

Eider ducks and the Aurora Borealis in Varanger

This tour concentrates on the wintering birds of Northern Norway and along the border with Russia. At this time of the year daytime temperatures can be low, even in early April. We have exceptional opportunities to watch and observe many familiar and uncommon European species birds that winter in and around the Varanger Fjord, which includes several species of owls, ducks and High Arctic species.

■ Please note you should arrive in Oslo on April 3rd as the flight to Kirkenes is early on the 4th.

Day 1: Fly to the mining town of Kirkenes in extreme Northern Norway. On arrival we drive towards the taiga forest in the Pasvik valley where our base is at Svanvik for two nights. The vegetation of Pasvik is dominated by pine and birch forests.

Day 2: We birdwatch along the border with Russia and in the Pasvik National Park. Some of the species we look for include Eurasian Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Pine Grosbeak, Siberian Jay, Siberian and Willow Tits, Arctic Redpoll and the northern race of Eurasian Bullfinch which often forms small flocks. Birds of prey include Merlin and White-tailed Eagle. We also have a good chance of seeing Northern



Pine Grosbeak Photo: Anders Mæland

Dates

Saturday April 4th – Friday April 10th 2020

Leaders: Anders Mæland

Group Size: 7

Birds: 60-90

Hawk and Short-eared Owls and, if it is a good rodent year, Great Grey Owl. Resident species of interest include Great Spotted, Lesser Spotted and Three-toed Woodpeckers and Bohemian Waxwing.

Day 3: Drive towards the Varanger peninsula and through the Tana Valley. As we cross the Tana Valley with its rocky outcrops we should keep an eye out for Rough-legged Buzzard, Golden Eagle and Northern Hawk Owls, which are a distinct possibility along the road. Stunted willows attract flocks of Arctic Redpolls. At the highest point of the road the edges and any exposed rocks may have Willow and Rock Ptarmigans, both of which will be in their 'white' winter plumage as we approach our base at Batsfjord for the next two nights.

Day 4: Today is spent birding around Batsfjord and Berlevåg. The landscape and scenery is quite dramatic with snowfields, frozen lakes and Arctic tundra. The fishing port of Batsfjord has Steller's, King and Common Eiders at close range along with Long-tailed Ducks and Goosander. In the afternoon we drive slowly towards the isolated settlement of Berlevåg. This can be a



Steller's Eider Photo: Anders Mæland

productive area in late winter for Merlin, Gyrfalcon and Rough-legged Buzzard. The harbour at Berlevåg often holds large numbers of gulls which may include Glaucous, Iceland and the northern races of Herring. In recent years both Ivory and Ross's Gulls have put in an appearance. Shorebirds present include Purple Sandpiper.

Day 5: Today we drive back over the mountains towards the spectacular Varangerfjord, a huge indented sea loch where White-tailed Eagles are particularly numerous. Stops along the shore at Nesseby, Varangerbotn and Vestre Jacobselv allow good vantage points into the fjord where we should find White-billed and Red-throated Divers, Common and Velvet Scoters, Black Guillemot and the three eider species. Transfer to Vadso for two nights.

Day 6: This morning we visit the fishing port at Vardø for a trip to the fantastic birds cliffs at Hornøya. It is a short boat trip from the harbour to the cliffs where Common and Brunnich's Guillemot, Razorbill, Atlantic Puffin, Black-legged Kittiwake and

European Shag all breed. Later in the day we visit Svartnes and Kiberg harbours in search of anything we may have missed earlier in the tour.

Day 7: Return to Kirkenes for our flights south to Oslo and on to London with arrival later the same day.

Prices

Ground Price: £2,995
 Single room: £200
 Deposit: £300
 *Air Fare: £350

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature. Night in Oslo and meals on the 3rd.

**Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*