

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Brown Bear Weekend (AFB 2017)



TRIP DURATION
4
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic

Tour Pace: Relaxed

Tour Type: Small Groups

Accommodation Grade: Simple

Trip Code: AFB

Trip Highlights - Brown Bear Weekend

- ✓ Lentiira - Observing the European brown bear from a bear hide
- ✓ Kainuu region - Pristine area of natural beauty
- ✓ Nature walks - Learn about the forest on a walk with our local wildlife guide

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 2 nights Simple Lodge
1 night Simple Hut

Included Meals: 3 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 3 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Kajaani Airport

End Point: Trip ends: Kajaani Airport

Transport: Bus

Countries: Finland



Brown Bear Weekend

Sparsely-populated North Eastern Finland is an untamed expanse of pristine natural beauty. The dense taiga forest with its many rivers and lakes offers a haven to the elusive European brown bear. Travelling deep into the forest to specially prepared observation hides, we aim to observe this amazing animal in its natural habitat during this exciting short break.

Why Book this trip

Finland is the destination for this exciting wildlife filled trip. Spend a night camping out in hides observing the nature that Vartius has to offer with the likes of wolves, arctic hares, wolverines and of course wild brown bears all calling this region their home.

Wildlife

Finland is home to approximately 1200 brown bears which are mainly located in eastern Finland, close to the Russian border, where there is less human habitation. The viewing season runs between April and September, before the weather starts to turn colder and the bears go into hibernate. June is mating season for brown bears, so we could be lucky enough to see the male bears following a female mate. By travelling in spring (May), any cubs that have been born over the winter start to take their first explorations into their surroundings. The long northern summer means that there is between 12 and 16 hours of direct sunlight each day, plus 2 to 4 hours of twilight - all the more light for trying to observe these inquisitive giants of the forest.

On this trip, although bear sightings are not guaranteed, it is common to see a number of individual bears from our hides during one night. There is a variety of other wildlife in the area that we may also be fortunate enough to see including owls, wolverine, foxes and elk.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Simple

No-frills accommodation which includes berths on sleeper trains, rooms in village houses, boat cabins, campsites, huts and simple family-run lodges, guesthouses and hotels. Sleeping arrangements are simple and amenities are adequate, sometimes with en suite facilities and occasionally communal.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Relaxed

Easy paced tours with plenty of time to relax and absorb the sights and immerse yourself in the local surroundings.

Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

This tour will not be accompanied by an Explore Tour Leader. Instead you will be accompanied by an Explore Representative. The representative will not be with you



for every section of the tour and will not stay at the accommodation at night or eat out with the group in the evenings. However they will be available for you and your group during the included activities and will help if any problems occur.

DAY 1 Join trip at Kajaani airport; drive to the Wild Brown Bear Centre

Arriving at Kajaani airport we then take a bus east towards the Russian border through a magnificent landscape of densely packed forest of both deciduous and coniferous trees broken up by lakes, bubbling streams and flowing rivers, as we make our way to the home of the brown bear. Our journey will take around 1 hour 30 minutes. On arrival at the Wild Brown Bear Centre you will have a free evening. If time allows, we recommend ending your day by partaking in the pastime that is almost a national obsession in Finland - the sauna. Please note that on our 23 Jun 2017 we will fly into Oulu airport instead of Kajaani airport and transfer from here to the Wild Brown Bear Centre. The journey will take approximately 3 hours and you'll see some spectacular Finnish scenery along the way.


Overnight: **Simple Lodge**

 **Included Meals:** Dinner

DAY 2 Guided nature walk; exciting evening spent bear watching from hides

This morning we include a guided walk through the forest with a local wildlife guide, to gain a greater insight into the natural history of this pristine region. During the 4 to 5km walk we learn more about the habitat of the brown bear, whilst looking for the other animals and rare plants found in this truly unique area. This afternoon we will walk to our specially prepared hides to spend a night observing bears. Located in a small open wetland area, with a fabulous backdrop of spruce and pine forests the hides have been designed to offer the best opportunity for the observation and study of bears. Each hide accommodates up to 8 people and is equipped with comfortable viewing chairs, a sleeping area and a toilet. Although predominantly a solitary animal, bears do congregate in numbers within popular areas where food is plentiful. Although as with all wildlife viewing we cannot guarantee that bears will be seen, it is common for a number of individual bears to be observed from the hides during any one night. In the viewing season we can expect 12 to 16 hours per day of direct sunlight and 2 to 4 hours of twilight, so maximising the opportunity to see these amazing animals. As well as bears, owls, wolverine, foxes and elk are visitors to this area, so make sure you load a large memory card into your camera!

