Winter Eagle Photography Workshop – January 2016

We will journey to Flatanger, Norway, and to the home of Ole Martin Dahle, world-renowned as simply the best eagle guide in Europe. We will be staying in the beautiful village of Lausvnes (the image below was taken at the quayside where our boat is moored and where we eat each night), in a lovely spacious hostel with all mod-cons.

Accommodation will be in a mixture of single and double rooms, and the house (which we will have to ourselves) has a spacious kitchen and lounge, a very large collection of wildlife photography books, two immaculate bathrooms with laundry facilities, and two sun terraces looking down over the sea which is 50 metres away.

We will eat at a charming little local restaurant, the Zanzibar, most evenings: a lovely end to each long, tiring, yet hugely enjoyable day.

Ole provides insulated and waterproof all-in-one ‘sailing suits’ for the boat which are comfortable and warm to spend hours in. Please bring thermal trousers and a thermal top, plus walking trousers and a warm sweater, to wear underneath the sailing suit, plus a warm hat, scarf and gloves. These suits are pretty great for time in the hides, too, when camouflage is unimportant. A down jacket and maybe also down trousers will be important for the on-land days, although the hides have a small heater.

This is an extended trip, with 6 full days in Flatanger. We’ll fly to Trondheim on the 9th of January and fly back out again on the 16th.
Of those 6 days we will probably spend 3 days in the eagle hides, 1 day at a wildlife park photographing wolves, lynx, arctic foxes and other mammals, and 2 days on Ole’s boat photographing white-tailed eagles taking fish from the sea’s surface nearby. However, the itinerary is flexible, and there will be a little leeway to extend the hide time, or the boat time possibly, should your wishes, or the weather, make it desirable.

The hides are warm and comfortable (see below, though this is only one of several hides), with enough space for 5 photographers to set up their cameras on tripod heads bolted to a sturdy wooden bench. We will arrive before dawn, so the eagles and ravens don’t see us coming, set up our cameras by torchlight (lenses are poked through special holes in the hide walls), and then wait for the light. We can expect a few golden eagles to visit most days, as well as potentially white-tailed eagles (you will see many of them from the boat too, see above), and ravens and hooded crows.

When it comes to the boat sessions, the seas are fairly calm because of the protection of offshore reefs, allowing both comfort on the boat and a stable platform from which to take photographs.

We will spend between 3 and 4 hours in each boat session scudding across the beautiful deep blue seas of Flatanger’s fjords to entice the dozens of local white-tailed eagles to feed near the boat. We sometimes had about 25 fishing attempts per session in 2015. If the weather allows we may be able to tempt the eagles down onto pack ice near the boat, to photograph them in the open air at close range.
Ole knows the landscape, seas and the eagles like the back of his hand and will run the week to make the best shooting opportunities for everyone. He has known some of the eagles for over a decade. For example Ole told me that Miguel, an eagle, turned 31 in the summer of 2015 and I love to think that he has been flying around his beautiful fjord for most of my lifetime. We may get the chance to approach close to Miguel as he sits in a tree and surveys his realm.
I will be on hand throughout the trip, of course, and reachable by email or phone whenever you need me beforehand too, to help you with equipment choice and camera set up, so you can make the very best of this wonderful opportunity. There will also be plenty of time for feedback sessions in the evenings when we are resting before another intensive session of photography the following day.

It is bordering on ridiculous how many wonderful images you will come back with after this trip, I guarantee it. My weeks in Flatanger in 2014 and 2015 remain some of the very happiest of my life to date.

There will only be 4 clients on this trip so I will be able to spend plenty of time with each of you, to teach you how to set up your cameras for every shot. I am also hugely happy to meet up beforehand to answer any questions you have about what to bring and what to expect. Having only 4 clients also means plenty of room and comfort in the hides and on the boat (some other tour operators aim for 5 clients, making it all a little too cramped for all concerned).
Itinerary

Day 1 – 9th January
Fly out to arrive in Trondheim by lunchtime, ideally. Ole will pick us up at Trondheim airport and drive us to the house at Lausvnes. We can then settle down in the lovely accommodation and discussion any questions you have over a coffee before we go for dinner at the Zanzibar, and then bed is in order ready for an early start the next day.

Day 2 – 10th January

If this is a “hide day” we will be out of the house an hour before dawn, ready for the short drive to the hide. It is then a very short walk from the road up to the hides, which we will do in the pitch black, by torchlight. Then we will quickly set our cameras up before the light comes, before sitting back (thermoses of coffee are available / nigh on essential) and waiting for the light to come. The hide is heated and even has a chemical toilet, although warm clothes are required for before the heater has got the place warmed up.

