

# Finland - On the Trail of the Wolverine

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline itinerary

- Day 1** Fly Kuopio and transfer to Lieska
- Day 2/3** Wolverine-watching and woodland walks from the forest lodge and hide
- Day 4** Transfer to Joensuu and fly London

**Departs**  
July

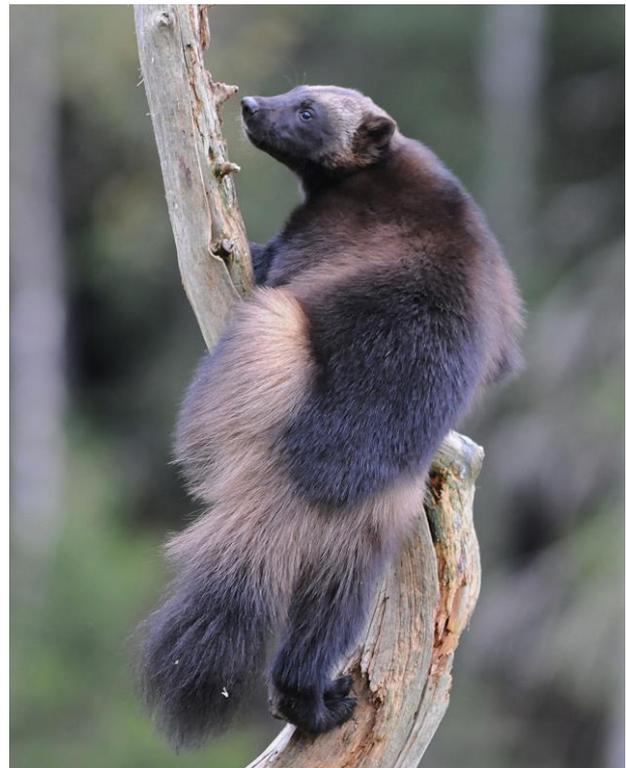
**Focus**  
Wolverines, other mammals and birds.

**Grading**  
Grade A. Gentle forest walks only.

**Prices**  
Visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) (tour code FIN03).

### Highlights:

- Watch for Wolverines from a log-cabin hide deep in the Finnish forests
- Brown Bear also possible
- Long hours of daylight during the Finnish summer
- Excellent photographic opportunities
- Look for Black-throated Diver, Black Grouse, White-tailed Eagle & Brambling
- Red Deer & Red Squirrel
- Explore Finland's vast Taiga Forests
- Escorted by a local Finnish guide



*Finnish taiga forest and Wolverine. Images courtesy of Eero Kortelainen.*



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## Introduction

Within the vast tracts of boreal forest that encircle our planet's higher latitudes roams one of the northern hemisphere's most formidable, but rarely seen, predators. The Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) is the largest land-dwelling member of the Mustelidae, the family of mammals that includes Stoat, Badger and Pine Marten; only the aquatic Giant River Otter of South America is larger! These powerful and solitary animals are the nomads of the Arctic and travel great distances in their insatiable quest for food. This nomadic lifestyle makes Wolverines very difficult to see and there are few places in the world where the 'Glutton' of the animal kingdom can be observed (*Gulo* being Latin for 'Glutton'). One such place is hidden amongst Finland's forests and lakes close to the small town of Lieska. Here a hide has been specially constructed amongst the trees overlooking a favoured feeding area for the local Wolverines, and a couple of nights in this hide offers one the best opportunities anywhere in Europe for a privileged view of this secretive creature.

## itinerary

**NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.**

### Day 1

### Lieska

We depart London Heathrow Airport at around 0730 hours this morning on a Finnair flight to Helsinki, the attractive Finnish capital, from where we take a short internal flight to the small town of Kuopio. On arrival (at around 1410 hours), we will be met and driven for 180 kilometres through an endless landscape of forests, wetlands and lakes to the town of Lieska, located about 30 kilometres from the Russian border. A night in the comfortable Hotel Puustelli then awaits us and the opportunity for a good night's sleep in preparation for the two nocturnal vigils ahead!

### Day 2 - 3

### Wolverine-watching hide

After a leisurely breakfast we will drive for 40 minutes to our lodge, a typically 'rustic' Scandinavian forest retreat built in a traditional Finnish style with a large dining and lounge area, a couple of dormitory-style bedrooms, outside compost toilets and several saunas which our friendly host, Eero Kortelainen, will fire up on request. The lodge is situated deep within Finland's taiga forests and will be our base for the next two days.

