



Wild Globe Travel Consultancy

Tailored Wildlife, Wilderness and Adventure Travel Across the Globe.

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LITHUANIA AND LATVIA

Date - May 2026

Duration - 5 Days

Destinations

Kaunas - Klaipėda - Curonian Spit - Nida - Birutė Park - Liepāja - Nemunas Delta - Rusnė - Cape of Ventė - Dzūkija National Park

Trip Overview

Considering that the majority of this short tour was designed around the Curonian Spit and Nemunas Delta, its title is somewhat misleading, as the Latvia element basically included a rather nice lunch in Liepāja, which lies approximately 50 miles north of the Lithuanian border. I was initially hoping to spend two nights at each of the two main destinations, but the only flights from the United Kingdom arrived too late to make this possible and we therefore spent our first night at an airport hotel and travelled to the Curonian Spit early the next morning, where we sadly only had a single night. This was also the case at Dzūkija National Park, which was added at more or less the last moment, primarily to include the European bison conservation work that has been taking place there since 2022. With hindsight, this was the destination I would have preferred to have spent more time at, as it was by far the most authentically wild



and I had the feeling that a three or four-night stay would have been fairly productive, particularly if you devoted sufficient time to searching at night. As it was, the tour had been created purely as a daylight trip and we generally spent around fifteen hours in the field each day, basically from first light at around 5am to 10pm, with a couple of hours off to eat at lunchtime. However, Dzūkija was clearly so promising, we also added two hours spotlighting until midnight on our one night there and were almost instantly rewarded with the spellbinding view of a ravishing grey wolf, initially running through the forest beside our vehicle and then stopping to stare directly at us. It was by far the highlight of a trip that included several memorable encounters and with a few more days, and definitely a little more local knowledge, I could certainly organise at least a general wildlife tour in Lithuania, if perhaps not a major mammal expedition to rival say Poland, which lies directly to the west. In addition to the nine mammals that my partner Karina and I observed alive and well, we also sadly encountered several species dead on the road, including raccoon dog, northern white-breasted hedgehog and Eurasian badger, which we did actually see at Dzūkija as well, but only with the thermal imager. As is often the case, Lithuania is considered to be more a birding than mammal destination and the Nemunas Delta, or the Neman River Delta as it translates, is by far the largest of seven Lithuanian Ramsar sites, which basically means it is the most significant Wetland of International Importance in the country. As such, it attracts a host of both migratory and breeding birds and I understand that almost 300 different species have been recorded here, which equates to approximately 75% of the 400 or so birds that occur in all of Lithuania. Whilst most of our time was spent searching

for mammals, pretty much as always, we are both interested in wildlife in general and stopped to admire a variety of birds, including white-tailed eagles, common cranes, Eurasian curlews, a single grey partridge, various geese and woodpeckers and, as you would no doubt expect in this part of the world, a multitude of white storks. These impressive birds occur throughout the country and are commonly viewed perched on the artificial nesting platforms that are a feature of so many villages and towns across much of Europe. Several had young and we would occasionally see a tiny head peering out from the contrastingly massive nests, whilst adults took turns sitting on unhatched eggs and would fly down to feed between vigils in the surrounding meadows and fields. As much as we enjoyed the Nemunas Delta and the animals that do find at least some form of protection here, the area cannot be described as wild, as there is a huge hunting presence, indeed, there were more hunting towers than I have seen in Europe, and much of the landscape is devoted to agriculture. You actually have to drive through extensive farmland to reach the far smaller areas of protected habitat and even here the wooden shooting towers dominate almost every backdrop. You find yourself photographing moose within a few metres of where they are likely to be killed within just a few short months and at times it is difficult to escape the feeling that the majority of these areas are



