © Finnature

Finland and Arctic Norway offer the perfect combination for birders with their spectacular rugged landscapes, vast boreal taiga forests, endless lakes, majestic mountains and an intricate coastline boasting remote coastal fjords to stunning Norwegian Sea cliffs and offshore islands brimming with countless thousands of breeding seabirds. Here during the short summer, the sun never sets for months on end, fueling the spectacular land of plenty, and the all too brief explosion of Arctic life makes our visit to Scandinavian Lapland so special. Be prepared for a fascinating adventure in one of Europe's most varied, untouched and exciting wildlife-watching destinations!



Our trip is perfectly timed to enjoy the early summer with this natural abundance of life, offering us many sought-after Arctic breeding specialties along with an excellent opportunity to experience mass spring migration as countless water, sea birds and songbirds are heading here to enjoy breeding in the Land of the Midnight Sun. This tour has been meticulously designed, along with expert local birders, enabling us to highlight the best Scandinavian avian treasures, including many of Europe's most charismatic owls (up to eight species at known nesting sites) and no less than five incredible grouse species too, with many on exciting leks!



Male Capercaillie on its lek is one of our main targets. © Olli Lamminsalo

Imagine filling your lungs with the tonic that is fresh, clean Arctic air like a high class bottle of bubbly, wind sighing in the boreal forests, light sparkling and dancing on the surfaces of myriad lakes—all while enjoying the varied landscapes including natural grassy meadows ablaze with colorful wildflowers which is still a common and glorious sight in Scandinavia. If you love owls and grouse to

immense seabird colonies, this is the tour for you. Better still, we will enjoy observing the owls in the day light!

This exciting new tour will also offer many of Eastern Europe's most sought after Sibes (Siberian) and Arctic species. The forests and tundra here are blessed with an astonishing array of boreal songbirds and shorebirds, all in full breeding plumage with their melodious songs ringing throughout secluded forested valleys, while we marvel at the rarely seen shorebirds displays. This trip truly is a hidden gem for naturalists and birders alike.



We begin our tour in Finland—a sparsely populated country brimming with natural beauty from lakes, rich wetlands, to vast forests of pine, birch and spruce. In fact, seventy percent of Finland is still forested and a further 10% covered with lakes! Successive ice ages and the cold climate have led to the formation of a wide range of peatland and wetland habitats. Meltwater rivers inside the ice deposited long ridges of sand and gravel which now stand above the surrounding landscape and are known as eskers. Finland is reputed to be the ‘Land of a Thousand Lakes,’ with nearly 200,000 lakes which are mostly small and shallow—excellent for the country’s abundant waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors alike.

Oulu, high up on the Gulf of Bothnia, is a birder’s paradise. Here we’ll concentrate our efforts birding both the rich forests and internationally important wetlands of Liminganlahti. The region is best known, however, for its breeding northern owls, so we’ll begin our owl quest here but also continue further north in Kuusamo and Ivalo. Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Ural, Great Gray, Eurasian Pygmy, Northern Hawk and Boreal are all expected. Our local guides

specialize in showing these to visiting birders and usually have active nests located.

Magnificent wetlands offer us a great selection of breeding shorebirds including hopefully the rare Terek sandpiper, Black-tailed Godwit, Northern Lapwing, both Wood and Green sandpipers, and splendid Ruff in their incredible varied breeding colors performing their intricate displays at leks. These immense scrubby marshlands offer a good chance to find summering Harriers, Common Cranes, Eurasian Bittern, Whooper Swan, Greylag Goose, Little Gull, Smew, Yellow Wagtail, Whinchat, Yellowhammer and possibly even a rarity or two.

Continuing eastwards towards Kuusamo and closer to Russia, we find a land of lakes, bogs and extensive forested hills providing nest-sites for Bean Geese, Great Crested and Red-necked grebes, Arctic Loon, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Jack Snipe, European Golden Plover and Spotted Redshank. Taiga forests offer good chances of finding more cool woodpeckers such as Black and Eurasian Three-toed to the odd Wryneck and more owls plus Greenish Warbler, Fieldfare, Redwing, Parrot Crossbill, and Pine Grosbeak. It’s a magnificent area for grouse including Eurasian Capercaillie and



The Eurasian Eagle-Owl is one of many owls we will enjoy.
©Finnature

Black and Hazel grouse. However, the area is best known for being the only European nesting sites for a number of eastern specialties or Sibes such as Siberian Jay, Gray-headed Chickadee (Siberian Tit), Red-flanked Bluetail, and Little and Rustic buntings.

Next, we will venture still further north and eventually cross the border into Norway, entering the true high-arctic habitats of Lapland and the pleasantly variable landscapes of the Varanger Peninsula on the Barents Sea. Spectacular scenery of rugged mountains, stunted taiga forests, rivers, tundra and fjord coastlines offer a further range of exciting birds in a marvelous wilderness setting. Seabirds, shorebirds and wildfowl will be especially rewarding with a mix of circumpolar species—Gyr Falcon, White-tailed Eagle, Hoary and Arctic redpoll, Long-tailed Duck, Steller's and King eiders (with

luck), Red-necked Phalarope, Rock Ptarmigan, Willow Grouse, Parasitic and Long-tailed jaegers, and Yellow-billed Loon amongst "Old World" species such as stunning Eurasian Dotterel, Smew, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint, Red-throated Pipit, the stunning Bluethroat, Brambling, Pine Grosbeak and distinctive pink-rumped Twite. The truly awesome seabird colonies along the Norwegian coast will be holding large numbers of five Atlantic alcids: Common and Thick-billed murre, Black Guillemot, Razorbill and the cute Atlantic Puffin; plus European Shag and majestic Northern Gannets, and offer excellent photographic opportunities.



