

Let's enjoy the beauty of Estonian nature in Soomaa National Park and Viljandi!



Estonia is a country of contrasts. For such a small nation, Estonia is astonishing with its **diverse and untouched nature**. This is a place where the land meets the sea, bogs are interspersed with virgin forest, fields and fish-rich rivers and lakes. Add to this four seasons of immense variety.

One fact that most vividly speaks for Estonia's nature is that a quarter of Estonia's territory is designated as a **nature reserve**. Altogether, five national parks and hundreds of other preserves have been established to maintain nature's unique value. Practically all of them tempt nature lovers with numerous hiking trails, as well as bivouacking opportunities, and overnight stays in charming cabins.



Estonia might easily be called the kingdom of **bogs** since approximately one quarter of the country is covered in marshes. Over 10,000 years ago, bogs that began to evolve after the last ice age, have today become time capsules where pure, untouched nature is preserved. Bogs are a place of peace and quiet, a pleasant escape from the everyday life.

Below please find a brief description of what our day in nature might look like.



Our first stop will be in **Soomaa National Park**, which was founded in 1993 and is an extensive wilderness area in south-western Estonia, containing large peat-bogs and thick forests interwoven by numerous rivers and the floodplains that border them.

Soomaa is best known for having five unique seasons with the fifth season being the high-water season. The waters here are extraordinary. A number of local rivers from surrounding uplands, meet in a relatively small area between the bogs and swamp forests. Once or twice a year, when snows melt across the country, they fill with melt-water and break their banks.



In Soomaa National Park we will take a walk on the **Ingatsi hiking trail**. Approximately 2 hours on a 4 km of footpath along ancient forest and bog paths will take us through different types of bogs and forest. For crossing wet places there are wooden boards on the path.



During our walk we will have a chance to see the reserve where lots of species of fungi, vascular plants, lichen, dragonflies and fishes live and grow and which is also a safe habitat for birds (including eagles) and very many endangered species of flora and fauna. There is also an observation platform on the trail, where we can enjoy a breathtaking view of gnarled pines and beautiful bog.

Our next stop will be in **Viljandi** - an ancient city situated on a hill by a beautiful lake and a city which heart beats in ancient rhythm. This rhythm contains the past, the present and the future, creation and preservation. It represents centuries of life in this place, its strong cultural history and old traditions. Viljandi – it's the possibility to enjoy great holiday in an inland resort and it's ready to extend a greeting hand to visitors from all over the world.



In **Viljandi** we will have a guided tour in a centre of the former town of Hanseatic League and over the bridge to Viljandi Castle Hills in a height of 15 meters above the bottom of the valley before wandering in the ruins of Viljandi Order Castle, imagining the history with a beautiful and breath taking view down to the lake.

Viljandi has the honour of being the home of Estonian folk music. Each year the summer in Viljandi culminates with the annual Folk Music festival, which brings friends of folk music to town from all over the world. **Dinner** will be served in a cafe of the Estonian Traditional Music Center located at the foot of Viljandi castle hills



More information on Soomaa and Viljandi can be found at <http://www.soomaa.com/>, http://www.viljandi.ee/en_GB/general-information and <http://www.visitestonia.com/en>