

WILDLIFE WATCHING 7 NIGHTS / 8 DAYS



This Fly & Drive takes you through the sparsely populated taiga forests of north-eastern Finland. There are three national parks and two national hiking areas with their hiking, canoeing and fishing possibilities easily accessible from the route. Close to the Russian border you can participate in bear, flying squirrel or beaver observation tours which give you a unique chance to watch and photograph these animals safely. In an information centre you'll get to know Finland's large carnivores – bear, wolf, lynx and wolverine.

Accommodation varies from hotel rooms to apartments and cosy cabins. Each night you will get to enjoy local delicacies and the genuine Finnish sauna is also available most nights.

Day 01: Arrival at Kajaani

Kajaani – Metsäkartano approx. 150 km

Arrival at Kajaani airport where you will collect your hire car. For the first night you will drive to Metsäkartano mansion situated in Rautavaara in a tranquil spot in the heart of nature. On the way to Metsäkartano it is possible to visit Vuokatti which is a versatile holiday centre offering great possibilities for various activities like hiking, horse-back riding, husky-trekking, boating etc. In Vuokatti you can also ski and snowboard all-year-round, thanks to the indoor tunnels.

Day 02: Explore a National Park

Today you can choose between two national parks that are both within easy reach of Metsäkartano. Tiilikkajärvi National Park offers quite easy routes, beautiful lakeside scenery and beaches. By contrast, the scenery at Hiidenportti National Park is quite rugged; trails include more hills and are a bit more demanding. The heart of Hiidenportti National Park is the majestic Hiidenportti Gorge with its vertical rock walls. Both national parks have some good hiking trails for a few hours' day tour. Remember to carry the picnic lunch with you because there are no opportunities to purchase food in the parks. Dinner and accommodation at Metsäkartano Mansion.

Day 03: Metsäkartano – Kuhmo approx. 105 km

It's time to say goodbye to Metsäkartano and head via Nurmes in Karelia to the village of Kalevala, Kuhmo. In Nurmes you can visit the Karelian Bomba House and the Karelian village around it. Bomba House might be a good place to enjoy lunch as well. Midway, in the middle of the wild taiga, is a company organizing wildlife watching tours. During these tours you can observe some interesting native Finnish animals, such as beavers and wolverines. You can participate in a safari, at an extra cost, but this must be booked before departure. By the end of the day you'll arrive at Kuhmo which is a small village where you can see the Finnish national epic Kalevala reflected in the architecture, events, research, museums and the food. You can learn more about Kalevala and Karelian culture at the Kalevala Information Centre Juminkeko and at Kalevala Spirit Experience Park, close to your accommodation. If you visit Kuhmo during the last two weeks of July – you won't be alone! At that time of year Kuhmo is full of guests enjoying the annual Chamber Music Festival which is famous and appreciated throughout the world.

Day 04: Meet the Brown Bears

Kuhmo – Juntusranta approx. 170 km

In the morning you will have the opportunity to visit Petola Visitor Centre which is an information center on Finland's large carnivores – bear, wolf, lynx and wolverine. From Kuhmo the route goes toward north through some very sparsely populated areas following the Russian border. You'll pass through the beautiful village of Lentiira and cross the road leading to Kostamus and to the international frontier crossing point of Vartius. Some 25 km south of Suomussalmi is the historical area of Raate which was the stage of some heavy battles during the Second World War. In Raate it is possible to visit the Winter War exhibition and the Raate Frontier Guard Museum. Your accommodation for the next night will be in the tiny village of Juntusranta just beside the Russian border. Arola, Helena and Eero's former dairy farm, is well-known for its delicious local food. The farm is surrounded by remote woodland inhabited by European brown bears. In the evening you can take part in a bear safari (extra charge) and observe these majestic animals from the purpose-built log cabins.

Day 05: Hiking in Hossa

Juntusranta - Kuusamo approx. 135 km

Heading north again you will first arrive at Hossa which is a national hiking areaknown for its crystal-clear lakes and handsome pine heathlands. The area offers great opportunities for hiking, canoeing and fishing. One good destination for a day hiking trip might be Värrikalliot, the oldest rock paintings in northern Finland dating back some 4000 years. Hossa Visitor Centre offers information on trails and there is also an exhibition on the area's history and present day. In Hossa you can also visit a reindeer park and get to know the semi-wild animals inhabiting the northern area of Finland better. You can try your skills at lassoing reindeer or just pet and feed them. Your final destination today is Kuusamo, which is one of the most important tourist destinations in Finland thanks to its magnificent nature and the vast range of activities available throughout the year. Before settling down for the night at the cosy Ollila Holiday Cottages you could, for example, pop into the Tourist and Nature Centre Karhuntassu and visit a nature photography centre there.

Day 06: Kuusamo – Nature's Own Amusement Park

This morning you don't need to pack your luggage because you will stay another night at the same place. Today you can head to Oulanka National Park or to Ruka which is maybe the most popular skiing resort in Finland.

The landscape of Oulanka National Park is made up of pine forests; river valleys with sandy banks and rapids; and, in the north, vast marshes. The area is rich in animal and plant species. Hikers can get a general picture of the park's nature even on daytrips. There are several routes available but one very nice (though very demanding) one is the Small Bear's Trail starting from the village of Juuma. Departing from Oulanka Visitor centre you can visit the Kiutaköngäs rapids which are some of the biggest rapids in Finland. Many safari companies organize river rafting in Oulanka National Park varying from easy family tours to speedy tours that will make your heart race!

At Ruka you can climb up to some of the hills and admire the beautiful views over forests and lakes. An easier way to get to the top is the Ruka Lookout Lift that takes you up to the hill. If you are brave enough, you can descend on a speedy summer sled! The safari companies of the area also offer many other activities, such as canoe trips, quad safaris, mountain biking and Nordic walking tours. The night is spent again at Ollila Holiday Cottages.

Day 07: Southwards to Kajaani

Kuusamo - Kajaani approx. 270 km

This will be your last and longest day of travelling, going south along the highway E5 and ending at Kajaani. If you are still willing to do some hiking you can easily visit Kymäluoma Hiking Area situated by mainroad. The area offers various short circular routes, ideal for daytrips. Before arriving at Suomussalmi you can admire an impressive artwork called "Hiljainen Kansa" (The Silent People). It consists of thousands of human-like figures with bodies of hay, head of peat and dressed in old clothes. Your destination Kajaani is a small town and the capital of the Kainuu province situated on the shores of Lake Oulujärvi. The best place to enjoy the lake scenery is probably the small village of Paltaniemi where you can also visit the old church famous for its beautiful paintings on the walls and ceilings. Accommodation will be at the Hotel Karolineburg near the town centre.

Day 08: Departure

Kajaani airport 7 km

Breakfast and drive to the airport of Kajaani where you will leave your hire car.

Dates 1 May – 30 September 2012

Included in the price

- Accommodation on days 1, 2, 4 and 7 in double rooms of hotel standard and on days 3, 5 and 6 in cabins for 2 – 4 persons
- Breakfast and dinner daily
- Sauna every night except on day 3
- Exclusive travel documentation package including personalised maps, itinerary and driving directions

Not included in the price

- Flights
- Car rental
- Lunches and drinks on meals
- Entrance fees
- No activities are included in the price

Supplementary Extras

- Wolverine observation (on day 3) season May - August 19th,
- Bear watching (on day 4), season 1st May - 17th August, prices 12-hour overnight