Striking Eurasian Dotterel breed on the tundra. © Andrew Whittaker

Apart from a splendid list of very unusual birds, the tour should be a delight for the stunning, unspoiled and varied scenery, and the excitement of civilized, safe and comfortable travel into some of the most remote wilderness areas Europe has to offer. The Finns (after the Brits!) are some of the keenest birders in Europe and there is a wealth of local knowledge from our Finnish co-leaders to assure that we have the best possible opportunities for finding the most sought-after birds. The Birding Hotline will likely direct us to a number of rarer species, too. The road systems, transport, hotels and meals are all (as we might expect from Scandinavia) of a high standard. Several of the national parks have excellent trails, visitor centers, blinds and observation towers to make our birding here an even more pleasurable experience.

May 14-15, Days 1-2: Travel to Oulu, Finland. Participants not continuing from the Brown Bears & Wolverines Pre-Trip should plan to arrive in Oulu (airport code OUL) no later than May 15. Most international flights from the United States will depart in the afternoon and arrive in Helsinki (airport code HEL) the following morning, with onward connections on Finnair from Helsinki to Oulu. You will be met on arrival by a representative of our ground agent for transfer to our nearby hotel, where you will meet your tour leader and fellow participants. Upon request the VENT office will be happy to assist with extra hotel nights and transfers for early arrivals.

Oulu is situated on the Gulf of Bothnia, at the mouth of the river Oulujoki, which was an ancient trading site. The city proper was founded on April 8, 1605 by King Charles IX of Sweden, opposite the fort built on the island of Linnansaari. Today it is a modern bustling city of 250, 000. Time allowing, we will make an excursion for some of the local specialties this afternoon. Species such as nesting Pied Flycatchers and striking Redwings are common “garden” birds. We will be close to excellent coastal birding sites where we may find the first stunning Whooper Swans, Eurasian Wigeon, black-and-white male Smews, and many waders as well as an exciting assortment of many other waterbirds.

Situated on the beautiful Kempeleenlahti Bay, our hotel offers delightful birding opportunities in the bay’s nature reserve, with its rich meadows and shallow bay being an important breeding and migration staging point. A nature trail starts directly from the hotel and is about 3 km long with a birding tower by the sea.



Brambling are a fairly common bird of Scandinavian forests. © Finnature

NIGHT (May 14): Overnight aboard aircraft

NIGHT (May 15): Finlandia Hotel Airport Oulu, Kempele, Finland

May 16-17, Days 3-4: Birding the Taiga Forest and Famous Liminka Bay Wetland Reserve. Although Oulu is one of the larger cities in north-central Finland, there are places within half an hour's drive with all the atmosphere of untouched wilderness. This area of the Gulf of Bothnia offers some of the finest birding opportunities in Finland and Liminka Bay is one of the country's most important wetlands.

We will spend two full days birding the forests and coastal areas around Oulu. The region is best known for its northern owls. Our local guides specialize in showing these to visiting birders and often have active nests located here and at the other locations where we stay later into the tour. While breeding numbers fluctuate from year to year, the breeding species include Great Gray, Ural, Boreal, Pygmy and Short-eared owl and most years also the nomadic Hawk and Long-eared owl too. Depending on the vole numbers, some owl species might also be encountered further north in the Kuusamo and Ivalo regions, including Hawk Owl even up in Norway. In the forests surrounding Oulu, we will also look for the local breeders including Honey Buzzard; Eurasian Woodcock; Three-toed, Greater-spotted and sought-after Black woodpecker. One of our prime targets is the incredible immense male Capercaillie. Black or even Hazel grouse are also possible. Songbirds should include Crested Tit, Eurasian Bullfinch, Wood Warbler, Common Rosefinch and Red-backed and Great-gray shrike among several others interesting species that breed in the area.



Northern Hawk Owl © Finnature

Just south of Oulu, we will visit Liminganlahti – a large internationally important wetland reserve that is home to a multitude of shorebirds, water birds, gulls and raptors. Hundreds of Whooper Swans and Common Cranes spend their summers here, and breeding species include Eurasian Bittern, Caspian Tern, Black-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Curlew, Greenshank, Common Sandpiper, Eurasian Teal, Common Shelduck and migrant Garganey. Among the numerous migrants that rest here, we should see hundreds of Ruff that nest in the area and we will certainly relish the males which should be in their bizarre and extravagant breeding dress of white, orange, black and speckled ruffs. Other shorebirds such as Northern Lapwing, Spotted Redshank, Little-ringed Plover and the less common Broad-billed Sandpipers also often stop here. The coastal meadows around Oulu are good for colorful Western Yellow Wagtails, Yellowhammer, Reed and Ortolan bunting, and raptors. White-tailed Eagles and Western Marsh Harriers patrol the shores and colorful meadows endlessly. We will keep a constant look-out for the rarer and more graceful Pallid and Montagu's harrier, both seen regularly during migration and the former in the last decade has become a more and more regular breeder up here. The rarest and most desired of all shorebirds is of

course the distinctive Terek Sandpiper, with only a few breeding pairs left in Finland. Oulu is their last breeding area and we will certainly concentrate on looking for them during our time here. Despite the northern location, some “night singers” are also found in the Oulu area in most years, and with luck and depending on the season if it’s not late, we may be rewarded with the sounds of either Thrush Nightingale, or Blyth’s Reed Warbler.