Overnight: **Simple Hut**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3 Free day with the chance to enjoy a nature trek or go canoeing

This morning we return on foot to our hotel located a short walk from the hides. After freshening up, the day is free for personal exploration, although you may wish to join an optional canoeing trip or nature trek (12 km) with our local guide. For those people not wishing to partake in these options, the location of our hotel makes it an ideal place to just sit and relax. There is the opportunity this evening to return to the hides for a second night of bear watching (optional - space permitting) or relax in a traditional smoke sauna. In the unlikely event that bears were not seen on the first night, a second night of bear watching will be included without additional charge.

Overnight: **Simple Lodge**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4 Drive to Kajaani airport where the trip ends

This morning if time allows we drive via Kuhmo, a town located on the banks of Lake Lammasjarvi in the Kainuu region, before returning to Kajaani airport.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Notes

The Wild Brown Bear Centre's remote location makes it ideal for wildlife spotting and relaxing in the tranquil surroundings. The lodge is furnished in a simple style and the bedrooms are basic with some having shared bathroom facilities. There is a dining room area, auditorium and two saunas at the lodge.

You will spend at least one night of your stay in the wildlife watching hides, which are positioned by a picturesque lake. There are 21 hides and the largest can accommodate up to 10 people. They are equipped with comfy chairs and beds in the back in case you need to take a snooze at any point during the night. They also have basic toilet facilities and we recommend taking hand sanitiser with you. Outdoor shoes aren't permitted to be worn inside the hides (in order to keep them clean and noise to a minimum), so you might want to wear soft slippers or thick socks when inside. It is also advisable to bring insect repellent with you, as the location beside the lake

can attraction insects. Once we have entered the hides at around 18.00 we won't be able to leave until approximately 07.00 the next morning.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 3 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 3 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Finland

Lunch £: 10.00

Dinner £: 20.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Finland

Bottle of Beer £: 6.00

Water £: 1.30

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Lentiira - Nature trek through the forest €30.00 for 3 to 4 hours (8 to 12km)

Canoeing - 1 to 2 hours canoeing on the lake at the lodge €20.00 (maximum of 6 people) - if you are interested in this activity, please email: info@taigaspirit.com prior to departure

Bear hides - An additional night can be purchased locally for €90.00

Moose safari - Go in search of Moose with a local expert, 2 to 3 hours trip for €50.00 (maximum of 5 people) - If you are interested in this activity, please email: info@taigaspirit.com prior to departure

Tipping - Local Crew

Local Representative - At your discretion you might also wish to consider tipping your local representative in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Foreign Exchange

Finland

ATM Availability: ATM machines are available only in Helsinki, Helsinki airport, Kajaani (no ATM in Kajaani airport or in Paljakka). If you need money, it is important to mention this to the Explore Leader/driver at the airport and they will stop at the ATM in Kajaani before driving straight to Paljakka.

Credit Card Acceptance: Hotels do accept credit cards.

Travellers Cheques: We do not recommend that you use travellers cheques as they can be difficult to exchange

Local Currency: Euro.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: We recommend that you take Euro cash with you to Finland as on this tour there is little opportunity to change money.

Where to Exchange: The tour leader will advise.

Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

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CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

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We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Finland: Visas are not required by citizens of the UK, US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Vaccinations & Protection

Finland

Nothing compulsory though we recommend protection against tetanus and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Europe, at specific times of the year. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

Finland

Finland's summer is generally warm and bright, with temperatures often reaching mid-20s. The days are long during the summer months of June and July as Finland is home to the Midnight Sun. The winter is often snowy and very cold with short days. Temperatures can drop well below freezing sometimes getting as low as -20.

Clothing

You will need lots of layers. Although the evenings/nights can be cold, once in the hide in can often get quite warm. Bring a warm jacket/fleece as it can get cold at night and a raincoat.

Equipment

We also recommend taking a water bottle, torch, sun cream, mosquito repellent, sunglasses, binoculars and a camera. A telephoto lens will be useful for wildlife shots and a tripod may be useful but not essential.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes or wellington boots and trainers/sandals. A pair of slippers can be nice to wear in the lodge or hide.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysac for personal items.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Finland

Population: 5,391,699

Size of Country: 338,424 sq km

Major Language: Finnish

Religion: Evangelical Lutheran

Time Difference to GMT: +2

Electric Supply & Plugs

Finland

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award-winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family-run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

These trip notes were printed on 17/08/2017 23:28:25