being conserved more for the local hunters than the actual wildlife. The situation is somewhat better on the Curonian Spit, a 98-kilometre sand-dune spit shared between Lithuania and Russia in the Baltic Sea, but again, this is not true wilderness and it is extremely difficult to search for wildlife on the one busy road that traverses what feels like an island on the northern Lithuanian side. To be fair, there are a number of excellent walking and cycle paths to explore, but the spit is a major tourist destination during the spring and summer months and none of these are going to produce regular mammal sightings, at least not during the day. At night the situation is completely different of course and two of our more memorable encounters took place at dusk on our one night here, a first ever moose for Karina and a pair of massive wild boar. Accessed by car ferry from the relatively large city of Klaipėda, I had included the Curonian Spit primarily to show Karina a moose and was thrilled to not only spot one for her, but to be able to photograph it as well, as I was doing all of the driving and it can be extremely challenging to try to shoot more or less everything out of the driver's window. As such, I was sadly not as fortunate with the boar, as I had to turn the car slightly to give myself a view and as I lifted the camera, they both disappeared into the murk of the forest. As much as we enjoyed our short stay at what is a highly unusual and scenic location, Dzūkija National Park would prove to be our favourite major destination of the tour, as there are no hunting towers and the forest, in part at least, is clearly more intact than elsewhere. We largely searched without encountering another vehicle and although we were not destined to see any of the 44 European bison that have been released here to date, we did visit the extensive paddocks that the bison acclimatise in before being released. Most have been moved from other areas of Lithuania, as well as I believe from Poland and Belarus in order to maintain a healthy gene pool, and several had young, all of which should ultimately live and die in the wild. As previously mentioned, I would have preferred significantly longer at Dzūkija and although there are other areas of Lithuania I would also like to explore, if I do eventually return, I will book at least a three-night stay here. That said, and as much as we thoroughly enjoyed our short break in what is a tremendously pretty country, there are better locations to observe all of the species that occur in Lithuania and it would be difficult to imagine planning a longer mammal trip here, as opposed to say Poland or Romania.

Mammal Sightings

Order Carnivora - Family Canidae (Dogs - 2)

1. Grey Wolf - *Canis lupus*

As I have already alluded to, this was by far the most dramatic encounter of our short tour and one that will live long in the memory, particularly for Karina, who had never previously seen a European wolf. All wolves are beautiful to me, but this one was truly magnificent, with an almost entirely white coat, except for patches of grey and black fur. It was also as big as I have ever seen in Europe and was running, not at full speed, but not slowly either, until it stopped, more or less in its tracks, to look directly back towards my light, before finally backing off into the shadows. It was one of those utterly magical experiences that leaves you almost breathless and if this had been the only sighting of our entire visit, the trip would have still been more than worthwhile. It took place on our final night at Dzūkija National Park, where we decided to spend a couple of hours spotlighting for the first time, despite having started before 5am that morning. It would prove to be a long day, but an equally inspired decision and would again highlight the importance of spending time in the field at night, particularly in terms of hoping to observe carnivores.

2. Red Fox - *Vulpes vulpes*

On this occasion that philosophy would not need to apply to red foxes, which, although not exactly common, were observed at reasonably regular intervals throughout the tour. Indeed, our first sighting took place on the morning transfer from Kaunas to Klaipėda, where we were due to catch the ferry to the Curonian Spit, and only one of our seven encounters took place at night, when Karina picked a fox up with the thermal imager at Dzūkija National Park. Obviously, the likelihood is that we would have seen more if we had been searching at night, but this tour was not set up in that way and I was consequently happy to encounter as many of these habitually persecuted canids as we eventually did.



Order Artiodactyla - Family Cervidae (Deer - 3)

3. Moose - *Alces alces*

Apart from a highly improbable view of a Eurasian lynx at Dzūkija National Park, this was my main target for the trip, as Karina had never seen a moose and I had included two, if not exactly likely, then possible destinations for her to correct that. The first was the Curonian Spit, where we now had only one night due to issues with our arrival time and the subsequent transfer from Kaunas. A single night was certainly not ideal, especially when you consider we had decided that the entire tour would take place during natural daylight and that we would not do anything at night. The May Day holiday crowds were certainly not going to help either and I was almost resigned to having to wait until we moved on when I spotted a moose in the last few moments of evening light as we began the drive back towards our accommodation. It was initially slightly more visible than in the photograph below, but it moved back into the forest as soon as it became aware of our presence, at which point we realised there were actually two and that this considerably larger adult was with its calf from the previous year. In all we would enjoy three decent views of both animals, one of which was interrupted briefly by a couple of wild boar, and we moved on to the Nemunas Delta the next morning with no real pressure concerning this particular species. As it was, we would see four more there in any case, including one close to the side of a road at the beginning of a 5am drive and three more around one of the viewing towers within the delta, two from the tower itself on successive days and one at the very edge of the wetland, pretty much as per the roe deer image below.