Male Ruff lekking will definitely be a trip highlight. © Finnature

NIGHTS: Finlandia Hotel Airport Oulu, Kempele, Finland

May 18, Day 5: Morning Oulu Birding; Afternoon Driving Northeast to Kuusamo and Ruka. After another superb morning of birding around Oulu, we’ll journey along an incredibly picturesque road northeast to the small Russian border town of Kuusamo, a land of many lakes lying between low, forested hills—a contrast to the flat, open western coast. There will be plenty of opportunity for birding along our route as we pass through dense forests of birch, aspen, pine and spruce interspersed with bogs and countless amazing lakes holding Red-necked and Great-crested grebe, the delicate Little Gull and snazzy male Smew. Kuusamo is a small town whose population explodes in winter as it’s a major winter sports center, especially for skiing. A wilderness for man and woman, the far north is home to countless birds and animals which here seem to even lose their fear of humans. We’ll check into our hotel some 30 minutes north of Kuusamo in Ruka for three nights and enjoy a well-earned Finnish dinner and good rest.

NIGHT: Scandic Rukahovi, Ruka, Finland

May 19-20, Days 6-7: Birding Areas Around Kuusamo and the Oulanka National Park. Kuusamo is an exciting birding destination with a mouth-watering number of eastern and arctic species breeding here. It is also well known for its incredible natural beauty. For one of our two full days here, we’ll visit the unspoiled wilderness of taiga forest in Oulanka National Park, which embraces river valleys with endless tracts of forest, bogs, riverine meadows and gorges. It also adjoins a huge protected area on the Russian side of the border. The vast forests are excellent Hen Harrier and grouse habitat, and an early morning drive will be taken to search for Willow and Black grouse, the enormous and highly sought-after Capercaillie, plus the elusive Hazel Grouse.



Lekking male Black Grouse have to be seen to be believed. © Finnature

This is the western-most extreme of this boreal Siberian forest type and holds many rare plants and birds. During our stay, we should find breeding Red-necked Grebe, Arctic Loon, wildfowl including Smew and White-winged Scoter, shorebirds such as European Golden Plover, Common Greenshank, the minute Jack Snipe, Green Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank. Many of these are quite commonplace here. Oulanka is also wonderful for flowering plants including both the Calypso and Lady's Slipper orchids which can be seen, depending on blooming time.



Fieldfare is a common breeding bird in Finland. © Finnature

We will continue our quest for the northern woodpeckers including the bizarre Wryneck, as well as Arctic owls, and begin with other forest specialties. Interesting songbirds include Eurasian Cuckoo, the slick looking Bohemian Waxwing, Fieldfare (a colonial breeder), Willow and Crested tits. Streams hold the delightful White-throated Dipper, while colorful Pine Grosbeak; Red, Parrot, and occasional White-winged crossbills play in the variety of pine and spruce trees. This is the only European nesting area for a number of eastern specialties such as Siberian Jay, Gray-

headed Chickadee (Siberian Tit), Greenish Warbler, stunning Red-flanked Bluetail, and Little and Rustic buntings, all of which will all be given high priority. Golden Eagle and Rough-legged Buzzard breed here and are well worth scanning the skies they soar. In most years, Hawk Owl and Boreal Owl also breed in the Kuusamo area. With virtually no night-time darkness at this near-Arctic latitude (as far north as Fairbanks or Nome, Alaska), there is the potential to be active 24 hours a day in search of the excellent range of birds here!

NIGHTS: Scandic Rukahovi, Ruka, Finland

May 21, Day 8: Morning Birding Kuusamo; Afternoon Crossing the Arctic Circle to Ivalo. After another morning of great birding in the Kuusamo region, we will continue heading north into Lapland, crossing the Arctic Circle. En route we will observe the remarkable change from coniferous forest giving way to Mountain Birch and peat bogs. Birding highlights will hopefully include Rough-legged Buzzard, Bean Goose, Jack Snipe, and Red-necked Phalarope. Forests and moors should hold Bohemian Waxwing, Brambling, Eurasian Bullfinch, Bluethroat, Northern Wheatear, Whinchat, Redstart and Willow Ptarmigan.



A magnificent singing male Bluethroat © Finnature

Our next destination (a distance of 375 km) is the quaint and remote village of Ivalo in the land of the midnight sun! This lovely area is a vast, sparsely populated region of field ridges, spruce and pine forests, open tundra heath and bogs with streams—the heart of Lapland! Tourists visit every year for winter sports (downhill and cross-country skiing, snowboarding, husky and reindeer sledge riding) and for summer activities (trekking and hiking in the Saariselkä fjells, canoeing in Lapland's rivers, mountain biking, panning for gold and fishing, etc.). We plan to arrive in time for dinner at our quaint hotel.

NIGHT: Hotel Ivalo, Ivalo, Finland

May 22, Day 9: Ivalo Driving to the Barents Sea Coast and Båtsfjord, Norway. After breakfast we continue our tour towards the northernmost part of mainland Europe. As we explore the Lappish forests and bogs along the way, we will concentrate this morning on searching for several target species which might include Siberian Tit, Siberian Jay, Pine Grosbeak and Brambling in summer plumage, as well as Whimbrel and Ruff.



Siberian Jay is one of the classic species of the vast taiga forest. © Finnature

We may encounter groups of moose wading through the remote bogs, while forests are home to Reindeer and Mountain hare (the most common mammals in this area), the very cute Red Squirrel, Pine Marten, Stoat or Least Weasel, Northern Bat and several species of vole and shrew.



