

Considerations on Donated Hunts

by Bob Keagy (Originally published in SCI SFBA Chapter BaseCamp)

As we go into the Fundraiser season, it is perhaps timely to review a few considerations about donated hunts.

Winning any hunt at a fundraiser is just one, and not necessarily the first, step to a great hunting experience, and the prospective hunter should be aware of a few basics. The following are some very general considerations, and by no means are they a comprehensive listing:

Firstly, no chapter hunt guarantees that you'll be successful. Our chapter has exercised reasonable care that the guide is felt reputable, and that he has a good track-record -- but, beyond this, the success or failure of your hunt is up to you.

For these reasons, it is wise to do your research before the Fundraiser, to ensure you are fully acquainted with the guide's reputation, area, species, terrain, and other important aspects. That is, be an informed consumer.

(The SCI Convention in Reno in January is an excellent opportunity to meet with the donors, to discuss their areas, species, dates, hunting terrain and references well before our following March Fundraiser. A current list of donors and booths is usually sent out by the chapter just before the convention. In addition, several donors will also exhibit at our Fundraiser, providing a last minute face-to-face discussion opportunity.)

Secondly, read carefully the donated hunt description in the auction brochure--it is important!--if it says that the hunt is for 2007 only, it means just that--any extension that may or may not be negotiated is entirely between you and the outfitter, as is any upgraded game availability/species.

Thirdly, the chapter is not a "booking agent". That is, the chapter sells the hunt, but it is up to the bidder to contact the guide in an expeditious manner, and firm up hunt dates, species desired, any accompanying non-hunters, licenses, airline arrangements, visas, firearm import permits, etc. All of these should be discussed as early as possible with the donor. Do not overlook any visa or health requirements!

Fourthly, please bear in mind that the donor has made a contribution to your chapter's well-being. Whether a donation of time, vehicles, lodging, or trophy fees, a simple "thank you" goes a long way to ensure a better and continuing relationship.

While not limited to donated hunts alone, the following (admittedly very basic) points may be of interest with regard to some of our international donations:

Some of the areas from which we receive donations require fairly extensive air travel arrangements, which should be booked fairly early. As a rule-of-thumb, I'd recommend booking your flights no later than 5 - 6 months in advance of the hunt, particularly to far-distant locations (e.g., the Canadian Arctic or parts of Africa or Mongolia). Obviously, you should coordinate these arrangements with the guide, as he will need to make any pickup arrangements, transfers, charter flights, etc.,etc.

(Note: We play the "Frequent Flyer" game whenever possible. This means charging items preferentially to a United, American or Delta credit-card. Most of our recent trips to Africa have been paid for with frequent flyer miles. Note also that "frequent flyer" seat availability has, however, been getting tighter of late, requiring more intensive follow-up.)

Additionally, although everyone checks carefully (as well they should) on firearms import rules and regulations (particularly important now in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia), they tend to overlook the documents to bring firearms **BACK** into the USA. You will need to go to US

Customs prior to your departure (with your rifle- a hard case is best) and obtain Form 4457 "Certificate of Registration for Personal Items Taken Abroad" , listing the rifle or shotgun's make, caliber and serial number, in order to ensure that you can bring your firearms back into the US without controversy or problem.

Finally, you may need to have your taxidermy arrangements well in hand before departure. If (as in many Asian hunts) you bring the trophy back with you, you'll need to be met by a Customs Broker, to facilitate clearing customs, importation and subsequent forwarding, all of which should be in place/arranged before your departure.

A hunting trip is a wonderful way to experience the beauty of another state or foreign country. We always try to spend a few days prior to the hunt sight-seeing to get a better perspective on the country, and to get over the time-zone adjustments. To me it seems quite inadvisable to fly to West Blogostan, and try to hunt the first day or so--your body will be trying to adjust. If, instead, you take a day or two seeing the interesting sights, you'll go on your hunt more rested and ready to make the most of your hunting days, and enjoy it more, as well as having seen sights that you may never have the opportunity to see again.

I surely hope that the foregoing thoughts were not too boring, and that you obtain the hunt of your dreams at our Fundraiser!

Bob Keagy