

# Nature tour: Pripyat National Park

Pripyat National Park is a barely known jewel of nature in the south of White Russia. Nature lovers can explore the untouched, virgin beech forests which are centuries old and study the unique flora and fauna of the various moor and swamp landscapes, where many extremely rare animal and plant species abound. Pripyat National Park is home to the largest population of greater spotted eagle (*Aquila clanga*) in Europe, while the whimbrel (*numenius phaeopus*) and the European golden plover (*pluvialis apricaria*) have their breeding grounds here. And entomologists will be extremely interested to see the habitat of the stag beetles (*lucanus cervus*).

The best time for ornithologists to visit Pripyat is in the spring, when flocks of birds migrate from the south and start nesting. Otherwise there is a large diversity of animals and plants waiting to be discovered in summer and late autumn. In winter it is quieter as the swamps and moors in the national park freeze over.



Pripyat view

## Day 1: Lyaskovichi

After arriving in the Prip'yat National Park, a local English-speaking biologist will take you to visit the lowland plains near the village of Lyaskovichi. During the autumn migration some species of curlew (*numenius arquatus*), ducks (*anatidae*), heron (*ardea L.*) and others make a stop-over here. The azure tit (*cyanistes cyanus*) is also to be found nesting in the marshlands.

In the afternoon we will explore the various types of forest in the national park, such as alder woods and fen woodland.

In the evening you will go on a boat trip (about 2 hours) on the Pripyat and its meanders. This will give you the chance to see various mammals which live here including Eurasian beavers (castor fiber), the Eurasian otter (lutra), mink (neovison vison) and others.

You will spend the night in a simple mid-range hotel in the national park.



Otter

## **Day 2: Ornithological discoveries in Pripyat National Park**

In the morning, your anglophone tour guide will drive you to a fishing cooperative with extensive ponds. During migration, tens of thousands of birds break the journey here. The Eurasian sea eagle (*haliaeetus albicilla*), black kite (*milvus migrans*) and others all nest close to the fishery. On the edge of this area there is an ancient forest, which has partially become a swamp. This is the only place in Belarus where the smew (*haliaeetus albicilla*) nests.

After this, we will continue our tour to Turov (Turau). We will take the ferry across the Pripyat to another part of the national park. Here we will visit protected oak woods, hornbeam woods and more. At dusk we may be able to see elk, deer and red deer.

In the evening we will stop at a simple, clean country hotel.



A swan family

### **Day 3: Turov**

Today our tour will take you to the so-called Turov meadows. This is a unique ecosystem through which thousands of birds pass in spring.

Afterwards we will wander through one of the wetlands which are so characteristic of the Pripyat. On our way we will stop for a picnic and go on an evening boat trip along the river, from where we will see various flood plains. One has a good view of the flood plain from a bridge near the village of Cherni.

We shall return to our hotel for the night.



Flower at sunset

#### **Day 4: Tsar's Scots Pine Forest. Departure**

Today you will make an excursion with your anglophone tour guide to the so-called Tsar's scots pine. The decaying trees in the woods around you provide a good habitat for woodpeckers and hazel grouse (*tetrastes bonasia*, synonym: *bonasa bonasia*). If you are very lucky you may also see the European bison here, or at least its tracks will be visible.

The tour continues to the floodplains of the Pripyat, where the azure tit nests. Finally we can visit a young forest not far from a nearby fishery and compare it with the various types of forest we have previously seen in the national park.

Now it is time to prepare your departure and we will be pleased to help organise this for you.



Prypyat footbridge