Breeding plumaged Arctic Loon © Finnature

After lunch at the Finnish-Norwegian border, we will follow the famous salmon river of Teno to the fjords. We plan to stop at the Teno delta for shorebirds and the first eiders of the tour. Soon we start climbing uphill and leave the tree line behind. The highlands and arctic tundra in the Varanger Peninsula are simply bursting with life. Breeding waders and wildfowl offer some absolutely wonderful birding and the species list is truly appreciable: Whooper Swan, Bluethroat, Arctic Redpoll and Willow Grouse occupy the river valleys while Lapland Bunting, Shore Lark and Long-tailed Skua are found on the hillsides. Most

adapted are the Rock Ptarmigan, Snow Bunting and Dotterel which choose to stay on the barren hilltops. Roadside lakes provide excellent birding with Red-throated and Arctic loon, Greater Scaup and Long-tailed Duck, while Temminck's Stints show off their butterfly display flight along the roads. The extreme arctic is truly amazing! After birding the highlands, we will descend to the lovely small fishing town of Båtsfjord and our northern-most

outpost. The fishing village is located along the 13 km (8 mile) Båtsfjord inlet off the Barents Sea along the northern coast of the famous Varanger Peninsula. Historically, there were three whaling stations in Båtsfjord, but thankfully they are no longer in operation.

The River Teno (Tana in Norwegian) is one of the most important salmon rivers in Europe (bordering Finland and Norway), and has deposited enormous amounts of sand, reminding one of the great Siberian rivers. We will enter northern Norway which is a mixture of divine inspiration and spectacular sea cliffs simply alive with countless thousands of breeding seabirds. Here the North Atlantic drift carries the warm rich Gulf Stream this far north, resulting in an exceptionally high biological productivity. A combination of Arctic landscapes, boreal forests and intricate coastline make this one of Europe's most varied wildlife-watching destinations, boasting rugged archipelago, majestic mountains, glaciers, caves and exciting bird-filled sea cliffs and offshore islands. We will drive along the riverside and visit a delta area in Norway, which is famous in summer for its flocks of thousands of molting Common Mergansers (Goosanders), Shelduck, and breeding waders. We will also have fair chances to see seals and with luck, there may be a breeding site of Gyrfalcon on the nearby rocks!

NIGHT: Polar Hotell Valen, Båtsfjord, Norway

May 23, Day 10: Båtsfjord Birding on the way to Vardö. Today we travel northeast through the vast, open arctic landscape. The countryside is characterized by fells, which are not actually mountains, but gently rising cones of earth providing spectacular vistas. The bogs and lakesides offer an ideal open field of vision for birding among the dwarf birch and pygmy willow, thus providing some excellent birding with great likelihood of seeing Golden Eagle, Barnacle Geese, Red-throated and Arctic loons, Common Snipe, Redshank, White Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Arctic Redpoll and Snow Bunting. Besides Lemmings and Least Weasel, the main attraction of the taiga are the other famous European apex predators that reside in this biome, like Brown Bear, Eurasian Lynx and Gray Wolf, and even poorly known Wolverine are sometimes spotted, although we would be very lucky to encounter these on our main tour unlike our mammal orientated pre-trip. Even a reintroduction of the endangered Arctic Fox is ongoing here.



The powerful Gyrfalcon © Finnature

NIGHT: Hotel Vardö, Vardö, Norway

May 24, Day 11: Varanger Fjord and its Famous Hornøya Island & Barents Sea. This region of Norway offers further spectacular scenery of rugged, rocky mountains, open tundra, and fjord coastlines typical of the high Arctic. Vardö is in fact an island off the very northeastern-most tip of Norway. An important year-round fishing town, it is connected to the mainland by tunnel, allowing us easy access to this remote and exciting region. Seabirds, shorebirds, and wildfowl will be our special aim here—some unique to this part of the world, others more circumpolar, but nonetheless highly sought-after.



The rock star of northern seabird colonies is the Atlantic Puffin.
© Andrew Whittaker

This morning, weather permitting, we will make a half-day excursion by boat (15-minute boat ride) to visit the impressive seabird colonies on Hornøya Island. This nature reserve is the jewel in Varanger's natural crown—a wild island inhabited by 80,000 seabirds! Cliff ledges are crowded with thousands of breeding Common and Brünnich's murres, Black Guillemots, Razorbills, Eurasian Shag and some 7,500 pairs of Black-legged Kittiwakes, while grassy slopes hold enchanting Atlantic Puffins. Overhead the skies are often patrolled by immense White-tailed Sea Eagles that hunt here on the stunning sheer cliffs.



Huge White-tailed Eagles are fairly regular around the magnificent seabird cliffs. © Finnature

The Varanger Fjord holds some impressive birds, and we will look for shorebirds (all in wonderful breeding plumage) such as Bar-tailed Godwit, Red-necked Phalarope, Red Knot, Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone, Purple Sandpiper and Eurasian Whimbrel. In the waters we will especially search for the incomparable King and Steller's (both rare) and Common eider; Yellow-billed Loon; and Velvet and Common scoter. Song birds might include Ring Ouzel, Red-throated and Rock pipits, Hoary Redpoll, Snow Bunting, Lapland Longspur, and Twite. Numerous White-tailed Eagles patrol the coastline for easy prey and scanning the skies might also produce Rough-legged Buzzard.

With some luck we will encounter the true master of the air, the powerful majestic Gyrfalcon, patrolling the island in hopes of an easy snack and causing panic among the breeding seabirds. The air is filled with the cacophony of thousands of birds and there are excellent opportunities here for photographing seabirds at close range. A nice walk all the way up to the top of the island to the lighthouse will reward us with wonderful views over the Barents Sea.