4. European Roe Deer - *Capreolus capreolus*

The most commonly observed species by far, roe deer were encountered at every destination and always in healthy numbers, including around fifteen on our morning transfer from Kaunas to Klaipėda. Despite their abundance, I struggled in terms of a decent photograph, as distant shots were easy enough, but anything fairly close ran more or less as soon as I stopped the car and reached for my camera. It is always fairly tricky when you are driving and it is usually a case of trying to spot one at distance and then approaching as slowly and cautiously as possible. You only need one to comply of course and the picture at the top of this report was shot within a few metres of the bison enclosures at Dzūkija National Park, whilst the one below was taken amid the tall swaying grasses of the Nemunas Delta.



5. Red Deer - *Cervus elaphus*

This was a species I was not sure we would encounter, as red deer are not that commonly observed in the areas we visited, there are none at all on the Curonian Spit for example, and can be easier to see at night, when of course we were no longer looking. As it was, we would see two small herds at distance at the Nemunas Delta, one in the late evening and the second in the early morning.

Order Artiodactyla - Family Suidae (Pigs - I)

6. Wild Boar - *Sus scrofa*

Although I always hope to encounter one of my favourite European animals wherever they occur, this was one of the surprise sightings of the tour, as we both noticed a pair of boar whilst watching our only moose on the Curonian Spit. Sadly, they moved as I turned the car, but they were already clearly poised to bolt and at least we had an excellent, albeit brief, view of two of the largest boar I have ever seen. We would have almost certainly chanced upon more if we had been searching at night, as we encountered evidence of their digging and foraging across much of the spit and on most of our hikes at the Nemunas Delta.

Order Lagomorpha - Family Leporidae (Rabbits and Hares - I)

7. European Hare - *Lepus europaeus*

Before we travelled I had mentioned to Karina that we were going to see a lot of hares, as we both have a predilection for these striking creatures and they are usually one of the most commonly observed species in this part of the world. I was therefore fairly surprised that we would encounter just eight in total, at least in daylight, four at the Nemunas Delta and four at Dzūkija National Park, as well as probably two or three with the thermal imager during our one brief spotlighting session there. The picture that appears here was shot just before dusk at Dzūkija and the one on page eight was taken in the late morning on the edge of farmland within the Nemunas Delta.



Order Rodentia - Family Castoridae (Beavers - I)

8. Eurasian Beaver - *Castor fiber*

If I was surprised at how few hares we encountered, I was equally surprised by our four beaver sightings, as I travelled with just one reliable site for these incredible environmental engineers and our other encounters were all entirely a matter of chance. All four took place within the rough area of the Nemunas Delta and my original site did prove to be successful, where we watched a pair of beavers emerge from their lodge just after dusk to begin a night of foraging. Two others occurred within close proximity of a second observation tower within the delta, but the most surprising took place at the Cape of Ventė, where we watched a beaver swimming in the sea from a low concrete pier, approximately 180 metres from shore. I have heard of beavers swimming in saltwater previously, and even dying of salt toxicity as a result, but I have personally never observed this phenomenon and although I knew it was not the case, I even had to double check my photographs to confirm that it was not an otter.

Order Rodentia - Family Sciuridae (Squirrels - I)

9. Eurasian Red Squirrel - *Sciurus vulgaris*

As anyone who has spent a lot of time in Europe will testify, this can be a very difficult species to observe in its natural forest habitat and most sightings usually take place in parks or even formal gardens, where the squirrels are used to people. As such, I had included Birutė Park on the drive north to Liepāja in Latvia, where I knew red squirrels are relatively common. However, the park is large and with little more than an hour to spare, we would have needed to be fairly fortunate to see one, especially as we were visiting over the weekend and it was consequently crowded. Instead, Birutė provided us with a wonderful view of a grass snake, *natrix natrix*, swimming in one of the ornate garden lakes and we had to make do with a fleeting view of a squirrel scurrying across the road at the very end of our only morning drive on the Curonian Spit.

Excluding a Eurasian badger viewed with the thermal imager only and two unidentified bats, the second of which was observed as we boarded the plane to fly home.





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