

## Just Wolverines Photography Tour

**Destination:** Lieska (Kontiovaara), Finland      **Season:** April - May



Expert local guide with decades of experience hiking the Finnish forests



Access to specialist Wolverine photography hides with a success rate of 99%



Overnights in the hide, around 19 hours of daylight in May for photography



Special access to sites for other mammal and bird species known by our guide



Explore the forests of eastern Finland and search for many species of birds

### Dates:

Next group tour: 11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022

### Private / Tailored Tour information:

This tour can be booked anytime of the year, wolverines are seen throughout the year from our specialist photography hides. However there are peaks in wolverine activity (and sightings) and the best time of year is April and May, this is when the females have their kits and are more active looking for food and the bears are still largely hibernating. Later on in the year the brown bears are active and they outcompete the wolverines a little and so there are less wolverines per day. But you can see bears easier in June through to September. Also some people wish to book tours in winter, so they can get the wolverine on the snow for photography.

Whilst we have a good success rate in filling tours we always suggest booking a private tour to avoid any disappointment.

The costs for a minimum of 1 person (to have a private tour) are listed alongside the small group price (based on a minimum of 4 passengers).

We also have flexibility for the duration of trip you would like to book.

Some of our clients prefer to book longer trips and so we have options for longer trips, longer trips can then visit other locations nearby such as specialist brown bear or wolf photography hides and known locations for owl photography too.

Trips for any group size and any duration are possible, please enquire further for more information on our tailored wolverine and Finnish wildlife tours.

### Prices (2022 season):

Group Tour (4 nights)

£1,795 per person

\*single supplement £390

Private Tour (4 nights)

£3,295 per person (1 people)

\*single supplement £390

£2,695 per person (2 people)

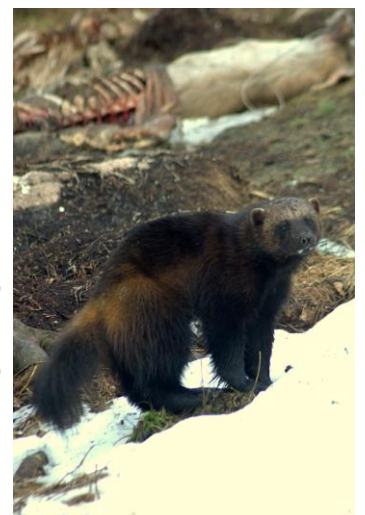
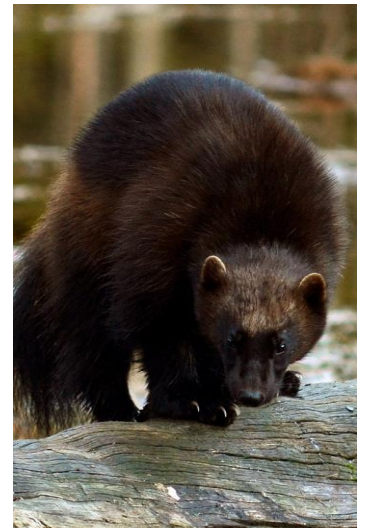
\*single supplement £390

### Overview

**Day 1:** Joensuu / Kontiovaara

**Days 2-4:** Kontiovaara

**Day 5:** Joensuu / Home





# Tour Information

## Introduction

This fantastic photography adventure delves into the old growth, ancient forests of eastern Finland close to the Russian border in search of Europe's least understood carnivore; the wolverine. These forests and various ecosystems are home to a wealth of wildlife that used to prowl the forests throughout most of northern Europe through to Canada and the northern US, however years over hunting and urban development have eradicated much of the forests and therefore many of the species.

However the forests in eastern Finland are still rugged and wild and whilst largely managed they are home to large numbers of wildlife and with a little bit of luck and our expert guide some of these species will be awaiting you in the deep forests.

Whilst there are other species that can be seen on this trip, in the day trips and also other animals that sometimes come to the baited area around the hides, there is ultimately one major focus on this tour; the iconic, large, beautiful and powerful wolverine. A formidable animal with a fearsome reputation which has lent itself to the popular character in Marvel's comic, TV and movie franchise, *X-Men*. Despite how commonly the name appears in modern pop-culture nowadays the animal itself is seldom seen and poorly understood. They are in fact badger sized super-hairy weasels; but this description doesn't quite do them justice.