We will also make an afternoon excursion to Hamningberg which is often referred to as the very end of Europe. The road follows the unique rocky coastline and there are excellent vantage points for sea watching from the road. Here we will look for White-billed and Common loon, Northern Gannet, Northern Fulmar, and again paying special attention to hopefully find either King or Steller's eider (both rare). Also, sea watching at times can be very productive, giving us chances of both Parasitic and Pomarine jaegers and Great Skua. The arctic coast is always a great place to look for whales, dolphins and seals; we will have a good chance of detecting Gray and Common seals. The Barents Sea also holds several types of cetaceans like Orcas, Humpback Whales, and Harbor Porpoises. Even the cool-looking ghost-white Belugas are rarely seen here.



An incomparable male King and Steller's eider © Finnature

NIGHT: Hotel Vardö, Vardö Norway

May 25, Day 12: To Ivalo, Finland. After breakfast and some more birding, we start our journey south, crossing back into Finland and on to Ivalo. We certainly will have time for some birding en route and will at least stop by Nesseby Church, which is a good area for shorebirds and rare Steller's Eiders. We will have a picnic lunch and afterwards return to Finland, where we will drive on the top of Ailigas, which is a good site for Rock Ptarmigan, Dotterel and Lapland Bunting. If we have time, we will also try to find Red-throated Pipit and Pine Grosbeak. Tonight we will enjoy a farewell dinner at our comfortable hotel.

NIGHT: Hotel Ivalo, Ivalo, Finland

May 26-27, Days 13-14: Departure for Home. After a few final hours of birding today, we'll transfer to the Ivalo airport (airport code IVL) in time for the 6:25 p.m. departure of Finnair Flight 609, which is scheduled to arrive in Helsinki at 8:55 p.m. on May 26. We suggest spending the night in a Helsinki airport-area hotel and departing for home on a morning flight on May 27. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements.

BROWN BEARS & WOLVERINES PRE-TRIP MAY 7-15, 2021

This exciting pre-trip offers an exceptional opportunity to experience the Arctic's foremost wildlife of the vast Siberian taiga forests in Eastern Finland. This sparsely populated area (only 184,000 people) is simply brimming with natural Arctic beauty from lakes, rich wetlands, and forests of pine, birch and spruce. Planned primarily to enjoy the antics of two simply fascinating carnivores in this rarely visited and untouched wilderness, it is simply a dream come true to observe one of the most mythical carnivores in the world, namely the extraordinary Wolverine! Wolverines look something like a mixture of a dog, a skunk and a bear, with short legs, long hair and elongated snouts. They also have a distinctive mask of dark fur around their eyes and forehead, and a stripe of blond or ivory fur that runs from each shoulder to the base of the animal's tail. This trip is planned to visit during its peak season of activity, and without doubt will offer us plenty of great photographic opportunities, too.



Playful Wolverines outside the comfortable Wolverine blind © Finnature

If that's not enough in itself, we will also encounter the most powerful apex predator of Eastern Finland, namely the European Brown Bear (like the North American Grizzly). We will enjoy these amazing experiences all from within the comfort and safety of a spacious, heated log cabin type blind that provides us with comfortable amenities. A night in a blind—seeing wild Wolverines or immense bears at close range is certain to be an unforgettable experience! Indeed, being surrounded by glorious fabled Arctic settings will also offer a sprinkling of magical boreal birds as well for us to enjoy. These forests are also home to stately Capercaillie, Hazel and Black grouse, Eurasian

Woodcock, Black and Eurasian Three-toed woodpecker, Siberian Jay and Parrot Crossbill. Our visit to the delightful Koli National Park will certainly be a birding highlight. We even stand a good chance for wolves or European Lynx (if we are very lucky), both of which occasionally come into the feeding stations. Avian scavengers could include enormous White-tailed Eagle, Northern Goshawk or Common Buzzard gracing the stage.



The Impressive Black Woodpecker © Finnature

Large carnivores are generally faring well in Finland, where vast areas of pristine taiga forest hold abundant prey. This mammal and bird watching tour is centered on visiting two comfortable, spacious log cabin blinds and will provide an unforgettable experience. Nights here are almost without darkness and are the peak activity time for these animals. By staying overnight in the blinds, we will maximize our chances of seeing and photographing several of these awesome predators!

*The Wolverine is a solitary and rare animal that is always on the move. It resembles a small bear with a long tail. They are primarily scavengers and can devour their food quickly in big chunks—their scientific name, *Gulo*, means glutton. Meanwhile, the Brown Bear is the largest predator in Europe, feeding on anything it can find or catch, ranging from berries to fish and other mammals. Adult males can weigh a massive 300 kilos or 660 pounds. Despite their big size, Brown Bears are agile and males can travel hundreds of kilometers in a short period of time; females and cubs inhabit smaller territories.*



European Brown Bear from bear blind © Finnature

Other boreal inhabitants we shall be on the lookout for are European Roe Deer, Pine Martin, Eurasian Otter, Moose, Muskrat or even a rarely seen Forest Reindeer! Importantly, the sun sets around 10:00 p.m. with sunrise at 4:00 a.m., but it does not really get dark at this time of year—therefore it’s excellent for wildlife viewing and photography as well. We will offer relaxation time at our lodges to catch-up on sleep during the day. Here bird feeders attract many of the commoner species: Great-spotted Woodpecker, Willow Tit, Crested Tit, Siskin, and endearing Red Squirrels. For sure this will be an action-packed pre-trip to one of the friendliest and most delightful countries—that is Finland.

