



## **FINNATURE'S SELF-DRIVE TOURS - USEFUL INFORMATION & TIPS**

Finnature's self-drive tours are an excellent way to get to know Finland's birds, wildlife and landscapes. During a self-drive tour, you get to explore interesting sites independently by car - it is a great way to combine the best birdwatching and wildlife watching in Finland!

Here we have compiled our recommendations and information about interesting birding and landscape sites to visit on your tour. We have included sites in the centres of our self-drive tour: Oulu, Kuusamo and wildlife sites in Eastern Finland, but also sites in between these centres so you can break up the journey and long drives. But remember - in the end, you decide where to stop.

Driving in Finland is pretty straightforward with our low traffic and straight roads. However, some of the sites are located in areas with low mobile phone coverage. We recommend to download offline maps for the areas you are traveling to. Some of the sites are in remote places so we recommend to shop and refuel in towns near by. Remember to also take the driving time into consideration when planning your stops - you don't want to be late from your birding or wildlife meetings!

**Combining birdwatching and wildlife watching  
in Finland is easy with Finnature!**



**For more information:**

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**Official Package travel trader (Organiser) and  
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## Oulu

Oulu offers some of the best opportunities for birdwatching in Finland. Birdwatching in the area is easy, thanks to several birdwatching towers and boardwalks.

### GUIDED BIRDWATCHING EXCURSION IN OULU

Our guided birdwatching excursion is a great way to see interesting birds. The highlights are of course Owls that we hope to find, but also Woodpeckers and Grouse.

**Excursion includes:** Guiding and transportation for max. 8 hours, hot drinks & biscuits

**Meeting point:** parking area of [Finlandia Hotel Airport Oulu](#), address Vihiluoto 10, Kempele

**Meeting time:** Early morning at 3.00 am

**Contact information:** Pasi Pieniniemi +358 40 5343064

### Recommended birdwatching sites in Oulu region

#### Birdwatching towers in Oulu region

There are 24 birdwatching towers and platforms in Oulu and its surroundings. Check the map and descriptions from [here](#).

#### Liminka Bay nature reserve

We recommend to make a visit to the most important wetland area in Finland, Liminka Bay nature reserve. Five birdwatching towers around the Bay offer excellent views over the landscape and birds - highlights being Pallid Harrier, Ruff in breeding plumage, Common Crane and White-tailed Eagle. Start from the Liminka Bay Nature Centre to get more detailed information and be sure to also have enough time to visit the wonderful interactive exhibition there!

**Liminka Bay Nature Centre:** Rantakurvi 6, Liminka

More information about the [birdwatching towers](#) and about [Liminka Bay Visitor Centre](#).

#### Hietasaari

Another interesting site for a birding outing is Hietasaari island near Oulu city centre. You can either drive or walk there from the city via walkway bridges. Hietasaari has lush coastal forests where species such as Lesser-spotted Woodpecker, Woodcock, Wood Warbler, Stock Dove and many common forest birds thrive - sometimes Thrush Nightingale or Blyth's Reed Warbler are found here as well. Take a walk through the coastal forests or the sandy beach in Nallikari - this is a popular visiting site although might not offer exciting experiences birdwise!

**Hietasaari parking area:** Johteenkuja, Oulu

Map to [Hietasaari](#).



#### Hailuoto

[Hailuoto](#) is the largest island in the Bothnian Bay just off Oulu city, and a beautiful outing destination all year round. Take the free ferry to the island from Oulunsalo. The coastline of Hailuoto offers good resting and nesting areas for waders, and the atmosphere at Hailuoto is unique - like on many islands. We recommend to visit the west point of the island - Marjaniemi. Lighthouse, small fisherman cabins and sand dunes make a picturesque environment. Take the short boardwalk among the dunes and enjoy the island feeling! Marjaniemi is a good vantage point during bird migration season and the sand dunes provide nesting area for Arctic Terns, for example. The boardwalk might hide migrating passerines such as Bluethroats or Skylarks. Other good spots to look for waders and waterfowl are Kirkkosalmi birdwatching tower just south of Hailuoto village, and Potinlahti Bay which is located a few kilometres along the road from the ferry.

**Address for the ferry:** Riutunkari, Oulunsalo

**Timetables for [the ferry](#).**

**Hailuoto lighthouse:** Marjaniementie 803, Hailuoto. For more information about the [lighthouse](#).

**Potinlahti Bay:** Link to [googlemaps](#)

**Kirkkosalmi birdwatching tower:** Viinikantie 143, Hailuoto.

Information about [Kirkkoniemi birdwatching tower](#) in Hailuoto.

### Recommended stops on the way from Oulu to Kuusamo

The distance between Oulu and Kuusamo is 215 kilometres and about 3 hours drive. We recommend to break the drive with stops along the way:

#### Hirvisuo mire reserve

Hirvisuo is a vast open bog area located immediately along the road 20 between Oulu and Kuusamo. Here is a 1km long nature trail that takes you to the bog. Typical species here are Hobby, Yellow Wagtail, Common Crane, Taiga Bean Goose and Golden Plover - you might even see Golden Eagle soaring the skies.

