



**BALTIC
NATURE
TOURISM**

*Latvia -
Estonia*

BALTIC NATURE TOURISM

NEWSLETTER
Nr 4
SPRING



Welcome to our 4th edition of Baltic Nature Tourism's newsletter. As spring approaches, the Baltic region blossoms with exciting outdoor activities. Keep reading to learn about the various outdoor activities available in the beautiful Baltic region this spring.



What's new in 2024?

From the start of the year we would like to introduce you with multi day packaged tours suitable for individuals and groups travelling to Latvia and Estonia. These are multiple-day packaged tours, featuring a variety of nature tourism activities. Primary among these are hiking, boating, cycling, allowing participants to experience the natural beauty of these countries. The tours are organised by local tour operators, ensuring high-quality experiences. The offered tours allow one to choose between absolutely independent, self-guided or guided tours. Check out more online and see you outdoors!

balticnaturetourism.com

Eastern celebration in Baltics

Easter celebrations blend Christian traditions with pre-Christian spring solstice customs, observed in March or April around the spring equinox. In the countryside, festivities that once held ritual significance are now enjoyed for fun. A popular tradition is installing large swings to swing high, symbolising the sun's ascent. Eggs are traditionally dyed for Easter, often using onion peels to achieve a deep brown colour, symbolising the sun and renewal. Smaller and bigger towns and cities host celebrations with these traditions, including swinging, egg dyeing, and abundant singing, inviting both locals and guests to partake in these joyous spring rituals.



We recommend visiting Valmiermuižas Craft Brewery to experience a vivid and fulfilling Easter celebration, to taste the local goods, birch and maple saps and enjoy the local traditions.

VALMIERMUIŽA.LV 



Bird Watching in Kolka Cape

Cape Kolka in Slitere National Park, is a prime birdwatching destination, especially during spring migration. Situated on a 370 km migratory path along the Baltic coast, it witnesses tens of thousands of birds flying overhead. Almost all of Latvia's bird species can be seen here in spring, with the coastal waters and Irbe Strait serving as crucial feeding grounds for migrating and wintering waterfowl. The best birdwatching period is from late February to late May, peaking in April and early May. Each year, Slitere National Park hosts special bird-related events, celebrating the rich diversity of species, including 66 rare and highly protected ones among the 261 observed at Cape Kolka.

Tour example - Bird watching in Kolka Cape

Join us for a guided birdwatching tour at Cape Kolka in western Latvia, a renowned spot for bird enthusiasts. You can expect to see about seven species of woodpeckers, six species of owls, two species of crossbills, and at least 14 species of raptors, including the Lesser-spotted eagle, as well as various waterfowls. Cape Kolka is one of the best places for birdwatching when it comes to the diversity of species during the spring migration. The tour is flexible and can be adapted to fit the interests of our group, offering a friendly and informative experience for all bird lovers.



[KURZEMES PUTNI](#)



Brown bear watching from a hide

Estonia is home to a population of approximately 1100-1150 brown bears, which makes Estonia the country with the highest brown bear population density in Europe.

The best times of year to spot the Estonian brown bear in the wild are from the end of April to mid-July and mid-August to the end of October. In spring and early summer, bears awake from winter hibernation and are on the move searching for food.

Tour example - Brown bear watching

Stay overnight at the Brown Bear and wildlife-watching hide in Alutaguse, nestled in the western-taiga forests and expansive bogs of Northeast Estonia. You'll have the opportunity to observe diverse wildlife, including raccoon dogs, elk, wild boar, roe deer, and otters. Additionally, a sensitive external microphone lets you immerse yourself in the natural soundscape of the area's wildlife. This experience gives you a chance to quietly watch bears and other wildlife, offering a real and exciting connection with the natural world.



