

Ahh, Victor

by mickey



My father was an active hunter in Yugoslavia. I remember him telling me stories about hunting every weekend with his German Shorthaired Pointer and the customs of the local hunting club.

This got me interested; so he bought me an air rifle when I was eight. I mercilessly hunted sparrows in the fruit trees until I was old enough to leave the backyard and pursue bigger game such as rabbits.

Thirty-two years later I wanted to go Pheasant hunting with my dad. The only problem was I didn't have

a dog or know of any properties around Canberra with any pheasants. What do you do? You Google! Ian Head's World Safari Xpeditions came up straightaway and the super efficient Chris Coles did the rest.

We arrived at the airport and cautiously approached the Qantas counter and almost whispered

ria!

gubas





“we’re going to Melbourne and we’ve all got guns”. I half expected the girl behind the counter to scream and call security. On the contrary she didn’t even blink and it was no shock or problem at all. We were on our way.

The first stop after landing in Melbourne was a gun shop to stock up on some more shells. Then we were off to the Royal Mail Hotel at Dunkeld, some three hours away theoretically as we took the involuntary scenic route via our blind trust in the GPS.

Once we checked in at the majestic Royal Mail Hotel we met at the bar for a couple of beers before dinner at the award-winning restaurant.

The next day we arrived at Victoria Range Game Preserve to be met by Rob Walter and his GSP, Diesel. The fire was burning nicely outside Rob’s shed where you can stay overnight if you prefer to stay at Victoria Range. It should be compulsory to get yourself setup next to a nice fire!

Thirty minutes later we were ready and formed into a line then started walking through the ferns. Not twenty steps in and Diesel picked up a strong scent. The first bird, a



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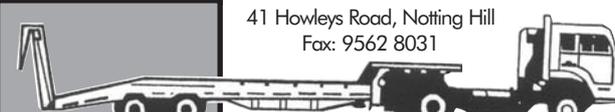
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cock, was up. Dad dispatched it in a very efficient manner. In another five minutes another bird flushed and was dropped and so the day went on.

We didn't go for more than half an hour between birds which were a mixture of hens, cocks and there were a few partridge mixed in. The ground is quite flat with a mixture of low ferns and a gum tree forest which flow onto open paddocks with grass and tussocks.

Our friend Alex Noumedis practices a very mild form of hunting where he misses most birds thus releasing them back into the wild. This has been documented in photos where it is clear to see the shot not even rustling any feathers as he doesn't risk wounding any birds.

A lot of birds were flushed within five meters of the hunter.

You had to have a bit of restraint and let them build up a bit of pace. Let them get some wing flapping action before letting a shot go, otherwise the only thing the birds would be good for are rillettes. Christian Hauberg, Alistair Scott

and Vladimir Gubas were the main offenders of the fast shot. I was taking photos and Alex has proven time and again to be no threat to any wildlife. He missed so many he may be a member of PETA.

Lunch at Victoria Range is something Rob takes very seriously. The quality and quantity of food is outstanding and is quite surprising to find and definitely not expected. Don't eat breakfast before you hunt here.

We ended up with 37 birds for the day. For a modest fee Rob arranged to have them plucked, gutted and packed ready to go back to Canberra for a meeting with a plate. After a long day of hunting if you can avoid cleaning birds and have a beer instead I'm all for it.

There aren't many places you can go hunting in Australia with 5 star accommodations and a 2-hat restaurant serving a 14-course degustation within 30 minutes of where you were shooting.

It's all great to camp but if your time poor and you don't have the time to pack all of the gear associated with camping, setting it up and then packing it up again then Dunkeld is the place to stay.



There's a lot to be said for packing only your gun, ammo and clothes and then concentrating on making the most of the limited time you have off work actually hunting and then relaxing after a nice hot shower.

Christian Hauberg who is Canberra's best chef and owner of Pulp Kitchen, loves his game meat. He decided to do a pheasant dinner and invite the food critics from the Canberra Times to his restaurant. Hunting and eating game got a great write up because of his efforts. We shall have to visit Victoria Range again soon.



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