**Hirvisuo parking area:** Kuusamontie 2557, Oulu

#### Syöte National Park

The fell Iso-Syöte is the southernmost fell in Finland - meaning that trees do not grow on top of this hill. Most of all, Syöte National Park is a beautiful Taiga forest and mire area, and home to many birds: Hazel Grouse, Willow Grouse, Capercaillie, Siberian Jay, Three-toed Woodpecker - even the Red-flanked Bluetail. We especially recommend to stop at the Syöte Nature Centre and to make a short walk in Vattukuru gorge.

**Syöte National Park visitor centre:** Erätie 1, Pudasjärvi. More information about [Syöte National Park](#).



## Kuusamo

Kuusamo is a wonderful birding destination in Finland. Here it is all about Taiga forested hills and numerous lakes, and the landscapes form a contrast to the flat and open west coast near Oulu.

### GUIDED BIRDWATCHING EXCURSION IN KUUSAMO

Our guided birdwatching excursion in Kuusamo takes you to the expansive Taiga forests to look for eastern and northern bird specialties of Finland: Siberian Jay, Siberian Tit and Rustic Bunting among others.

**Excursion includes:** Guiding and transportation for max. 8 hours, hot drinks & biscuits

**Meeting point:** Parking area of [Karhuntassu Tourist Centre](#), Torangintaival 2, Kuusamo

**Meeting time:** Early morning at 3.00 am

**Contact information:** Mikko Oivukka +358 40 7089722

### Recommended birdwatching sites in Kuusamo

#### Valtavaara / Konttainen parking area

We recommend to make a morning drive to Valtavaara / Konttainen parking north of Kuusamo - it is a good way to start the day and you might even find Grouses along the road sides on the way.



Around the parking area, you'll have good chances for some beautiful Taiga birds: Three-toed Woodpecker, Pine Grosbeak, Red-flanked Bluetail and Siberian Jay all inhabit the forest areas here. The old-growth forested hills are beautiful and a hike to the top of Valtavaara or Konttainen hills will reward you with vast and wild landscapes.

#### Valtavaara / Konttainen parking area:

Virkkulantie 43, Kuusamo

For more information about [Valtavaara](#).

#### Oulanka National Park

Another good destination is the vast Oulanka National Park north of Kuusamo. The river valleys, Taiga forest, mires, gorges and groves here offer variable habitat for many forest birds. The visitor centre is a perfect starting point, and the trail from there takes you along Oulanka river to Kiutaköngäs rapids. On the walk, common forest birds such as Goldcrest and Common Redstart might delight you, or even the Hazel Grouse or Parrot Crossbill. Usually the rapids is home to White-throated Dipper and Grey Wagtail. In late May / early June, the rare Calypso Orchid can be found blooming along the path!

#### Oulanka National Park visitor centre:

Liikasenvaarantie 132, Kuusamo

More information about [Oulanka National Park](#). Please check the opening hours in advance.



#### Lakes around Kuusamo town: Kuusamo Lake and Toranki Lake

The big lakes around Kuusamo town are worth checking!

At Kuusamo Lake, the beautiful Red-necked Grebe is a common sight. Usually, you can also find Yellow Wagtail and Wood Sandpiper here as well, and sometimes Peregrine or White-tailed Eagle can be seen soaring in the sky. Muskrats are plentiful on the shores. If you make your visit early in the morning, you might even find Willow Grouse on the bog sides nearby!

There are several spots where you can check these lakes around Kuusamo town, but you can start from the birdwatching towers:

#### Birdwatching tower at Vihtasalmi by Lake Kuusamo:

Nearest address Venevalkamantie 3, Kuusamo / Link to [googlemaps](#)

At Toranki Lake, you might find the stunning Smew and Black-throated Diver in breeding plumage amongst the more common Tufted Ducks and Common Goldeneyes. Make a walk at the walkway along the lake shore or just pop in to the birdwatching tower.

**Birdwatching tower by Lake Toranki:** nearest address Luomantie or Jatatie, Kuusamo / Link to [googlemaps](#)

#### Rääpyslampi Lake

Driving north of Kuusamo, the small Rääpyslampi Lake just opposite the road 81 to Rovaniemi is a good location for Velvet Scoter in most years - depending when they arrive from their migration. It is also not uncommon to find Smew or Whooper Swan here.

#### Rest stop Rantalahti along the road E63 for a vantage point to Rääpyslampi:

Nearest address Kemijärventie 104 / Link to [googlemaps](#)

#### Vuotunki Lake

North-east of Kuusamo lies the beautiful Vuotunki Lake to look for wildfowl and shore birds. For example, here you might find Greater Scaup, Red-necked Grebe, as well as Ruff and Smew in breeding plumage! Take a picnic lunch with you and make a stop at this pretty lake.

