



Boar on the Danube



Paul Childerley shares his experiences from a recent boar and red deer hunt in Hungary, and lets slip about his fears of crossing the Danube at night.

After hearing about the great hunting in Hungary, I decided to book a hunting trip with my friend, Dennis Buckland. After an interesting customs check with the Euro Firearms passes, we arrived in Budapest where we were met by the head forester and embarked on the two-hour drive to the hunting area of Gemenc. We were staying in the Gemenc Hunting Lodge, where we overlooked one of the royal hunting areas. The hotel was first class with 10 en-suite bedrooms and a large dining hall.

We had a shoot briefing before retiring for

an early night in light of the early start the next day. The head forester picked us up at five in the morning and drove us the 30 minutes to the banks of the Danube river. Reaching the hunting area required crossing the river by boat, which added to the excitement of the hunt. It's a spectacular river, though the thought of crossing the deep, dark water again late at night was worrying. Once across, we were met by two Hungarian hunting guides and a pony and cart – interesting!

The pony and cart was surprisingly comfortable and we were given old blankets to keep us warm as snow started to fall. Dennis was dropped off on the way along with the main guide, Attila, for their stalking, and I stayed on the cart with his son, Thomask. Communication was interesting as Thomask could only speak a little English and his father none – good luck Dennis!

We went through some small woodland, stopped on a grass area and stalked over to the far edge of the grass area where we climbed up to an old high seat overlooking some reeded marshland and open grassy scrub areas. Straight away there was a large red stag from our left, but he wasn't on the menu. He was followed by about 15 hinds, which all passed within 15 feet of the high seat. Half an hour later, a sow came out with eight piglets and two young males in tow, but no keiler. Just as we were about to move on, I spotted a larger boar through the reeds. As I was getting excited, thinking this was my chance, Thomask explained to me with hand signals and broken English that it was no good; it had a broken tusk. How he could tell this with his pre-war binoculars I don't know, but they were a pair of Zeiss.

We left the high seat and started stalking to another area in search of a suitable beast. Stalking over to an old stone embankment and looking across an open wooded boggy area we immediately saw a group of boar grubbing up the soil for food.



Travelling in style: The best way to get around the island was by pony and trap

Boar: Hungary



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in the area, as it's an island set between the Danube where it splits, and not many outside hunters are allowed to hunt there.

After lunch it was back to hunting and we set off on our pony and cart to the far end of the island where Thomask had seen two good keilers. Dennis set off with Attila to find a red hind, while I was hoping for a keiler. Once we arrived we walked to a rickety old high seat overlooking half of the river's edge and a large muddy grass area where the river had been in flood earlier that month. It was snowing a little more heavily now and it was very quiet until just before dark, when a group of boar came down the side of the riverbank, but there was still no keiler among them. After watching them for a while, we were losing the light, so I decided to take another young boar. Thomask told me to shoot the one with the

broken coat as it was in poor condition. It stood about 100 metres away on the side of the Danube and I was a little concerned that he might fall into the river. I took the shot, he ran back into the muddy grass area and I lost sight of him in the fading light. After waiting a while, we climbed out the high seat and Thomask tracked him to the edge of the wood, about 40 metres from the shot location.

When we returned to the lodge I discovered Dennis had shot a red hind and, once again, he was celebrating with his new best friends, Attila and Palinka. However, the only thing on my mind was how we were going to get back across the flooded Danube in that little boat. ■

Paul's second boar of the trip made a dash for the trees, but was recovered just 40m away

One of them was a young boar that was slightly off-colour and lighter than the others, which Thomask said I could shoot. The animals were all about 150 metres away, but milling through the wooded area, so it was a tricky shot. I waited for him to present himself for a clear shot. After five minutes he broke away from the main group, I took the shot and he dropped on the spot. The rest of the group froze, then starburst into any cover they could find.

I was using my .25-06 Sako rifle with the 3-12x56 Zeiss Varipoint scope, which seemed perfect for the conditions we were hunting under. We went over to the boar and I was very pleased with my shot placement and the effect of the .25-06. I was using a Federal 120 grain soft nose bullet, which I was told might be a bit light for the boar, but it's all about the shot placement. Once Thomask finished gralloching, he hung the boar in a small tree away from the jackals. Thomask explained we were going to loop back to the pony and cart so we carried on stalking down a small riverbed. I heard a shot in the far distance and Thomask put his thumb up and said, "Dennis yes." Good old Dennis!

After five minutes of walking we came across some red deer. There was a young hind that Thomask wanted to take out of the stock, but they were a long way away, which meant a lot of crawling. I was up for it, so we started off. After more than 200 metres of crawling we were close enough to get a shot. With more sign language, nods and eyebrows I took the shot on the correct hind. The shot reaction was perfect and the hind fell after 30 metres. I was really pleased with the performance of the calibre and scope. The Varipoint is my favourite of the Zeiss scopes; the 60 reticle gives you that pin-point accuracy at any distance with the option of turning on the red dot in poor light conditions.

Once Thomask finished with the young hind we headed back to the pony and cart to collect our two animals and then rejoined Dennis and Attila. We found them slightly worse for wear as they were celebrating with Palinka over Dennis' keiler. Dennis had shot a 23cm keiler that he was over the moon with.

Hungarian traditions of respecting shot animals are great, celebrating the good hunt and the animals that are taken. We were very lucky to hunt

Red hind: An opportunity at some different quarry



Top trophy: The tusks were expertly boiled out and cleaned ready for mounting by the Hungarian guides