

FLATANGER
GOLDEN & SEA EAGLES
NORWAY



20th - 27th FEBRUARY
2024

7 nights
£3250





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The BEST location to photograph

SEA EAGLES in Europe.

Bar none.

[And much more...]



...including

GOLDEN EAGLES

from a heated hide





and some
WOODLAND
CHARACTERS





THE RETREAT

FOR OUR SECOND RETREAT IN NORWAY, we would like to offer you an unrivalled opportunity to photograph two of Europe's most impressive birds, close-up, in a spectacular winter setting. And, of course, it's all delivered with our particular brand of hospitality. If you've not travelled with us before, that means making a home-from-home for you in a comfortable house, serving you with delicious meals. It's also about giving you the time, help and space to develop as a photographer, through practice and critique.

Amongst nature photographers, Ole Martin and Wenche Dahle's operation at Flatanger, 3 ½ hours north of Trondheim in central Norway, is considered *the* best place to photograph sea eagles in Europe. For over 20 years, Ole Martin has fed generations of local birds from the back of his boat and he is as familiar with their habits as they are with his. During two day time sessions timed to co-incide with the best light and sea conditions, he will take us to the best places in the complex of open and shaded fjords to make memorable, action-filled pictures. Better bring a spare card or two.

In more recent times, Ole Martin has successfully attracted golden eagles to a bait site which is served by a comfortable hide (blind) with heater. The golden eagle hide is quite near base and a 10 minute walk from where we park. You will be in before first light to avoid spooking the birds. It's a long day of exciting photography and you will have two sessions with these eagles.

Flatanger's appeal extends beyond these exciting raptors. In the sprawling boreal forest, with snow still on the ground, you will enjoy several sessions of quiet hide time to photograph red squirrels and a variety of small birds that are attracted to the food provided for them. And to round things off, Niall and Wenche, a rising star on the creative nature photography scene, will share their ideas and insights and show you new pathways to explore.





WHAT'S ON OFFER

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED in learning one of the particular skills Niall is known for (including field studio photography, "Colour Transects" or "Chocolate Bars"), take an [eLearning class](#) before the Retreat and have a chance to practise what you've learned in the field with him. The emphasis of this Retreat is on wildlife action photography and before we head out on the boat for the first time, we will make sure that your camera's autofocus is set up properly. Here's what we will work on:

- Fishing sea eagles in a variety of locations around Lauvsnes, Flatanger. The birds are attracted by "chumming" with whole fish and dive to pick the fish from the water's surface. Two four 3-4 hour sessions to correspond with good light and periods when the eagles are active.
- Golden eagle photography at an established bait site, from a hide. Two pre-dawn to afternoon sessions
- Red squirrels and a variety of woodland birds, photographed from permanent hides with natural-looking feeding stations. Minimum of two, five-hour sessions
- Landscapes featuring the shore, sea and sky
- An introduction to Wenche's and Niall's particular brands of multiple-exposure photography
- Regular critique sessions - group and private

“ *Ole Martin and Wenche's guest book reads like a who's-who of the nature photography scene. And for good reason.* ”



ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

YOUR ACCOMMODATION FOR THIS RETREAT is in two modern, Scandinavian-style houses 3 km apart, one owned by the Dahles and the other by their son, Vetle. We will take all our meals in the bigger one (right) as well as hold critiques there and you will be transported between the two as needed.

We can accommodate up to seven guests on this Retreat and there is no single room supplement.

Good food is at the heart of our Retreats, from breakfast through to after-dinner chocolates, all made by Charlotte. We take the view that even a good day is made better by the prospect of a lovely meal at the end of it. We eat largely vegetarian food at home but the range broadens to encompass all tastes on Retreat. She uses local ingredients, when they are available, in dishes that are delicious and imaginative without being fussy. Food allergies and intolerances are catered for sensitively when notified in advance on the booking form. Expect to eat well, for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Since we aren't beholden to hotel schedules, we time the meals to fit in around our photography. While we don't provide wine, beer or spirits, you will have the opportunity to buy them en-route from the airport or locally at the well-stocked Spar in Lauvsnes. But be prepared for Norwegian prices!



FINE FOOD
WITHOUT
FUSS.
AND IT'S
ONLY JUST
BREAKFAST
TIME.



FLATANGER

I FIRST VISITED OLE MARTIN AND WENCHE in the early-2000's just as their eagle enterprise was getting off the ground and attracting the attention of the likes of Staffan Widstrand, Brutus Ostling and Vincent Munier. It was where, shooting alongside Vincent, I first witnessed the potential of digital capture (and felt idiotic that I was still using film). I liked Ole Martin and Wenche as people and I liked their part of coastal Norway just as much. Almost 20 years later, nothing has changed.

