



CHEESEMANS' ECOLOGY SAFARIS

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Finland II

Boreal Wilds

July 5 to July 17, 2019



Brown bear ©Alain Verstraete

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Tour the sparsely populated taiga in Scandinavia's arctic to see wolverines, brown bears, and wolves under the midnight sun. Spend three nights in photography/viewing blinds amid these mammals' territories to observe and photograph them at close range. Explore Lake Saimaa in Linnansaari National Park searching for the endangered and endemic Saimaa ringed seal by boat. Meander through primeval forest and vast bogs of Patvinsuo National Park. Explore the birds and beautiful scenery of Valtavaara Nature Reserve, one of Europe's best birding spots, where you have the chance to see capercaillie (the largest member of the grouse family), red-flanked bluetail, little and rustic buntings, hazel grouse, three-toed woodpecker, and gray-headed chickadee. Regardless if you're a photographer or wildlife enthusiast, you will enjoy fabulous views of difficult-to-see mammals on this safari!

HIGHLIGHTS

- Spend three nights in special photography/observation blinds to watch wolverines, brown bears, and possibly wolves and white-tailed eagles.
- Discover taiga mammals and birds, like the endemic Saimaa ringed seal, forest reindeer, and Arctic birds.
- Get a feel for Finland as you travel from the mid-northern reaches to the southern tip of the country.

LEADERS: Brecht De Meulenaer and local naturalist guides.

DAYS: 13, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 6.

COST: \$5,390 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 4.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Our accommodations range from nice to rustic. For three nights, we stay in photography blinds, which have bunk or single beds and a pit toilet; during the day, you will have a double occupancy room. See the *Accommodations* section on page 6.

TRANSPORTATION: 9-seater minibus.

CONDITIONS: This is a **non-smoking tour** for people who are very interested in spending the maximum time in nature. See the *Conditions* section on page 7.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Jul 5	Travel to Oulu, Finland.		
Jul 6	Arrive in Oulu.	Airport Hotel, Oulu	D
Jul 7	Explore Oulu, and then head to Kuusamo for wildlife watching and hiking.	Holiday Club Kuusamo Tropiiki	B, L, D
Jul 8–9	Enjoy birdwatching at Valtavaara Nature Reserve and exploring Oulanka National Park.	Holiday Club Kuusamo Tropiiki	B, L, D
Jul 10	Transfer to Kuhmo. Close-up viewing of brown bears and possibly wolves from photography/observation blinds.	Blinds at Lassi Rautiainen's, Kuhmo; Hotel Kalevala, Kuhmo	B, L, D
Jul 11	Explore the Taiga and bogs after a good rest.	Hotel Kalevala, Kuhmo	B, L, D
Jul 12–13	Discover mysterious wolverines and brown bears during two nights in photography/observation blinds.	Blinds at Erä Eero, Lieksa; Kestikievari Herranniemi Lodge, Vuonislampi	B, L, D
Jul 14	Walk among the primeval forests and bogs of Patvinsuo National Park.	Kestikievari Herranniemi Lodge, Vuonislampi	B, L, D
Jul 15	Travel south with stops for scenery and wildlife before a relaxing evening.	Hotel Järvisydän, Rantasalmi	B, L, D
Jul 16	Boating on Lake Saimaa in Linnansaari National Park to search for birds and endemic Saimaa seal. Travel to Helsinki.	Hotel Haaga, Helsinki	B, L, D
Jul 17	Depart for home or fly to Longyearbyen for our Franz Josef Land expedition.		B

OPTIONS

Extend your stay in the Arctic by joining our Franz Josef Land expedition on July 18 to August 3, 2019 (www.cheesemans.com/trips/franz-josef-land-jul2019).

LEADER

Brecht De Meulenaer

Guiding tours and traveling are Brecht's passions. His love for nature began from a very young age and eventually developed into a career, including working for Ghent University and various research institutes before becoming a nature guide. He also leads glacier tours in Iceland and has led trips in Africa, Russia, Mongolia, and Greenland. Being multilingual, he is happy to share his vast knowledge with you and help you take breath-taking photos.



DETAILED ITINERARY

Jul 5 ~ Travel to Oulu, Finland

Jul 6 ~ Arrive in Oulu

Arrive in Oulu where a transfer agent will take you to the hotel, so you can relax and prepare for your safari. If you would like to arrive earlier, we can arrange your airport transfer and extra nights.

Jul 7 ~ Explore wildlife around Oulu and Kuusamo

Explore the hotel's gardens in Oulu, along the Gulf of Bothnia. Here you may find whooper swan, common goldeneye, common and red-breasted merganser, and abundant migrating sandpipers including common redshank, common greenshank, and ruff. Then journey toward Kuusamo for wildlife watching and hiking.

