

EXPLORE!

Brown Bear Weekend

4 days

Finland - Trip code AFB



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.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Wild Brown Bear Centre** - Spend a night observing the European brown bear from a bear hide
- ★ **Wildlife** - Look out for wolverine, foxes, elk and owls during your night in the hide
- ★ **Nature walks** - Explore the forest and learn about the bears habitat on a walk with our local wildlife guide
- ★ **Kainuu region** - Experience the pristine natural beauty of north eastern Finland

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Simple

These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Relaxed

You can enjoy easy-going activities and experiences on these Relaxed pace tours, with opportunities to absorb the sights and immerse yourself in the local surroundings, but still come home feeling relaxed and refreshed.

GROUP SIZE:**8 - 14**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

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 rivers, as we make our way to the home of the brown bear. The 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 22 June, 13 July, 27 July and 03 August 2018 trips, 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.

This tour will not be accompanied by an Explore 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.



Accommodation: Wild Brown Bear Centre (or similar)



Simple Lodge



Meals Provided: 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!



Accommodation: Wild Brown Bear Centre Hide (or similar)



Simple Hut



Meals Provided: 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.



Accommodation: Wild Brown Bear Centre (or similar)



Simple Lodge



Meals Provided: 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.

Please note that on our 22 June, 13 July, 27 July and 03 August 2018 trips, we will fly out of Oulu airport instead of Kajaani airport.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Wildlife



Bears in Finland

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.

Top Tips for bear watching

Charlotte Wren, one of Explore's Customer Sales and Support Executives has these five top tips for anyone hoping to spot bears in Finland.

- If you can manage it, avoid sleep. You just don't know when a bear is going to emerge. The group will wake you when there are bears but there's nothing more exciting than having that sighting. It's amazing how loudly you can whisper BEAR!
- Understandably everyone wants pictures of the bears they spot but try not to live through the lens and take some time to watch through the viewing window.
- Before your night in the hide, ensure batteries are charged and you have sufficient memory on your camera for all the photos.
- Take slippers! Outdoor shoes aren't allowed in the hide because they can be noisy and no one wants chilly feet.
- Pack your mossie spray for the daytime, you are right next to a lake and they are a constant companion.

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.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 3
Lunch: 1
Dinner: 3



Transport

Bus



Trip staff

Activity Guide(s)
Driver(s)
Explore Representative



Accommodation

1 nights simple hut
2 nights simple lodge

Trip information

Country information

Finland

Climate

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.

Time difference to GMT

+2

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Evangelical Lutheran

Language

Finnish

Budgeting and packing

Optional 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.

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

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.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes or wellington boots and trainers/sandals. A pair of slippers can be nice to wear in the hide as no outdoor shoes are allowed inside to keep noise to a minimum.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

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

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.

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.

Country Information

Finland

Food and drink

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.

Lunch price

£10

Dinner price

£20

Beer price

£6

Water price

£1.3

Foreign 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.

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

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

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 compost toilets (a simple hole in the ground but with a seat!) 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 attract 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.

There is no electricity in the hides so you will need to ensure your camera batteries are fully charged or take spares with you.

Essential Information

FCO Advice

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 click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

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.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport 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. [\lang1033 e.\lang20572](#)

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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

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 below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

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, Polar, 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 [click here](#)

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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

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 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.

Non refundable permits

Finland

Vaccinations

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. Please check the 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 [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