Lauvsnes is the administrative centre of the Flatanger municipality and where we will be based. It's a prosperous community of fewer than 500 people, with a locally owned salmon farming and processing company, boat builder and ancillary services. Here, the low granite mountains drop abruptly into deep dark fjords alive with cod and mackerel. It's no wonder that the population of sea eagles here is amongst the densest in Europe. Far from seeing them as a problem, as is sometimes the case in Scotland, local farmers regard them more like over-grown gulls. After all, when there is so much tasty fish to catch why bother going after wooly lambs, especially when they live in the forests?

At 64 degrees north, the days in February are lengthening quickly. Sunrise is about 08:00 and the sun falls below the horizon about 17:00. The wild forest that crowds the lower





slopes of the hills - a mixture of Scots pine, birch, willow, aspen and rowan - is busy with hungry birds eager to take advantage of the plentiful supply of peanuts and sunflower seeds provided for them. The red squirrels, dressed for the cold in thick red coats prefer the hazelnuts.

The sea and its influence are ever-present here. It softens the blow of the northern winter and gives an edge to the soft summer air flowing down from the mountains. A satellite view of Flatanger reveals a coastline that looks like it has been shredded into 1400 islands and skerries. Indeed, you need to travel a good distance from Lauvsnes before, eventually, reaching the open Norwegian Sea.

The sea eagles - *havørn* - however, have all they need in the waters around Lauvsnes. Fjords, which are essentially flooded valleys, come in all shapes and sizes here and one in particular offers the possibility of taking backlit photos with a deep black background to show every drop of water falling from an eagle - or herring gull. Regardless of the subject, the spectacle is breath-taking.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Price: GBP 3250, 20th- 27th February 2024.

What's included:

- 7 nights' accommodation at Lauvsnes
- Transfers from and to Steinkjer railway station as well as transport during the Retreat
- All hide and boat fees for the sessions described here
- All meals during the Retreat from dinner on Tuesday 20th February until breakfast on Tuesday 27th February 2024
- Tuition from Niall Benvie and a class with Wenche Dahle.

What's not included:

- Your travel to and from Steinkjer
- Alcoholic drinks

- Travel insurance
- Additional excursions, eg to fish farm
- Online learning before the Retreat.

Travelling to and from the Retreat

Since guests typically arrive from different parts of the world we will have one pick-up time, at Steinkjer Railway station, mid-afternoon on the 20th February. We will let you know the exact time closer to departure. You can take a train from Trondheim airport to Steinkjer. We aim to return you to the Steinkjer railway station by mid-day on 27th February. The Retreat starts with dinner on the 20th and finishes after breakfast on the 27th. You may wish to stay in Trondheim the night before the Retreat starts and/or on the night it ends. The journey from and to the airport, if you are driving, takes about 3 ½ hours. The drive between Steinkjer to Lauvsnes takes about 1 hour 20 minutes.

Where we will go

During the Retreat, we will be travelling only a short distance between our accommodation, boats, hides and coastal and mountain locations, mostly in the vicinity of Lauvsnes. When we find a good location, we likely to return once or twice until we've got the most out of it. Otherwise, we will be working from Ole Martin's boat (for sea eagles) or in hides in the forest.

The daily routine

Whatever we are shooting, it tends to look more attractive in the early morning or late evening when low-angled light shows relief and colours better. With dawn at around 08:00hrs and sunset just after 17:00 hrs, it's not a long day. If we go out for a dawn shoot, we will have a snack first then proper breakfast on return. Guided by Ole Martin's advice, we will make our plan for the following day the evening before and announce it at dinner, outlining the weather forecast, the locations and ideas for the next day, drive times, walking distances, where and when we'll eat and what gear you'll

probably need. Experience has taught that it's more productive—and satisfactory for you—to have a plan to follow rather than improvising.

We've learned over the years, too, just how much guests value being able to discuss the work they are creating, with Niall and other guests and to this end, we'd urge you to bring a laptop. While the emphasis is on review, Niall will advise on post-production too. We have a follow-up Zoom meeting a couple of weeks after the Retreat for a final review, to avoid eating into time on the Retreat.

