

# THE FLATANGER SEA EAGLES, NORWAY



6 - 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2023  
seven nights, £3200

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FOOD AND  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
RETREATS™

*with the Bennevis*

WD

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The BEST location to photograph  
SEA EAGLES in Europe.  
Bar none.  
[And much more].





## THE RETREAT

FOR OUR FIRST RETREAT IN NORWAY, we would like to offer you an unrivalled opportunity to photograph one of Europe's most impressive birds, close-up, in a spectacular fjord 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 four sessions - two morning and two evening ones - he will take us to the best places at the best times in the complex of open and shaded fjords to make memorable, action-filled pictures. Better bring a spare card or two...

But Flatanger's appeal extends beyond these exciting raptors. In the sprawling boreal forest, with spring recently arrived, you will have 3 five-hour sessions of quiet hide (blind) 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 fish parts but are often seen catching fish directly from near the water's surface. Two morning and two evening sessions to correspond with good light and periods when the eagles are active.
- Red squirrels and a variety of woodland birds, photographed from permanent hides with natural-looking feeding stations. Three, five-hour sessions.
- Woodland photography with birch and other deciduous trees leafing out, and flowers of the boreal forest.
- 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

**Y**OUR ACCOMMODATION FOR THIS RETREAT is in two modern, Scandinavian-style houses about 1km 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. It is highly unlikely we will have snow!

We can accommodate up to seven guests on this Retreat and there is no single 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. But be prepared for Norwegian prices!





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

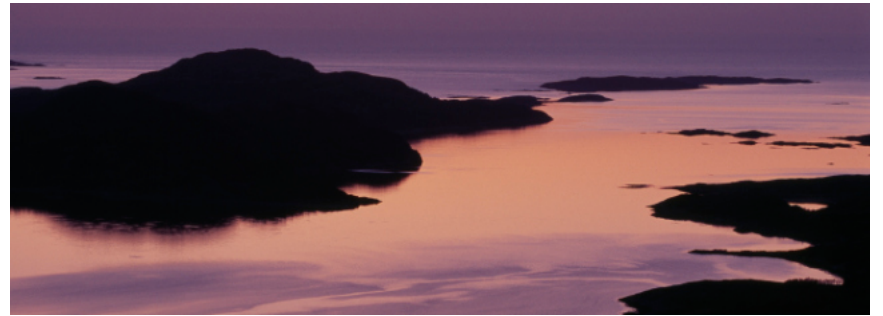


## FLATANGER

I FIRST VISITED OLE MARTIN AND WENCHE in the mid-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 them as people and I liked their part of coastal Norway just as much.

Lauvsnes is the administrative centre of the Flatanger municipality and where we will be based. 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 woolly lambs, especially when they live in the forests.

At 64 degrees north, the days in May are long, but spring is slow to creep this far north. Nevertheless, the wild forest that crowds the lower slopes of the hills - a mixture of Scots pine, birch, willow, aspen and rowan - is stirring to life again and buds are bursting. Having exhausted their winter stores, the red squirrels are hungry and eager to come for the nuts we provide.





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.

But we'll not be going near there as the sea eagles, *havørn*, 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 a herring gull. Regardless of the subject, the spectacle is breath-taking.

I once lost my camera pack in a forest near Lauvsnes. Keen to get pictures of sheep grazing in a woodland setting, I put down my heavy pack and followed the bells, with only a camera. After five minutes of pursuit, I just couldn't find my way back. It took a lot of retracing of steps before I recovered it, five hours later. These are forests to take care in where it's best to stick to the trail. If you have the energy, you can ascend through the pine and birch to reach the willow zone and, from there, look out over a landscape where culture is concentrated on the coastal margins and wildness prevails inland.



## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Price: GBP 3200, 6<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

### **What's included:**

- 7 nights' accommodation at Lauvsnes.
- Transfers from and to Trondheim airport (TRD) 3 ½ hours away as well as transport during the Retreat.
- All meals during the Retreat from dinner on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May until breakfast on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May.
- Tuition from Niall Benvie and a class with Wenche Dahle.

### **What's not included:**

- Your travel to and from Trondheim.
- Alcoholic drinks.
- Travel insurance.
- 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 Trondheim airport, at 14hr00 on the 6<sup>th</sup> May. We aim to return you to the airport at mid-day on the 13<sup>th</sup> May. The Retreat starts with dinner on the 6<sup>th</sup> and finishes after breakfast on the 13<sup>th</sup>. 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 from Lauvsnes takes about 3 ½ hours.

### **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 like 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 04:00 hrs and sunset just after 22:00 hrs, it's a long day, but one punctuated with proper rest periods when your time is your own. If we go out for a dawn shoot, we will have a snack first then proper breakfast on return. And if we are going to be out in the evening, we'll take an early dinner first.

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 and Niall will post your five favourite pictures from the Retreat in a private gallery on our Photoshelter site for the other participants to see.

### **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 lifejacket 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 all 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 over-view can do so with a guide.

#### **COVID**

Each guest is required to have completed a course of vaccinations and to have had a booster if it is recommended or mandated by the Norwegian government. We *may* ask you to wear a mask when we are travelling in the vehicle but only if there are any vulnerable guests. We will provide hand sanitiser at entry points to our accommodation.

#### **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. 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 might be May, but don't expect it to be terribly warm, especially when we are on the water. The early mornings are likely to be cold but on sunny days, the temperatures could reach double (°C) figures. Rain or shine, we have strategies to make interesting work.

#### **Clothing**

Prepare for cold weather, although the possibility of snow at sea level at this time of year is remote. You should have: proper walking boots; 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 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 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.
- Please pack a head torch, for safety and navigation.
- 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 widely 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 her 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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