Photo - Juris Smalinskis



BIRDING HAAPSALU: Early Spring Birding Tour

In early spring, Estonia transforms into a haven for birdwatching enthusiasts. As the chill of winter recedes, a variety of bird species begin to animate the landscapes. Migratory birds return in large numbers, joining the resident species. This season is particularly notable for the arrival of different species of waterfowl and songbirds. The thawing landscapes, with their mix of wetlands, forests, and fields, offer ideal habitats for these birds. Birdwatchers can enjoy the sight of diverse species engaging in their springtime rituals, from courtship displays to nest-building, making early spring a unforgettable time to experience Estonia's rich birdlife.

Tour example - Birding Haapsalu

Participate in a professional birdwatching tour that combines observing wintering Steller's Eiders and breeding Woodpeckers, Owls, and Grouse. This multi (from 4 to 7) day trip in West-Estonia, best scheduled from mid-March to early April, includes visits to Leidisoo Nature Reserve for Ural and Eurasian Pygmy Owls, and birdwatching on Saaremaa Island for the endangered Steller's Eider. The tour concludes with a visit to Soomaa National Park's western taiga forests, home to various woodpecker species, and possibly Hazel Grouse and Capercaillies.



Photo -Mati Kose

[BIRDING HAAPSALU](#)



Dviete floodplains - Latvia



[SPRINGTIME BOATING
IN DVIETE FLOODPLAIN](#)

Take a boat trip along the Dviete River's floodplain. The Dviete water-meadows nature park is one of Europe's largest and most well-preserved natural water-meadows. When the Daugava River overflows, it floods the old Dviete valley, raising the river's lower reaches by over 6 metres compared to low-water levels. The most stunning views of the Dviete water-meadows occur during the spring floods, as the Daugava's waters spread across the ancient valley for nearly 20 kilometres. Keep your eyes peeled for migratory birds, as well as the wild horses and cattle that roam the area.

[Tour example - springtime boating in dviete floodplain](#)

Explore the beautiful spring at the Dviete water-meadows with a 3-hour boating adventure. You'll navigate a peaceful 5-10 km route within the Nature Park. Whether you're a solo explorer or part of a group (up to 20 persons), all are welcome. Dress comfortably for the weather, and waterproof shoes are advisable. Consider combining your experience with an optional guide or binoculars. For group reservations, upon advance request we can organise bonfire-cooked soup. Nearby accommodations can be found within a 15-20 km radius.

The 5th season in Soomaa - Estonia

Soomaa is best known for its extra season. In Soomaa National Park, the early spring floods render up to 17,500 hectares of lower forests, roads and meadows only navigable by water. The floods start when one of the local rivers overflows its banks, ushering in an otherworldly fifth season and a magical way to immerse yourself in nature. Especially in a canoe! This deluge is something akin to a 'fifth season' - when canoes can be paddled along roads, through forests and sometimes even in yards. A wooden dugout canoe—called haabjas in Estonian—exemplifies how Soomaa's ancient traditions have survived to the present day. UNESCO added it to its List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2021.

[Tour Example - 5th season in Soomaa National Park](#)

Explore Soomaa National Park's fifth season with a three-hour canoe tour. This 4km journey in spring takes you through serene landscapes where roads and forests merge under water. Paddle along these flooded paths, observing nature's transformation. The experience, suitable for both individuals and groups up to 50 people, offers a contemplative way to connect with the environment, going through areas that are ordinarily dry land. This tour provides a unique perspective on the 5th season in Estonia.



Photo - Visit Estonia

As the water level rises and drops very suddenly, stay updated by following the news in our facebook page - [Baltic Nature Tourism](#).

[SOOMAA.COM](#)



Photo - lsm.lv



[GATAVO DABĀ](#)

Hiking with a taste

Latvian outdoor cooking traditions reflect a deep connection with nature and a rich culinary heritage. Rooted in simplicity and the use of fresh, local ingredients, these traditions often involve grilling or slow-cooking meats and vegetables over an open fire. Smoked fish, especially, is a staple in Latvian outdoor cuisine, showcasing the country's love for fresh, locally sourced river and sea produce. Hearty soups and stews cooked in large pots over campfires are common, offering warmth and nourishment. These outdoor cooking practices are not just about the food but also about bringing people together and enjoying the nature that surrounds.