Throughout their range in the northern reaches of the Palaearctic they are among the top carnivores and despite competing with much larger brown and polar bears as well as more numerous wolves, they hold their own and are fearless when defending their kills and scavenged carcasses. In fact there are stories of a wolverine holding off a fully grown brown bear from a kill and one stood its ground against a polar bear. It did lose this battle and died, but the fact that it tried is testament to an animal with courage and a fierce attitude, which is the secret to surviving the harsh winters here.

They are among the hardest animals in the world to see anywhere, with massive territories, elusive natures and very low densities even in areas where they are studied the scientists hardly ever see them and have to trap them in order to collar them and gain any data. But here there are around 5-7 adult wolverines and the females annually produce litters of kits to keep the local populations well supplied.

With long hours of daylight (around 18 hours daily of photographable light in late May), and carefully designed mammal watching hides and some strategically left baits; our wolverine location is the ultimate place for a short wildlife photography trip.

After three nights dedicated to the wolverines (and other animals that may show themselves around the hide, you will spend time with our specialist local guide and go looking for other wildlife.

But there are many other species in the forests of Finland and the wolverines share their habitat with brown bears, grey wolves, reindeer, moose, roe deer, otters, beavers and a wealth of resident and migratory birds.

Our local guide knows all of the best locations for wildlife around here, such as: some times the black grouse and capercaillie are lekking in their spectacular courtship displays (however due to climate change this is becoming rarer and harder to predict) and we can stake out these leks for photography. We also have locations nesting ospreys, Siberian flying squirrels, European roe deer, Eurasian beavers, many bird species and we are currently working on a reliable location for Eurasian lynx.

So depending on the time of year you are arriving here and your specific interests we can tailor the day time activities to include some of the above options.

## Itinerary

### Day 1 **Joensuu / Kontiovaraa**

### *Arrival & Wildlife Watching*

**Accommodation:**

Local Guest House

**Food:**

No meals included today.

**Transportation:**

Private Vehicle.

Today you will be met at the airport in Joensuu (or at your chosen hotel in Joensuu if you have arrived the day before) by our local guide and taken direct to your hotel in the town of Leiksa. After checking in (depending on your time of arrival) we may have time to visit some of the forests nearby the wolverine hide. This is the wilderness areas of northern Karelia. Along the way you will be taken north east towards the Russian border and some of the most remote and wild forests left in Europe. The forests here are full of wildlife and the nearby Ritojarvi Nature Reserve is very good for migratory birds. In May the winter thaw is well under way and all of the migratory species have started to come back to northern Europe from the Mediterranean and further afield (central Asia, Africa and India) to take advantage of the increased day length in order to mate and raise chicks. The extra day light hours increasing the time the adults can forage for food and so decreasing the time taken for the chicks to grow and fledge, so decreasing the time in the nest.



If you have arrived in the afternoon at the hotel then the rest of the day will free for you to rest and relax before an early start tomorrow.

---

## Day 2 **Kontiovaara Area** *Wildlife Watching & Wolverine Photography*

### Accommodation:

Wolverine Hide  
(Pro-photography  
Hide)

### Food:

Breakfast is served at the hotel and field snacks taken into the hide in the evening. Lunch at the hotel is not included today.

### Transportation:

Private vehicle &  
Walking.

This morning we will wake early and have breakfast at the hotel before heading out with your local guide. Depending on what animals are most active at this time of year you will either be taken to a black grouse lek, capercialle lek, a beaver hide or locations for ospreys, woodpeckers, roe deer or Siberian flying squirrels. After lunch back at the hotel you will be taken to the wolverine hide in the mid-afternoon.

These pro-hides are situated close to the baited feeding sites. This helps to ensure that wolverines receive lots of food during this time of year when they are still looking after their kits; it also provides brown bears with valuable food after their long hibernation. The other benefit of this feeding is that the wildlife are not feeding close to the roads on road kill without supplying food which would not be available anyway. The pro hides are located on a lower terrain than the larger normal hides and they are close to a natural pond; which makes for a great photogenic backdrop. The hides are also fitted out with reclining chairs positioned next to the windows, there are also beds with sleeping bags and pillows so you can catch some sleep if wildlife is being slow to arrive. There is also a dry toilet inside, and as there are bears around here once we are in the hides we are in the hides until dawn. There is also an amplified audio system which plays the sounds in the nearby forest, this is a good early warning sign for approaching wildlife so you can get into position in time for the animal to make an appearance.