Jul 8–9 ~ Enjoy the birds and scenery of Valtavaara Nature Reserve and Oulanka National Park

You'll discover some of the birds that call the taiga home. Enjoy the beautiful scenery, nice paths, and pure air in Valtavaara, one of the best birdwatching spots in Europe. You will search for the red-flanked bluetail, little and rustic buntings, and gray-headed chickadee. At Oulanka National Park, you'll experience rushing rivers amid the Scots pine and Norway spruce and wildflowers unique to this area. You will hopefully find black grouse, white-throated dipper dipping in the powerful waters, red-breasted flycatcher, gray wagtail, and others.

Jul 10 ~ Observe and photograph bears from blinds

Drive toward the border with Russia to an area near the town of Kuhmo, situated among territories of brown bears and if lucky, you may see the elusive wolves of this region. The vast, remote character of nature here is impressive. Spend the night in a photography/observation blind, while keeping your eyes peeled for white-tailed eagles and common ravens suddenly abandoning carcasses, a sure sign that a carnivore is about to make an appearance.



Wolverine

Jul 11 ~ Day of relaxation or short excursions

At the hotel, you'll be welcomed with a buffet breakfast, and during the day you may rest or go on short excursions with your leader. You have the opportunity to see mammals and birds including forest reindeer, Eurasian elk (the European version of moose), European pine marten, mountain hare, Eurasian capercaillie (the largest member of the grouse family), hazel grouse, and Eurasian three-toed woodpecker.

Jul 12–13 ~ Observe and photograph wolverines and bears from blinds

Travel to Lieksa, where you'll spend the next two nights in comfortable blinds to observe and photograph the secretive wolverine and families of brown bears. Only a few years ago, it was almost impossible to see wolverines in the wild anywhere in the world. Fortunately, the province of Karelia, where Lieksa is located, is one of the best places to observe and photograph this giant member of the mustelid family.

Jul 14 ~ Explore the forest and bogs of Patvinsuo National Park

Walk amid the unique primeval forest and vast bogs of Patvinsuo National Park, which you're sure to remember. Finland is well-known for its "mire" ecosystems. Mires, also called peatlands and wetlands, can be divided into two kinds in Finland: raised bogs with thick layers of peat (3–6m deep) and aapa mires with wetter, sedge-dominant habitat (peat layers 0.5–3m deep).

Patvinsuo is where the north meets the south, so you'll find a combination of raised bogs typical of the south and aapa mires typical of the north. Raised bogs rely on rainwater for nutrients, whereas aapa mires rely on the mineral soil for nutrients from groundwater or runoff from surrounding areas. Learn about the ecology as you wander through this unique landscape.



Black-throated loon © Marc Sloommaekers

Jul 15 ~ Travel South to Rantasalmi

Drive south towards Rantasalmi, stopping en route to explore the scenery and search for wildlife in the forests and along the lakes and bogs. End the day relaxing at and enjoying all the comforts your hotel has to offer.

Jul 16 ~ Boat trip on Lake Saimaa and explore Linnansaari National Park

Enjoy a boat trip in Linnansaari National Park on Lake Saimaa, the largest lake in Finland and the fourth largest natural freshwater lake in Europe. A local guide will accompany you to find the rare, endemic, and endangered Saimaa ringed seal. Together with birds such as the black-throated loon, common goldeneye, and red-breasted merganser, this will be a wonderful end to your Finland safari.

Jul 17 ~ Fly home or join our Franz Josef Land expedition

Depending on your flight schedules, you may spend the morning with a short excursion before your flight home or continue exploring the Arctic on our expedition to Franz Josef Land.

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$5,390
Single Supplement	Contact us

Costs are per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

We reserve the right to charge for cost increases that occur between when we set tour prices and the date of travel, for example, changes due to the cost of lodging and transportation. If you are a single traveler and you desire, we will find a roommate for you. If we cannot find you a roommate, we may charge you a single supplement fee. Single rooms are subject to availability and cannot be guaranteed throughout safari.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Second	October 15, 2018	\$1,000
Final	January 15, 2019	Remaining Balance

Payments will be due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space. For reservations made after a due date, all past payments will be due with registration. By sending your initial deposit, you agree to accept our payment schedule and cancellation policy as a contract. If payments are still outstanding two weeks after the due date, your space may be forfeited.

Cancellations

Until the Final Payment due date, deposits are refundable except for a cancellation fee of \$150 per person, which can be applied toward another tour if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable. No refunds are given after the Final Payment due date.