[Tour example - Hiking with a taste](#)

Meet Renārs Pūrmalis, a notable Latvian chef who brings the kitchen outdoors, creating a great and unique experience of cooking and nature. His extraordinary approach to gastronomy involves using fresh, local ingredients and teaching traditional cooking practices in beautiful landscapes. Join Renārs for a unique culinary adventure that combines the joy of hiking (up to 10km) with the art of cooking! In Latvia, we often say that food just tastes better when you're out in nature.

Birch and Maple Season

Have you ever heard of the Baltic's unique tradition of drinking birch and maple saps? It's a fascinating practice, especially after a long winter. Birch sap is known for its detoxifying and cleansing effects, almost like a natural energy drink. In April, when the sun begins to warm the earth, the sap starts circulating in the birch trees. Maple sap, much like birch sap, is renowned for its rejuvenating properties, acting almost as a natural tonic.

Curiously, the sap is harvested by drilling a hole about 30 - 40 cm above the ground in the tree trunk and using a tube to collect the sap into a container. The sap itself is a transparent, silky liquid with a pleasantly sweet taste that varies depending on the soil where the tree grows. This collection period lasts 3-4 weeks, ending when the leaves begin to sprout, and the tree is then carefully sealed with a wooden plug.

But there's more!

Birch sap can be transformed, using traditional recipes, into fermented sparkling beverages. These are produced by rural farms and can be found directly from the producers or in some of the largest supermarkets. Imagine going on a rural farm excursion, where you can dive into this wonderful tradition and taste both fresh and fermented birch sap. Isn't that intriguing?

Tour example - Excursion of Birch Sap Factory

Visit the Birzī factory in Smiltene parish to witness the craftsmanship behind our sparkling birch sap production. Birzī proudly incorporates ancient family traditions into the birch sap-making process. During your visit, you'll gain insight into the birch sap journey, from springtime collection to savoring various flavors, including our special birch sap syrup. Explore the world's first birch sap tree park and discover the organic essence of Birzī products, available for purchase as delightful souvenirs. Whether you're an individual or part of a larger group (up to 50 people), our tour welcomes you.



Photo - birzi.lv

[BIRCH SAP CRAFTERY](#)



MEET THE BALTIC NATURE TOURISM TEAM AT TOURISM INDUSTRY EVENTS!

Join us at the upcoming tourism industry events in Latvia, Estonia, the UK, and Denmark, where we can connect face-to-face and delve into the enchanting world of nature tourism for spring 2024. It's a wonderful opportunity to gather, share insights, and celebrate the latest trends in this dynamic field. We're excited to see you there!

- [5 Countries workshop in London](#) 13th February, London, United Kingdom Pullman London St. Pancras
- [Estonian Tourism Board](#) 12th - 14th of July Global BirdFair Rutland - Global BirdFair
- [The Nordic Marketplace 2024](#), on 20th February 2024, Tivoli Hotel & Congress Center, Copenhagen
- [Captains of Industry Cruise August](#), Helsinki 2024, late August
- [In the Nature Tourism product presentation event in Latvian Embassy in London](#) 18th of April, 2024, (Please contact us, if you have interests to join it!)

ABOUT BALTIC NATURE TOURISM

Baltic Nature Tourism is a consortium of individual nature and outdoor specialists across Latvia and Estonia. Our range of tours is varied, covering everything from brief, peaceful nature excursions to extensive, fully-equipped adventure packages that last several days. Whether you're in search of a peaceful nature experience with comfortable lodgings or an adrenaline-packed outdoor adventure, we cater to many preferences. In addition, these experiences can be paired with visits to capitals of Latvia and Estonia, Riga and Tallinn, giving your trip a good balance between nature and city break.



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balticnaturetourism@celotajs.lv

balticnaturetourism.com



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