It is incredibly exciting setting up by torchlight, knowing that by mid-morning a beautiful eagle or two will likely be gracing us with its presence. We will be in the hide all day, and after dusk Ole will drive us to the Zanzibar for dinner by the sea.

We will have an extended trip on the boat on each ‘boat day’, of 3 to 4 hours duration.
There should be thick snow on the ground to make an exquisite backdrop for your images of huge eagles plummeting out of the sky within 15 to 30 metres of the boat.

To give the trip even more variety we can, if you wish, spend a day in a local wildlife park, photographing lynx, grey wolves, red foxes & arctic foxes in natural snowy conditions.

After we return to the house you’ll need to back up that day’s images, put your camera batteries on charge overnight, maybe take time for a relaxed beer on the terrace overlooking the sea, and then it’s bedtime ready for the morning.

**Days 3 to 7 – 11th to 15th January**

As day 2, with the likely overall mix being 3 hide days, 2 boat days and 1 day at the wildlife park. You will have hundreds of images to be proud of by the end of the trip, and many happy memories of long hours in the beautiful mountains and fjords with such abundant and remarkable wildlife.

**Day 8 – 16th January**

Ole will drive us back to Trondheim airport in time for our flights.
Pricing

The price for the trip, to include everything except flights and any alcoholic drinks, is £2700 per person if there are 4 on the trip, and £2900 if there are 3. (I will refund people the £200 difference if and when the trip gets up to 4 clients, so it’s well worth your while persuading a friend to come along too.)

A 30% deposit is payable to secure your place, and the trip will run if I get 3 or 4 clients. If not then I will return your deposits to you, of course.

I realize that this is, of course, an expensive trip, but this is inevitable given this is the best place in the world for what we will be photographing, and because Norway is such an expensive place to live. I will be glad to mentor you through the build-up to the trip, and during the trip itself of course, so that you can get the very best out of our time in Norway: I really want you to have as amazing a time as possible, and to get as many images you’re proud of as possible, as I always do when I go to work with Ole in Flatanger.

Many UK and European airlines operate to Trondheim, either direct or via Oslo or Amsterdam. You will inevitably have quite a lot in your carry-on bag. Some airlines (EasyJet and British Airways for example) are pretty relaxed about the weight of this, and some a little less so (such as KLM). However, I have always found that staff are pretty reasonable, if you are a kilogram or two over, if you explain what is in the bag, its value and that it would be uninsured if in the hold.

If you have a short transfer then it’s really useful choosing a seat at the front of the plane, or as close to the front as you can get, to give yourself an extra few minutes to make the connection.

Please consult with me before booking flights. I usually fly by KLM from the UK, changing planes at Amsterdam.
**Comments from previous clients who have come to Norway with me**

From Howard Morgan: “I really enjoyed the trip – I’m still dreaming of the eagles, they were glorious. The pictures from this trip are incredible. I’m sure we all have the same amazing results, thanks to the great weather we experienced and your and Ole-Martin's assistance and attention to detail. I have so many great pictures (not just of eagles either) that I am going to put a book together for family and friends. I would absolutely love to do something like it (this trip) again. Thanks again for organising such a great trip.”

From Pauline Silver: “Just to say thank you so much for arranging the trip to Norway. I don’t underestimate the hard work and preparation you must have put in both before and during our visit. On top of that you had the four of us constantly firing questions at you - so well done. The trip was beneficial on many levels, getting good photos, learning about my cameras’ capabilities, seeing Norway and also improving my own techniques. I had a great time.”

**Technical Equipment Advice for the Eagle Boat Trips**

Most people on the trip should have what they need provided they hire or buy (hiring may be the best choice) one extra telephoto lens and one extra high quality D-SLR camera body for the week. This may well not be essential for everyone, depending on what you already have.

You will need a total of two D-SLR camera bodies to maximize your opportunities of taking different kinds of shots as the opportunities present
themselves in quick succession, and so you have a spare if one breaks down. There is, of course, no need to buy anything if hiring is more appropriate for your needs.

I am hugely happy to take you through the equipment needs over a coffee in person, or on the phone if you live a long way from me (I'm based in Cambridge, England).

To reassure you, your equipment needs need not be overwhelming at all and I will guide you through it, but one or two extra items could really improve your hit rate at getting great images that you will love for years to come.

I have included a few more images so you can get an idea of just what a remarkable trip this will be.
Finally, here is Ole in his element on the boat in the Flatanger fjords. His friend’s name, I believe, is Charlie. Ole is a really lovely guy to spend a week with, and a simply world class eagle guide: he is known as “The Eagle Man of Norway” for good reason.

I really hope you can join me in Norway in 2016 for this amazing trip.

Do not hesitate to get in touch with any questions.

It’s info@jamiegundry.com or phone me on 0 (7967) 818651.