---

## Day 3 **Kontiovaara Area** *Wildlife Watching*

### Accommodation:

Wolverine Hide  
(Pro-photography  
Hide)

### Food:

Breakfast is served at the hotel and field snacks taken into the hide in the evening. Lunch at the hotel is not included today.

### Transportation:

Private vehicle &  
Walking.

Early this morning you will leave the pro-hide and head back to the hotel for breakfast and a rest. There is around 16-17 hours of daylight here in April - May and as a result the nights in the pro-hide can be very long and if there is a good amount of activity from wolverines and possibly early emerging brown bears as well as the slim possibility of wolves or even the very rare and elusive lynx you will be much in need of a short rest, before more wildlife watching later on.

After a break you will be taken to some close by nature reserves within the local region to look for wildlife (as described in day 2). Then later on in the afternoon we will head back to the lodge for lunch and then back to the pro-hide for a second night hopefully watching wolverines and bears. The night will follow the same plan as yesterday.

---

## Day 4 **Patvinsuo National Park** *Wildlife Watching*

### Accommodation:

Wolverine Hide  
(Pro-photography  
Hide)

### Food:

Breakfast is served at the hotel and field snacks taken into the hide in the evening. Lunch at the hotel is not included today.

### Transportation:

Private vehicle &  
Walking

This morning you will once again leave the pro-hide and head down to the hotel for breakfast and a rest, the same as yesterday. After a rest and breakfast you will leave the lodge and head further into the Fennoscandia wilderness areas and we will be looking for wildlife again. Today you will visit one of the larger national parks in the area, Patvinsuo. The park is mostly marshland with birch forest and is home to an array of bird species, it may be possible to see osprey and common cranes here as they return after the winter further south. There is also the chance of moose here in the marshes. After hiking around here and visiting the watch tower we will head back to the hotel for lunch before returning to the wolverine hide for your final night in Finland and your last opportunity for wolverine photography.



## Day 5 Home

## Departure

### Accommodation:

NA

### Food:

Breakfast at the hotel is the only meal included today.

### Transportation:

Private vehicle & International flight.

This morning you will be collected from the hide and taken to the hotel for your breakfast and to freshen up and pack before departing to the airport in time to catch your return flight home.

### Your tour and all Royle Safaris services end upon transfer to the airport

Please note that the itinerary stated above is correct as our planned intentions for the tour. However adverse weather conditions and other local considerations can necessitate some modifications of the itinerary during the course of the tour; any changes will be made to make the best of the time, weather conditions and other constraints forced upon us and all changes will be made in conjunction with our terms and conditions.

### Tour Inclusions

Absolutely everything mentioned in the above itinerary is included (except where it is expressly mentioned as an optional extra).

- All accommodation as mentioned above or of a similar standard as mentioned.
- All meals as mentioned in the itinerary; ***please note that some lunches and dinners are not included in this itinerary, and some meals are made up of packed snacks in the field or hides.***
- Bottled mineral or purified (boiled) water will be provided throughout and on request.
- Private vehicle for all transfers and wildlife watching drives.
- English speaking local driver and guide with years of experience in working in the areas we are travelling.
- All fuel, tolls, taxes and other expenses relating to driving.
- All wildlife watching activities, guided walks, and other activities as mentioned in the itinerary.
- Use of the pro-photography wolverine hide and one man tent / hides for some bird watching sites.

### Tour Exclusions

Nearly everything you will need is included in the price you have already paid for the tour. However there are some things not included.

- Flights to and from the tour start and end points.
- Travel insurance including any fees that result from emergency medical or evacuation needs.
- Visa fees for entering the country(s).
- Vaccinations and any medication are not included.
- Any food or drink other than the meals provided and mentioned in the above itinerary; ***please not that some lunches and dinners are not included in this itinerary.***
- Any items of a personal nature are not included, such as souvenirs, medication, toiletries, laundry and phone calls.
- Tips are also not included. The guides in Finland will not expect a tip, however this is down to your decision and if you think your local guide has been above and beyond you are free to tip accordingly.
- Any departure taxes which may be due when leaving are not included (but may be included in the cost of your flights).

**Please refer to our Terms & Conditions (<http://www.royle-safaris.co.uk/terms-conditions/>) before booking any trips – email or paper copies of Terms & Conditions can be provided if needed**