



Autumnal Bears

Photographic tour with tour leader Ellie Rothnie

18th - 23rd September 2026

Trip Overview

Group size:

The trip accommodates a maximum of 8 guests.

Cost: £2,095. Deposit: £495.

Cost includes:

Airport transfers, accommodation, all meals, use of hides.

Cost excludes:

International flights, alcohol, and sundry items.

Accommodation:

Our guest house is set amongst the forest and is based on twin rooms very comfortable for the remote location.

Single supplements are very limited and on the expensive side so do enquire on a first come first asked basis.

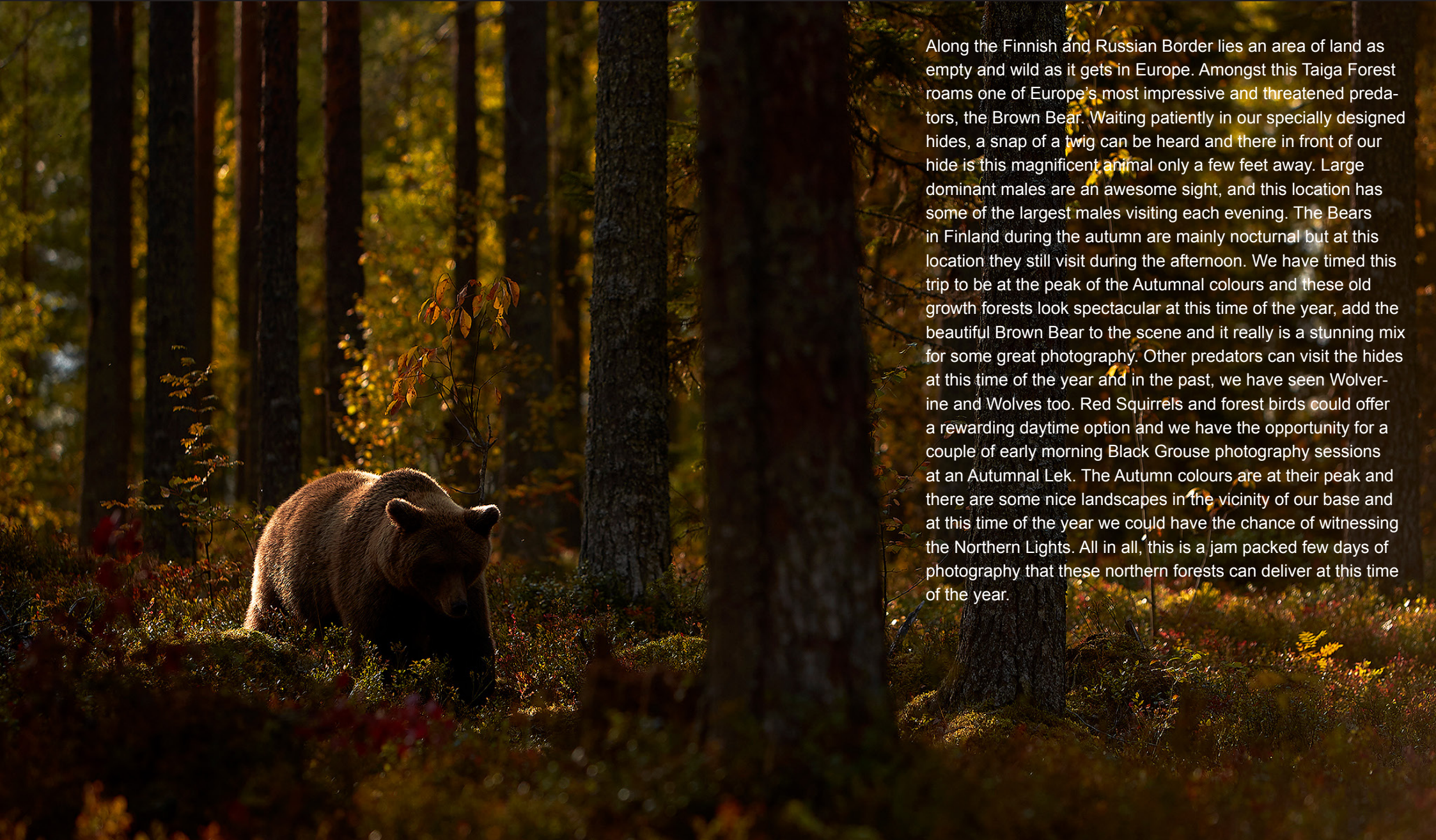
Level of Fitness:

The forest walk to the hides is only a short distance. You will only be in the bear hides for a few hours in the afternoon so no overnight stays. This is an easier trip than our usual summer trips because of the short time in the hides.

LEVEL 1



Trip Overview

A large brown bear is walking through a forest with autumn foliage. The bear is in the lower left of the frame, moving towards the right. The forest floor is covered in low-lying plants with yellow and red leaves. Tall, thin tree trunks are visible in the background, and the sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a warm, golden glow. The bear's fur is a mix of brown and black, and it appears to be looking down at the ground as it walks.

Along the Finnish and Russian Border lies an area of land as empty and wild as it gets in Europe. Amongst this Taiga Forest roams one of Europe's most impressive and threatened predators, the Brown Bear. Waiting patiently in our specially designed hides, a snap of a twig can be heard and there in front of our hide is this magnificent animal only a few feet away. Large dominant males are an awesome sight, and this location has some of the largest males visiting each evening. The Bears in Finland during the autumn are mainly nocturnal but at this location they still visit during the afternoon. We have timed this trip to be at the peak of the Autumnal colours and these old growth forests look spectacular at this time of the year, add the beautiful Brown Bear to the scene and it really is a stunning mix for some great photography. Other predators can visit the hides at this time of the year and in the past, we have seen Wolverine and Wolves too. Red Squirrels and forest birds could offer a rewarding daytime option and we have the opportunity for a couple of early morning Black Grouse photography sessions at an Autumnal Lek. The Autumn colours are at their peak and there are some nice landscapes in the vicinity of our base and at this time of the year we could have the chance of witnessing the Northern Lights. All in all, this is a jam packed few days of photography that these northern forests can deliver at this time of the year.

Itinerary



Day 1: We are all due to travel to Oulu airport in Finland via Helsinki where we will be met for the 4–5-hour transfer to our base for the duration of the trip. We'll arrive too late for any hide-based photography for the bears this evening. Over dinner we can discuss our plans for the trip ahead. (We will send out the flight recommendations nearer the time as the precise destinations can change based on flight schedules that year).

Day 2: After the long day travelling the day before I suggest you use this spare day to relax, ready for our first afternoon encounter with the bears. Breakfast and lunch will be served at certain times, and we will advise once there. We can spend the morning setting up a small feeding station for the local small birds and Red Squirrels. The small birds visiting the feeding station can be Crested Tit, Bullfinch and Siskin or we could walk to a lake and look for the autumn landscapes.

Dinner is around 1.00pm and then we get ready for the short journey to the bear hides. Each hide location offers completely different images, so a good mix is what we are looking for. The walk to the hides is short only 5 minutes or so. The forest hide is set in the pine trees and the activity can last all afternoon here as this is the first port of call for many of the bears; it is a beautiful setting in old growth pine trees. The other hide overlooks a swamp with beautiful colours and bears wandering across the open area. We also can photograph the bears along the shore of a small lake. We leave the hides at around 7.30pm as it is dark by then and so you don't spend the evening in the hides. We head back to base camp for a coffee and snack.