May 8-9, Days 1-2: Travel to Joensuu, Finland; Transfer to Koli Hotel with Afternoon Birding Koli National Park. Most international flights from the United States will depart in the afternoon and arrive in Helsinki the following morning, with onward connection to Joensuu. We suggest Finnair Flight 343, which is scheduled to depart Helsinki (airport code HEL) at 12:10 p.m. and arrive at Joensuu (airport code JOE) at 1:10 p.m. on May 9.

On arrival at Joensuu in northern Karelia, we will meet our local expert birding guide for an enjoyable one-hour drive through the spruce forests and lovely heritage meadows, looking out for any exciting nature, on our way to Koli, about 60 kilometers north of Joensuu. Koli became a symbol of romantic nationalism at the end of the 19th century, and its stunning landscape has inspired numerous Finnish artists.

Upon request the VENT office will be happy to assist with extra hotel nights and transfers for early arrivals.



Stunning boreal landscapes prevail © Finnature

Koli National Park is truly a delightful destination for birding with a versatile mixture of hills, forests and special slash-and-burn meadows full of flowers, while Pielinen Lake is bordered by lovely spruce forests and smooth, rounded cliffs, forming an impressive landscape. Arriving at Ukko-Koli, we will visit the Koli Nature Center



The Wood Warbler is a true delight. © Andrew Whittaker

Ukko where birding these iconic landscapes will be a joy and offer us a great sample of the local avifauna. During our walks here several target species include the elusive Hazel Grouse; Eurasian Three-toed and Black woodpecker; Eurasian Woodcock; stunning Bohemian Waxwings; Red-breasted Flycatcher; Greenish Warbler and Common and Parrot crossbills. Freshly arrived warblers from Africa should be in full song and we will be enchanted by the cascading songs of Wood Warblers and delightfully sweet voice of Willow Warblers, along with the iconic and famous European Cuckoo chime, often singing from exposed tree tops or telegraph poles.

Raptors could include Northern Goshawk, Eurasian Hobby or Short-eared Owl, Common Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Eurasian Treecreeper or Eurasian Siskin. We'll return to our hotel for dinner and for those interested, our hotel offers a relaxing spa.

NIGHT (May 8): Overnight aboard aircraft

NIGHT (May 9): Hotel Break Sokos, Koli

May 10, Day 3: Morning Birding Koli National Park; Drive to Lieksa Hotel and Afternoon/Night in the Wolverine Blind. Early this morning we return to Koli National Park to search for anything we didn't see the day before. We plan to visit exquisite Lake Pielinen—home to Arctic and Red-throated loon, Great-crested Grebe, Whooper Swan, Common Crane, Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal, Tufted Duck and Common Goldeneye; while exploring its shores for the likes of Northern Lapwing; Eurasian Curlew; Wood, Green and Common sandpiper; and Common Snipe. Vibrant meadows are home to House Martin, Northern Wheatear, Whinchat, White Wagtail, Tree and Meadow pipit, Eurasian Skylark, Greenfinch, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Mid-morning, we will drive into Lieksa and check-in to our hotel. In the afternoon, we will take the short trip to Kontiovaara and enter our exciting Wolverine viewing hide for the night. The comfortable and ample log cabin blind has two sides which are connected. Each side has eight chairs and altogether there are twelve bunk beds with sleeping bags and pillows for resting, as well as dry toilets. After settling in, we can relax and enjoy the spectacular boreal settings and excellent opportunities for observing Wolverine as we're smack in the center of the animal's natural environment. Here, wild Wolverines visit the site virtually daily since it's baited. The number of individuals varies, but usually there are several Wolverines around. In addition, Brown Bears and even Wolves visit this site occasionally. We will overnight in the hide, constantly on the lookout for any wildlife. Keep in mind for anyone resting that you can be assured if and when animals or any exciting birds appear, you will be informed. We also will not go hungry as plenty of snacks/goodies and hot drinks will be provided.



The poorly known Wolverine © Finnature

NIGHT: Hotel Puustelli, Lieksa / Wolverine blind

May 11, Day 4: Rest in the Morning; Early Afternoon Visit to the Wolverine Blind. This morning we return to the hotel for breakfast and time for a well-earned rest before more exciting night-watching from the blind this evening. However, for those who just can't get enough Arctic species, the feeders at the hotel attract many of the common species here: Great-spotted Woodpecker, Willow Tit, Crested Tit, Eurasian Siskin and charming Red

Squirrels. By mid-afternoon we will return and spend another night in the comfy Wolverine cabin to maximize our chances and time to see and enjoy this incredible mythical creature plus any other exciting wildlife. The blind baits usually attract Eurasian Jay, Magpie and Common Gull, Hooded Crow and sometimes Northern Goshawk, Eurasian Sparrowhawk or Common Buzzard.



A charming European Red Squirrel © Andrew Whittaker

NIGHT: Hotel Puustelli, Lieksa / Wolverine blind

May 12, Day 5: Lieksa to Viiksimo and Drive to Boreal Wildlife Centre and Enter Brown Bear Blind. After returning to the hotel this morning for breakfast, we will continue our quest, driving north through the taiga, keeping our eyes open for Moose and other wildlife en route. The Boreal Wildlife Centre is situated between the Gulf of Bothnia and the White Sea, close to the Russian border in Viiksimo, Kainuu region. We will have rooms at Boreal Wildlife Centre, which used to be a border patrol station. This simple lodge—with shared toilet and shower facilities—serves as our base for the next two nights and here we really are in the middle of Finnish wilderness! The viewing hides themselves are situated close-by in the Finnish-Russian border zone. After an early afternoon meal, we will depart for the Bear cabin to begin our encounters with wild Brown Bears. The viewing cabin is located on a shallow slope and the feeding point itself is in a boggy depression. The cabin windows give excellent views and are situated at a perfect height. There are also openings for camera lenses below the height of the viewing windows. The cabin is excellent for general views of Bears and for obtaining photos of the animals with their natural habitat in the background.