On arrival we will head out on a woodland walk for a couple of hours in search of some of the wildlife that lives here such as Red Squirrel, Crested Tit, Brambling and Parrot Crossbill. Following a home-cooked late lunch we must prepare for the night ahead before departing at about 1600 hours for the 6 kilometre drive along forest tracks to the Wolverine-watching hide. It is then a short and easy walk of around 100 metres to the hide itself which is set on top of a low hillock overlooking a lightly wooded valley and small lake. The hide is essentially a large log cabin with two rooms and a compost toilet. At the front is a row of comfortable padded seats with views out across the valley through glass windows (double glazed to reduce misting). Each viewing position is equipped with a metal screw plate on which a tripod head can be fixed and headphones connected to a sensitive outside

microphone through which you can enjoy the sounds of the birds and other wildlife nearby. At the rear of the hide is a second room with beds for those wishing to have a night-time nap. Since this will be our home until around 0730 hours the following morning, patience is an essential component of this holiday! Snacks and a hot drink will be served soon after arrival and then it will be time to relax, watch, listen and wait. Fortunately, Finnish summers are blessed with long hours of daylight so it is likely to be light enough to watch for our quarry most of the night.

Wolverines are forever on the move and cover great distances each day. They are elusive and secretive animals that need to be 'persuaded' to stop for a while. With that in mind, our host baits the immediate surroundings of the hide with carefully concealed pieces of meat. The local Wolverines are now aware of this regular food supply and so — although they do not visit the hide every night — they are seen on a regular basis throughout the summer months with a peak in sightings between late June through to mid-July. From time to time, Brown Bears wander past too, and, for the very fortunate, there is even a slim chance of Wolf! During the hours when our main quarry is not on show, we can enjoy the peace and tranquillity of this beautiful area, watch for passing birds, and listen to the croak of a nearby Raven or perhaps the piping song of a Pygmy Owl.

NB - Keen photographers may choose to spend one or more nights in the separate photographic hide which — although more basic in construction — is located at the bottom of the slope, closer to the bait and at eye level with the animals. Please call the Naturetrek office for more information.

We will be collected from the hide at around 0730 hours and transferred back to the main lodge for a home-cooked breakfast of hot porridge, cold meats, cheese and pastries. This tour includes two nights in the hide to maximise the chance of a Wolverine encounter. In between our nocturnal vigils there will be the opportunity to relax and to sleep back at the main lodge or to explore the forests further in search of birds and other wildlife.

## Day 4

## Fly London

Once again we will be collected from the hide at around 0730 hours and return to the main lodge for breakfast. A short while later we will need to leave for the three hour transfer to Joensuu Airport for your return flight home (via Helsinki) arriving at around 1710 hours.

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## Grading

Grade A (easy). This is a straightforward wildlife tour that makes no great physical demands and should be within the capabilities of anyone who is of a reasonable/average level of fitness. Walks around the wilderness lodge are along undulating narrow forest trails. The transfer to the hide involves a 6 kilometre journey in a vehicle followed by a 100 metre walk along a wide forest trail down a short slope.

## Weather

Although this tour take place during Finland's summer, the weather can be vary variable. Temperatures are similar to those you might expect in Scotland and rain is possible. Daytime temperatures are likely to be between 15°C and 25°C, dropping to 5 -10°C at night.

## Food & accommodation included in the price

All food and accommodation is included in the price (apart from lunch and dinner on Day 1 and Day 4). For the first night we will stay in the comfortable Hotel Puustelli in the town of Lieska, each room having private facilities.

Please be aware that the accommodation used for the rest of the trip is basic in nature with shared toilet and shower facilities. The lodge is a typical 'rustic' Scandinavian forest retreat built in a traditional Finnish style with a large dining and lounge area, a couple of dormitory-style bedrooms with bunk beds, no electricity, outside compost toilets (there are no flushing toilets!) and several saunas which can be fired up on request. Although this style of rustic wilderness living is beloved by Scandinavians, we appreciate that it is not for everyone! Should you wish to discuss this in more detail please give the Naturetrek office a call on 01962 733051.

The wolverine hide is a large log cabin with two rooms and a compost toilet. At the front is a row of comfortable padded seats with views out across the valley through glass windows (double glazed to reduce misting). Each viewing position is equipped with a metal screw plate on which a tripod head can be fixed and headphones connected to a sensitive outside microphone. At the rear of the hide is a second room with a wooden table and beds for those wishing to have a nap.

Breakfast consists of hot porridge, cold meats, cheese and pastries. A late lunch is the main meal of the day followed by tea, coffee and light snacks in the Wolverine-watching hide. Although the lodge does not have a licence to serve alcohol, guests are welcome to bring in a small amount of wine, beer or spirits for personal consumption (drinks are excluded from the tour cost).

Single rooms are available for the first night in Lieska at the supplement price outlined on the website or in the Naturetrek brochure/newsletter. Single rooms are not available for the remaining two nights.



Main forest lodge (Eero Kortelainen).



Wolverine-watching hide (Eero Kortelainen).

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## How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, you will need to read our main Naturetrek brochure thoroughly and complete and return the enclosed booking form, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure please give us a call on 01962 733051, and we will gladly post one to you. Alternatively, you can book on line at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or telephone us and make a booking with a credit or debit card.

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