#### Vantage point at Vuotunki Lake:

Nearest address Vuotungintie 328, Kuusamo / Link to [googlemaps](#)



## KARHU KUUSAMO

The basic self-drive tour includes one night in a Brown Bear watching hide in Kuusamo. You will meet a local guide who assists you in this northernmost Bear watching place in Finland. This is an overnight experience, from the hides you will return to the cars around 8.00 am.

Preferably wear dark-coloured clothes to avoid reflection from the windows. Please take something to drink and eat during the stay. Welcome to Kuntilampi!

**Meeting point:** Kuntijärventie 127, Kuusamo

**Meeting time:** 5:45 pm

**Contact information:** +358 50 543 2022

([basic self-drive tour ends here](#))



## Practical information for the self-drive tour

<b>People:</b>	Finland has appr. 5.5 million inhabitants; Finns are friendly and welcoming nation
<b>Language:</b>	Finnish, Swedish and Sami are the official languages; English is widely spoken
<b>Currency:</b>	Euro; international bank and credit cards are widely accepted
<b>Tipping:</b>	Gratuity is always included in the bill and therefore tipping is not required; applies to everything: restaurants, taxis, cafés, room service etc.; however if you feel like you have received great service, most Finns appreciate a tip and will gladly accept it
<b>Internet:</b>	Free wifi is available in most accommodation establishments
<b>Cell phones:</b>	GSM system covers the majority of the country and has 3-4G coverage in the main centers. Note that Finnature tours will travel in areas without coverage
<b>Electricity:</b>	Finnish electric standards are European (50Hz, 240 volts) so British or North American devices will require adapters; plugs are two-pinned
<b>Drinking water:</b>	Finland has a very clean and healthy potable water system; bottled mineral water is available in all stores if preferred
<b>Safety:</b>	Normal precautions are enough
<b>Everyman's rights:</b>	Freedom to roam; it is a right protected by the law that allows everyone to sleep, eat and walk everywhere in nature, and to enjoy but it is also an obligation to take care of nature

### Take with you

In May and June the weather in Finland can be variable and it is wise to **bring warm layers with you**. The nights in May can drop below zero degrees (rare) - but in contrast we've had + 30 °C as well! It is advised to take equipment suitable for variable temperatures but a base layer and an outer layer are usually sufficient. Wind- and waterproof jackets and trousers are a good choice, and so are a woollen sweater, hat or a cap, a neck buff and gloves, and hiking boots as shoes.

**Mosquitoes** start to hatch usually in the end of May and an insect repellent will become useful then. Insect repellent is readily available in stores and gas stations in Finland.

**Bring your own binoculars with you.** Our guides will have telescopes with them on our birdwatching excursions.

## Pre- and post-tour hides

Here you will find information about optional pre- and post-tour hide sessions.

### EAGLE OWL HIDE IN LIMINKA

You will meet our local guide who will guide you to the Eagle Owl hide for an exciting night. This is an overnight experience and you may leave the hide in the morning between 7.00 am - 12.00 noon. Preferably wear dark-coloured clothes. Please take something to drink and eat during the stay.

**Meeting point:** Parking area of [Liminka Bay Visitor Centre](#), Rantakurvi 6, Liminka

**Meeting time:** 12th / 19th May, early evening at 18.00 pm

**Contact information:** Finnature office will send guide information individually



## Kuhmo - post-tour wildlife hide

### Recommended stops on the way from Kuusamo to Kuhmo

If you continue your tour to Kuhmo for Wolf / Wolverine watching, the distance from Kuusamo to Wildlife Safaris Finland is 280 kilometres and about 4 hours.

#### Hossa National Park

Hossa National Park lies south of Kuusamo and is a vast wilderness area full of Pine forests and crystal-clear lakes. There are interesting rock paintings dating back thousands of years that tell the stories of shamanism. Start your stop at Hossa Visitor Centre for more information about the trails and outdoor possibilities - but we recommend especially the beautiful (although demanding) Julma-Ölkky nature trail.

**Hossa National Park visitor centre:** Jatkonsalmentie 6, Ruhtinansalmi

More information about [Hossa National Park](#).

### WILDLIFE SAFARIS FINLAND

Wildlife Safaris Finland is your destination in Kuhmo - here you will enter the wildlife hides for an exciting night with Wolves and Wolverines! Meet the local staff at Basecamp Kuikka at 15:00 pm and they will guide you to the hides. Entry for the overnight session to the hide is at 16.00 pm.

Preferably wear dark-coloured clothes. Please take something to drink and eat during the stay. You can rent a sleeping bag for the hide on the spot.

**Meeting point:** Wildlife Safaris Finland, Kiviekintie 938, Kuhmo

**Meeting time:** 18th / 25th May, 16.00 pm

**Contact information:** Sami +358 50 579 0947,

Lassi +358 40 038 0878

More information about [Wildlife Safaris Finland](#).