European Brown Bear taking a close look outside the blind © Finnature

We will spend the night in the blind which has bunk beds with sleeping bags for those who wish to rest during the night and there are dry toilets. Again, goodies/snacks and hot drinks for the night are provided. At the hides, the baits usually attract Raven, Hooded Crow, Common Gull, Eurasian Herring Gull, Baltic (Lesser Black-backed) Gulls and possibly some raptors. In addition, even Wolves and Wolverine visit this site occasionally.

NIGHT: Boreal Wildlife Centre, Kuhmo / Bear blind

May 13, Day 6: Boreal Wildlife Centre and Bear Blind. We return this morning to the wildlife centre for breakfast and enjoy time off for a proper rest—or if you can't get enough, some local general forest birding. In the surrounding forests we could encounter Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Hazel Grouse, Siberian Jay and some more common forest birds such as Tree Pipit and Common Redstart. This area also has a population of wild Forest Reindeer. Sometimes Bohemian Waxwings are found in the garden here.

In the early afternoon we will depart for the Bear cabin for our final night in this magnificent Finnish wilderness, enjoying another night with the exciting bears and other wildlife at the blind. With great luck we may even see an enormous White-tailed Eagle or Black Kite on the bait!

NIGHT: Boreal Wildlife Centre, Kuhmo / Bear blind

May 14-15, Days 7-8: Driving to Oulu for Overnight or Departure for Home. We will return from the bear blind this morning to the comfortable wildlife centre for breakfast, after which, we'll pack up and drive to Oulu for the start of the main tour on May 15. For anyone not continuing on the main tour, we suggest a late afternoon

departure on Finnair to Helsinki, spending the night in a Helsinki airport-area hotel and departing for home on a morning flight on May 15. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements.

NIGHT (May 14): Finlandia Hotel Airport Oulu, Oulu
(or afternoon flight to Helsinki)

TOUR SIZE: The main tour will be limited to 12 participants. The pre-trip will be limited to 9 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Andrew Whittaker, with the assistance of a local guide



Andrew Whittaker, a senior member of the VENT staff, has led VENT tours since 1993 throughout South and Central America, Antarctica, Europe, Israel, and, more recently, Asia. His birding passion began at the early age of seven (thanks to his father), but he is also a true all-around naturalist. Andy immensely enjoys sharing his bird knowledge and fascination for all other aspects of the natural world in a really fun way. Andy was born in England; however, he considers himself Brazilian, having lived more than 30 years in this mega biodiverse country, first working for the Smithsonian Institution, studying Amazonian rainforest birds in Manaus. Andy is a qualified ringer/bander trained by the late Dr. Clive Minton (famously known as the father of shorebird/wader studies).

A lifelong fascination with bird migration has seen Andy working around the globe at several top bird observatories: Eilat, Israel; Long Point, Canada; and in the UK at Sandwich Bay and on Fair Isle, Scotland. Andy is well recognized for his passionate and intimate knowledge of bird vocalizations and taxonomy, which has enabled him to discover several new species (such as the Cryptic Forest-Falcon in 2002) and rediscover others thought to be extinct. He is an excellent communicator and tour organizer and loves nothing better than finding and sharing a rare skulker, or telling one of his many fascinating bird stories. Andy had the honor of working with Sir David Attenborough as a consultant for the prestigious BBC *Life of Birds* series. He is widely considered an authority on Amazonian birds, having authored numerous technical publications on the region's avifauna. At present, Andy is working with Kevin Zimmer on a comprehensive field guide to the birds of Brazil to be published by Princeton University Press. Andy is an associate researcher at the Museum Goeldi, Belem and an active conservationist. He loves photography (with many of his images being used in books) and is an avid football fan of Birmingham City FC and an orchid lover. Andy lives with his partner in life, Jaqueline, and their dog, Mozart, in Porto Alegre, southern Brazil.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the main tour is **\$6,295** per person in double occupancy from Oulu (tour ends in Ivalo). This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to lunch on Day 13. The fee for the pre-trip is **\$4,450** per person in double occupancy from Joensuu (tour ends in Oulu). This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to lunch on Day 7. Both tours include accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. The tour fee does not include airfare from your home to Oulu for the main tour (to Joensuu for the pre-trip) and return from Ivalo on the main tour (return from Oulu if only on the pre-trip); alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for the main tour is **\$525**. The single supplement for the pre-trip is **\$295**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. Your preference will be noted and confirmed if possible.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for each tour part is **\$1,000** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard, Visa, or American Express at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to

receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at www.ventbird.com) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard, Visa, American Express), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days prior to the tour departure date (December 14, 2020 for the main tour and December 8, 2020 for the pre-trip).

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For your protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If you cancel:

180 days or more before departure date

179 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$500*

No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded

No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where you, the customer, are not at fault and have not cancelled in violation of the terms and conditions of any of the contract for transportation or travel services, all sums paid to VENT for services not received by you will be promptly refunded by VENT to you unless you otherwise advise VENT in writing. This policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Resolutions as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™**. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most highly regarded travel insurance programs available.

