



# Romanian escapade



## Paul Childerley sets out to break his spell of bad luck by shooting giant boar in the depths of the Romanian forest

This was my seventh trip for a Romanian boar and it wasn't looking good for the final evening of a three-day hunt. I was in the mountains in the heart of Romania with nearly a metre of snow under my feet. On the way to the high tower, the guide pointed out two large owls hunting across some reed grass and said if the owls move in early evening, the boar move at night. Fingers crossed because I had to break my spell of bad luck sooner rather than later.

We parked about half a mile below the area where the high tower was and stalked in. As we approached the high tower, we stopped and scanned the area to see if anything was out early but no such luck. The high tower was the best yet. I'd give it a five-star rating on TripAdvisor; it had an opening door and two glass windows that could be opened to shoot out of. The area view from the seat was perfect with half a football pitch of pure white snow, which meant the visibility was going to be excellent, and there was quite a bit of cloud

in the sky to cover the moon. The surrounding forest was hauntingly dark with several white trail paths leading to the view area.

Within 10 minutes of sitting there, a wildcat slowly crept to the bait in front of us and sat there rather pleased with itself. In this area they used a red deer carcass, which had been found tangled in fencing. They also spread maize across the open area. A fox appeared sneaking across with his head laid low on the ground. It was a most unusual mannerism for a fox; it looked like it was submissive. All of a sudden I realised why – the wild cat had come at full pelt to attack the fox and to keep him away from its prize. This happened about ten times over the next hour; the fox was desperate for food. This part of the country was seriously bleak.

After dozing on and off, a large roebuck arrived underneath the high tower. It was a very good trophy buck, still in velvet but I could see the mass of thickness and the height of this buck's antlers – it would definitely be a

very good medal. We had been looking earlier that day at the roe deer on the planes and I couldn't believe the numbers that we saw.

From the darkness on the other side of the view area, a group of nine boar appeared, looking like they were on a mission. Instead of heading to the feeding station, they ran straight past, over the ridge and out of sight. Moments later a big shadow followed them. Knowing the largest males – known as keiler – never generally lead the group, I was confident it was one but he also followed them out of sight. Being a little despondent, I thought they would charge straight in on the food but once again, I was out of luck. Surprisingly, the group turned up right next to the high tower, making all sorts of squealing and grunting noises as they charged onto the maize. Boar are much more clever and tactical than I thought, they first checked the area out on the far side and then did a large circle around the feed station, approaching it into the wind, to make sure there was no danger.



## Boar: Romania

After a few mouthfuls they charged back to where they had come from and disappeared out of sight. Still no sign of the shadow, but enough action to keep me awake and ready.

The group had circled down a little further and did exactly the same thing again, returning to the food station for a whole minute this time and the shadow appeared on the edge of the darkness. Before I could confirm it was the Keiler I was after, the group charged back into the darkness, taking the shadow with them. Five minutes later, all nine of them appeared again, the shadow following. The group seemed to be a lot more settled this time, were not in such a hurry and looked like they would come to feed for longer. Once the shadow got its large rounded shoulders and back.

I opened the glass window in total silence and mounted the rifle on the boar. I was using the forester's Blaser .300 Win Mag with a Zeiss Varipoint 3-12x56 scope. By this time, it had joined the group and they all looked similar in the darkness. I looked once again with the binoculars to double check and luckily the keiler broke away from the group, again back towards the darkness. I was still confident he was going to return and he did, after a couple of minutes. This was my chance and I wasn't going to let him go again. He presented a good broadside shot about 80 yards away and it was easy to distinguish his head from his rear as he moved in. He stopped for a brief moment and the shot was fired in the dead of darkness. All the animals scattered in all different directions, including the Keiler but I was happy and confident with my shot placement.

After 10 minutes, the forester turned up to see the results. He produced a small torch and we headed out to the baited area where the shot was taken. We soon found a good blood trail heading back to the darkness. I was a little worried by this, as I was more than familiar with the stories of wounded boar charging. We could still hear boar moving in the forest. We followed the blood trail for about 30 metres, which was quite easy in the snow, and then we found the Keiler lying dead half buried in the snow, next to the rocks.

The forester congratulated me and told me it was a three-year-old keiler that he had seen on the trail cameras he'd had set up, on the feed stations. I was over the moon. It was a great hunt – very exciting with a perfect ending. ■



Five-star accommodation: Paul hid out in a luxury high seat



Roebuck were plentiful, but were safe from Paul's attentions for the day



A three-year-old keiler was the result of a great hunt