Itinerary



Days 3 – 5: Each afternoon follows the same routine and after lunch we transfer to our chosen hide for the Bear photography session. We must be in the hides by 2.00pm so by now we will be well into our routine. You will spend 4 afternoons in each of the hides so giving you a varied portfolio. You can have a couple of hours with the bird feeding station if you want it is your choice in the mornings after breakfast. If the weather conditions are favourable, we will have the opportunity of visiting an Autumnal Black grouse lek, this session is an early morning start. We must split the group to be able to accommodate us and will make plans for this once we are there. We can also have image review each day.

Day 6: After breakfast we will be returning to Oulu airport for our flights home.

Things to bring



Our accommodation is clean and comfortable with all bedding and towels provided so you simply need to bring yourself. Please let us know if you have any special dietary requirements that are not on your booking form. In terms of clothing, you'll obviously need plenty of warm and weatherproof clothing. Most of your time will be in the hides, but the weather is unpredictable in Northern Finland at this time of the year, and it could be cold. You won't need serious arctic gear for this trip, but the following are very much recommended - a good pair of strong waterproof boots or even better a good pair of wellington boots as it can be boggy walking to the hides, especially around the lake and to the Black grouse hides, good waterproof over-trousers. For the top half it's very much a question of having several layers – like a thermal type of vest, t-shirt, thin jumper, fleece and then a waterproof coat with a spare jumper or 2 at hand as well, you'll know your own cold thresholds, but it really is a question of building it up in layers. A good hat and some fingerless mittens/gloves are ideal. I would take a thermos flask for tea/coffee which you can fill up at the base and you may want to take chocolate bars or biscuits to nibble on whilst in the hides. Once you are in the hides there is no going out to the toilet so be prepared to use a small chemical toilet. The weather is difficult to predict at this time of the year it could be cold, or it could still be warm, if the latter then there will still be a few mosquitos around and so you must investigate buying some good mosquito repellent; most good camping stores sell good stuff nowadays and the mosquito nets/hats can be very useful as well. It is also worth bringing with you some antihistamine tablets in case you get bitten by the mozzies. We might be lucky and escape the mozzies, but you are in a northern boreal forest, and they can be a bit of a pest at times even during the Autumn!

Camera equipment



In terms of camera kit, you'll need the longest lens you have (300mm or 500mm + convertor would be my recommendation/choice) and then some supplementary lenses for other opportunities such as a 24-70mm for landscapes and an intermediate zoom (70-200 or 100-400) so that you don't miss anything. You'll get the chance to decide what you want/need each evening, so you won't be burdening yourself with it all the time either but the distances to the hides are not far. Regarding camera support tripods are not ideal in the hides because of the space they take up but there are superb devices to attach your tripod head to the shelf, so make sure you can detach your tripod head if you want to use these. Tripods though do come in handy if you want to work on the small bird feeding station or at this time of the year you can see the northern lights. Bring plenty of memory cards with you as well because if you get a good evening, you will take a lot of images.

In many hides the bears can come very close, so a 70-200mm range zoom would be very useful. A wide-angle lens can also be used in a couple of setups, so although the least used type of lens, there is a potential in a couple of the smaller hides. For longer lenses, depending on the hide setting and the type of image you would like, anything from a 300mm to 500mm + convertor will work for longer reach. A 100-400 type lens would cover a lot of bases but please keep in mind, the woodland hides can get dark very quickly, so slower, variable aperture lenses will struggle more compared to faster f2.8 or f4 lenses. A gimbal for your longer lenses will be useful. The hides all have the larger 3/8 screw threads in them, so tripods are not required. You can screw your heads straight to the shelf in the hide. Smaller threaded tripod heads, for smaller lenses, will not fit the screw mounts available. If you have a second body, this will be useful to avoid pulling lenses in and out of hide openings if bears/wolves are around. That way you can have one larger lens on a gimbal pointing out one opening and a smaller, mid-range zoom on a second body ready to go out of another.

Useful Contact Information

My contact number for the build up to and for the duration of the trip is:

Ellie: +44 (0)7879 480143



Please don't hesitate to contact me even if you think it is a minor question, I am here to help.



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