Critical benefits of **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance** include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation and rescue services** from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; comprehensive travel insurance for **trip cancellation/interruption**, primary medical expense coverage, and much more. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available but must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other security events, and a "Cancel for Any Reason" clause (must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit). Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: ripcordrescuetravelinsurance.com/ventbird; or click the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. *Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be responsible for any air ticket penalties.*

BAGGAGE: We request participants limit their luggage to one medium-sized piece and one carry-on, if possible, as space in the vehicles will be limited.

CLIMATE: Early summertime in this region is temperate but very variable, especially since we will cover such a wide range of latitude, including north of the Arctic Circle (If you've birded the full extent of Alaska from Juneau to Barrow, expect similarly varied conditions.). Hopefully much of the time will be clear and sunny with temperatures in the mid-60s to mid-70s. However, be prepared for clouds, wind, some rain and temperatures down to the low 40s (or lower with wind chill) in the far north with even the possibility of light snow.

CLOTHING: Please bring lightweight, layered clothing to allow for all eventualities of temperature, wind, and precipitation. Gore-Tex, fleeces, thermal underwear and windproof/waterproof outer clothing are advised. Remember that dark-browns, dark-blues and dark-greens are less likely to startle birds and mammals and are the preferred colors for all birding. **PLEASE kindly, no bright colors or loud, crackling plastics.** Dress is casual throughout. Keep in mind that most hotels on this tour do not provide laundry service.

You should bring water-resistant hiking boots or hiking shoes with rugged soles—tennis shoes are NOT sufficient for this trip. Rubber boots may be useful and will allow full access to boggy or wet habitats (these can be purchased locally if required). The sun will shine, so a sunhat with a good rim or cap, sunglasses and sunscreen will be essential. Most hotels have saunas and some have swimming facilities, so bring swimwear if interested. A sturdy dark-colored collapsible umbrella may also come in handy. Few European hotels provide face cloths; bring your own if you wish. For the pre-trip, winter sleeping bags are provided in the hides You may wish to bring a sleeping sack to line the sleeping bag provided in the blinds.

CURRENCY: Each country has its own currency. Finland uses the Euro, while Norway's currency is the Norwegian Krone. Each has different values compared to the US dollar. Credit cards are widely accepted and ATMs are available to obtain local currency.

DIFFICULTY: For the main tour, one or two longer walks (1-2 miles) up slight inclines may be needed in order to see specific birds. Some days will start early (5:00-6:00 a.m.) and other days we will stay out late (11:00 p.m.-12:00 midnight), but long midday breaks will be provided on these days.

On the pre-trip there are short and easy walks involved in getting in to the blinds. We will spend many hours in these blinds—but it is possible to stretch your legs and even sleep in the blinds, so it is fairly comfortable to stay overnight. Basic dry toilets are available, but there is no running water in the blinds. Wool socks are suggested as the nights may be cold, and the floors may be a bit drafty.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure is required for entering Finland and Norway. Visas are not required for entry by United States citizens for Finland or Norway. Non United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, extra cameras, lenses etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, and medications and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leaders will have two spotting scopes, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so as this is certainly a tour where a scope will be used a great deal. **We encourage you to do so, especially if you wish to digi-scope.**

HEALTH: There are no required immunizations for this tour. Bring an adequate supply of all personally required medications with you, as these may not be available on the tour. There is a generally high standard of hygiene in Scandinavia and we should be generally safe from stomach upsets, but bring a preferred remedy plus general first aid items, just in case. Water is safe to drink. As with all northern latitudes in summer, mosquitoes can be numerous and a problem at times, depending on weather and emergence times. Insect repellent is essential. A head-net can be useful if you are particularly bothered by mosquitoes and can be purchased locally if required.

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against hepatitis types A and B.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html (click on Travel Health).

MISC:

Electricity – 220 volts; European style 2-pin plugs are standard throughout

Time – Finland and Norway are 1 hour different from each other. We will be between 6-7 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

Language – Each country has its own language: Finnish and Norwegian. English is widely spoken in both countries.

Laundry – Most hotels on this tour do not provide laundry service.

INTERNET: All the hotels have internet connection available. Internet connection might be slow or missing in wolverine / bear blinds.

SUGGESTED READING: A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Bird Field Guide:

Svenson, Mullarney, Zetterstrom & Grant. *Collins Bird Guide: The Most Complete Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*. Second edition, 2009. This field guide has received excellent reviews for its identification detail and illustrations. The most updated & highly recommended! It is also available as an App for mobile phones! App edition produced in partnership by: Nature Guides, William Collins, Bonnier Fakta and Gyldendal.

Mammals:

MacDonald, David and Priscilla Barrett. *Mammals of Europe*. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Barret, Pricilla & David Macdonald. *Mammals of Britain and Europe*. Collins Field Guide, 1993.

Shirihai, Hadoram & Brett Jarrett. *Whales, Dolphins and Seals: A Field Guide to the Marine Mammals of the World*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2019.

Butterflies:

Tolman, Tom. *Butterflies of Europe*. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Botany:

Fitters & Marjorie Blamey. *The Illustrated Flora of Britain and Northern Europe*. Collins Hand Guide, 1985.

General Reading:

Chester, Sharon. *The Arctic Guide - Wildlife of the Far North*. NJ: Princeton University Press; Princeton Field Guides, 2015. Excellent all-around book for naturalists.

Bird Voices:

Sample, Geoff. *Collins Field Guide: Bird Songs and Calls of Britain and Northern Europe*. 1996.

Kettle, Ron and Richard Ranft. *British Bird Sounds on CD: The Definitive Audio Guide to Birds in Britain*. British Library, 2006.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on July 23, 2020, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission,

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or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.

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08/03/20 - MA/RS