Included

- All leaders, transport, park entry fees, landing fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Accommodations for the nights of July 6 through July 16.
- Group photography/observation blinds for the nights of July 10, 12, and 13.
- Meals from dinner on July 6 through breakfast on July 17.
- Transfers regardless of arrival day in Oulu and on July 17 between the airport and lodge.
- Boat trip on Lake Saimaa.
- Non-alcoholic beverages.
- Sleeping bags for time in blinds (if requested).
- Gratuities to airport and hotel porters.
- Trip Materials - information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- All airfare, airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Airfare is approximately \$975–\$1,700 from the USA to Finland, depending on origin.
- We can arrange divergent airport transfers and extra hotel nights for an extra cost.
- Gratuities - tipping is, of course, discretionary, however we suggest budgeting about \$35 to \$70 total *per participant* for Brecht. All other gratuities are included.
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance, but it is required for you to purchase. For more information see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance
- Trip cancellation insurance. For more information see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, alcoholic beverages, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Reservation/Release Form.

SIGN UP

Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Reservation/Release Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

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OTHER DETAILS

Climate

At this time of the year, the weather should be nice, sunny and warm. Of course, in the high Arctic you can always expect some cloudy, rainy, or cold weather. Highs average in the upper 60's°F (~20°C), and lows in the low 50's°F (~11°C).

Fitness Level

You will spend three nights observing wildlife in blinds, which may lead to sleep deprivation, depending on your sleep needs and habits; patience and a positive attitude is required. Walking is limited, and the hikes are generally easy with some small hills.

Accommodations

You will spend three nights in comfortable photography blinds with single beds or bunk beds with sleeping bags (if requested) and a pit toilet. You'll generally arrive in the blinds around 4:00pm and stay until around 7:00am the following morning. During the daytime and other nights, you will stay at comfortable lodges, with time built in to rest after nights spent in the blinds.

Transportation

You'll travel throughout in a heated nine-seater minibus.

Flights

Airfare is not included in trip costs. Detailed logistical information and the contact information for our recommended flight-ticketing agent are included in the Trip Materials we will send you. Please let us know if you are arriving earlier or staying later as we are happy to assist you with any extra overnights that you might want to arrange.

Flights you (or a travel agent) book: Arrive at Oulu Airport (OUL) in Finland by the evening on July 6. Depart from Helsinki-Vantaa Airport (HEL) in Finland anytime on July 17. **If you are continuing on to our Franz Josef Land expedition, see its itinerary for flight details** (www.cheesemans.com/trips/franz-josef-land-jul2019).

Conditions

- **Non-smoking policy:** We have a strict non-smoking policy. Smoking is not permitted at any time or any place during our tours.
- **Maximum time in nature:** We try to spend as much time in nature as possible, sometimes resulting in long days, but giving you a more in-depth experience.
- **Itinerary route:** The itinerary route, stops, and plans are subject to change by unforeseen circumstances beyond our control, such as weather or road conditions.
- **Additional forms:** For some of our tours, you may be asked to fill out additional forms (e.g., medical questionnaire).
- **Medical conditions and travel risks:** Travel to remote places is exciting, but it is important to understand and accept the risks, both medical and logistical. Minor medical problems can usually be treated, but because we are often far from medical facilities, there can be no expectation for immediate medical treatment or evacuation, even in cases of trauma. Anyone with health problems needing close medical supervision should not consider going on this tour. Bring enough medication for the duration of the trip for any chronic medical needs since pharmacies are usually not available. When you send your deposit and signed Reservation/Release Form, you certify to us that you do not knowingly have any physical or other conditions that would create a risk for yourself or for other trip participants.
- **Use of drones/UAVs on tours:** Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), AKA drones, are not suitable for use on most Cheesemans' Ecology expeditions due to logistical constraints and in many cases, local and national laws or regulations. In some cases, such as on our polar voyages, we operate under environmental regulations that ban the use of recreational drones. Do not bring a drone on safari without contacting us first.

Conservation

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris is passionate about conserving the precious regions that we travel to and supports many conservation efforts. By visiting these areas, we contribute to sustainable conservation of these valuable wildlife habitats. The Nestori Foundation is committed to promote safeguarding and improving habitats for the Saimaa ringed seal (www.nestorisaatio.fi/index_uk.html).

We aim to make all our trips carbon neutral by splitting the cost of carbon offsetting with our participants. For your convenience, the optional donation amount for your half of the carbon offset will be indicated on your invoice. We source high quality offsets through CarbonTree Conservation Fund, a non-profit we helped found, supporting pioneering forest conservation in the Valdivian Coastal Reserve, a Nature Conservancy project (<https://tinyurl.com/ybgkwton>).