Safety

We take your safety seriously during our Retreats. At locations with known risks—such as drop-offs, tree-roots, muddy shores and embarkation points—we will draw your attention to them before we set out. On the boats, you will be issued with a survival suit and given safety instructions by Ole Martin. Thereafter, you are responsible for your

own safety and that of your equipment. We provide guests with a hi-vis vest to attach to their camera pack; it makes you, and it, easier to locate. We also issue guests with a two-way radio in order that we may keep in touch in a situation where the group can scatter. This also makes it easier to access help or guidance from Niall. We do not recommend leaving any equipment in our vehicle overnight. We can accommodate various levels of fitness and most walking on this Retreat is at low levels, on trails. Those who want to climb for an overview can do so with a guide.

COVID

At the time of writing, the threat from COVID has receded. Nevertheless, if there is a resurgence, we will require guests to conform to the statutory guidelines pertaining at the time.

Spending money

If you would like to carry cash (although Norway has long since "gone plastic"), you can withdraw

some during the journey from the airport.

Insurance

It is a requirement of booking that guests provide evidence of personal travel insurance to cover cancellation and curtailment, medical and emergency expenses (including repatriation), personal accident, injury and death in addition to loss of/damage to luggage and possessions, personal possessions and flight cancellations/ delays.

Passport and visa requirements

Norway is a member of the Schengen Agreement area and as such, there are no visa requirements for citizens of that area. Visitors from the UK, US, Canada and Australia **do not currently require** a visitor's visa and they will probably not be introduced until November 2023. But do check when booking your airline tickets. A passport valid for at least six months beyond the length of the stay is required for non-Norwegian visitors and the passport you present must not have been issued

more than 10 years before the date of your return. You should also check your insurance in respect of COVID claims.

Language

Norwegian is the native language but English is spoken widely, including by our hosts.

Climate

It's March so don't expect it to be very warm, especially when we are out on the water. Snow-free winters are still something of a rarity up here so it's best to plan for cold conditions. The early mornings are likely to be cold but on sunny days, the temperatures could reach four or five °C. Rain or shine, we have strategies to make interesting work.

Clothing

Prepare for cold weather. You should have: proper walking boots or, ideally, neoprene wellingtons; waterproof trousers; a waterproof shell; a down jacket or fleece; and thermals. You might not need them

but it's not so easy to buy things locally. A windproof hat and liner and fold-down mitt/ liners combination will keep head and hands warm. It's a good idea to have a waterproof bag for your pack or the bag that you want to take on the boat. Space is at a premium though, so bring only what you will likely use. You may want something smarter for the evenings. We ask that guests wear slippers or indoor shoes in the accommodation. It's the Norwegian way, after all.

Equipment

If you are travelling by air (as we will be), you may be concerned about carry-on luggage restrictions. The way round this Niall has used for many years is to pack as much gear as you reasonably can into a photographer's waistcoat. This counts as a garment, not hand luggage, and you can still take your carry-on allowance into the cabin. Equipment you'll need during the Retreat:

- If possible, please bring a laptop with Lightroom/PS, CaptureOne or Affinity Photo

- A telephoto zoom, eg. 100 - 400 mm, is generally better than a fixed telephoto when we are photographing the eagles. A telephoto in the range of 300 - 500 mm is good for the hide work. For landscapes, a 24 -70 mm or its equivalent is useful and versatile
- You'll need a tripod, especially for work at dusk. Ole Martin provides Arca Swiss compatible gimbals in the hides
- Please pack a head torch, for safety and navigation
- We recommend, at the very least, YakTrax for your boots, or micro-spikes, to reduce the risk of slipping on ice
- A walking pole or staff is useful in the hills
- Bring all the chargers, cards, batteries and backup media you need, plus appropriate adaptor if you're travelling from outside the EU. Norwegian power sockets deliver 220 volts and accept the Europlug types C and F.

- A polarising filter and graduated ND's—only if you have them
- Hand warmers—which help to prolong your battery's life. And make your work more comfortable.

About us

After many years leading tours and workshops for other companies at home and abroad, Niall and Charlotte Benvie established Food and Photography Retreats in 2018. Our offer combines cultivating your photography in attractive locations with great hospitality, conversation and food.

Niall has been a professional photographer, writer, designer and guide for 30 years with a massive publication record including six books and hundreds of articles. He has been involved in founding and running several of the biggest outdoor photographic initiatives of the last decade, including Meet Your Neighbours, Wild Wonders of Europe and 2020VISION and is recognised for the innovative nature of his work – and capacity for re-invention.



For 28 years, **Charlotte** combined a career in the Civil Service with freelance catering and hosting roles before coming to work with husband, Niall. Guests value not only her expertise in the kitchen and dining room but her attention to detail and warmth. She has a keen eye for a picture too and can also assist with Lightroom processing. She is a trained chocolatiere and between Retreats sells her work in France.



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