



Stalking: First hunt



Zeiss's Christin Rabitz is introduced to British hunting with a double stalk for muntjac and roe. Paul Childerley is the guide...

Some of the greatest rewards from my business come from introducing newcomers to the world of hunting and giving them their first hunting experiences in the field.

Christin Rabitz, PR manager for Zeiss Sports Optics, was planning to launch the new Victory V8 riflescope in the UK, showing its versatility in different types of hunting situations. She arrived from Germany in late summer ready to scout out testing locations and make a five-day plan to put the products to the test. While looking at the grounds in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, Christin admitted she had just qualified and gained her hunting licence in Germany, but had never been out on live quarry.

The hunting licence in Germany is quite hard to obtain; it can take up to a year to complete the training and exams, which consist of nature conservation, animal and quarry identification, hunting laws and seasons, firearm training and safety, and

finally a shooting test with a shotgun and a rifle. The course can be taken from the age of 16 providing you are with a guide until the age of 18, when you can hunt solo.

Arriving at the grounds in Gloucestershire in the late afternoon, Christin didn't need much persuading to hunt one of the areas, putting her new licence and skills to the test.

First we headed out to the range to ensure she was happy with the rifle and the zero and to prove that she was competent and up to the task. All three shots were perfect, two bullets touching in a thumbnail group, basically what I'd expect from an efficient German hunter.

Christin's plan for the trip was purely PR related and she had not planned to hunt, so I kitted her out with a coat, hat and binoculars and set off to an area where there were several muntjac. It was a 400-acre block of old English woodland, with several arable fields linking it to the main estate – a perfect area and species, which I thought

would make it ideal and a memorable first hunting experience.

After a mile-long stalk down a winding track with no luck, we reached a large open grass ride 200 metres long and 80 metres wide, which I knew was a good spot for muntjac. We approached very low and crawled the last 10 metres so we wouldn't be seen, as the deer cross on the top of the grass ride and would be able to look down on us if we were walking.

As soon as we arrived at a good shooting position, I noticed movement on the back left of the ride. I quickly glassed and saw it was a female muntjac, one that would be a good one to cull, as it had no follower.

I had already explained to Christin that muntjac are always on the move and we would have to move fast to prepare to take the shot. Christin was on the ball, had seen the muntjac and appeared calm. I set up the rifle, putting the bipod legs down and making sure the muzzle was clear of



Christin was thrilled with her first ever deer, a muntjac doe



A representative roebuck was the final reward for Christin

any grass. Christin swiftly settled into the shooting position.

I explained to her that the deer was 150 metres away and I would stop it when it appeared from behind the big ash tree. She would have a good 10-second shooting window, so there was no rush.

It was a textbook shot – the muntjac dropped on the spot. I congratulated Christin on her great achievement; she got up and literally jumped for joy.

On inspection of the female muntjac, we could see it was a perfect heart shot. Christin had got the hunter's rush by this point and I knew it would be the first of many hunts to come.

I was correct in my judgement as since the initial hunt with me, Christin has successfully hunted a Chinese water deer on the variety tour with one of my guides and also achieved roe deer and a fox back home in Germany with friends.

Following a meeting with the Zeiss team in Nuremberg, I invited Christin along with Armin and Jan to hunt for spring roebuck. This would be an informal hunt, as I would be hunting myself and they would not have guides. They planned to come over in middle of May for two days hunting, a time of year, which is quite difficult for roebuck,

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as the cover is up and they are difficult to see. Still, it's my favourite time of year.

As Armin and Jan are experienced hunters, I was planning to give them a specific area to hunt on their own. Christin had now gained enough knowledge and confidence and asked if she could hunt alone. This was perfect as I had several areas that would be ideal in a high seat, which she was happy with.

The first morning I showed Christin the high seat and advised her how to stalk into it. I informed her that there were three small bucks in this area she could try for. After three hours I returned to the high seat where she told me she had seen two bucks but neither presented a good shot so she let them pass. This again was good etiquette and hunting fieldcraft. We took a break, went for breakfast and made a plan for the evening hunt. Christin was keen to return

to her high seat because she felt she had a good chance of success. Unfortunately, the evening's hunt too was unsuccessful.

The next morning, I encouraged Christin to try another high seat where I had seen a nice roebuck the evening before. I explained where the high seat was and set Christin off in the right direction. In under an hour she had texted me to tell me she had "got him". I returned to see a very happy German lady next to her first English roebuck. It had appeared 70 metres from the dense cover on Christin's right hand side and slowly meandered out onto the ride, right in front of the high seat, giving Christin the perfect broadside shot.

It has been great to see Christin on her journey from newly qualified to a competent hunter. She's taken all the training, advice and knowledge and already put it into good practice in the field. ■