

# Walk Like a Croatian!

**Pete Moore** details the ups and downs of a driven boar trip he took in Croatia with Artemis Hunting

**T**o me driven boar is possibly the most exciting and challenging form of hunting I have ever done and also a continuous learning curve! I've shot a few but would say that like most Brits I do not do enough of it to have it all worked out! Unlike deer shooting, which and in comparison is a far more predictable and technical exercise. The target is normally stationary; you know the range and the shot is often supported. So much so that a first round, on the ground kill is the norm. With piggies you have to shoot fast and think on your feet...

I have shot boar in a few European countries, but never in Croatia and not

for the lack of trying, as I have been twice with my good friend and owner of Artemis Hunting, Tomo Svetic. In both cases the boar were there, but as I discovered, and Tomo pointed out to me, I was shooting like a deer hunter. "Peter" he said, "just shoot, do not wait or hesitate". Sound advice, but I found I had to adopt a new mind set, as blasting away at an elusive target will also result in missing and wounding the beast. OK an over simplification as driven has its own techniques and formulas for success. However, if you don't shoot fast and take chances then you will end up with nothing, as I found.

## THIRD TIME LUCKY

Tomo invited me for one of his driven hunts in December, which would be a first for me as I have never done the whole package thing before. For a first timer this might seem a little daunting as most of the group had shot with Artemis a few times, some up to five, so knew each other. I would urge you if you are considering this don't let being a newcomer put you off, as I found a good bunch of blokes and a wealth of experience to draw on!

Tomo offers a package deal, which includes flights, accommodation, food and the animals, with no bag limit. This costs £1500 and gives three full days of decent hunting with a number of drives per day. The only thing extra is you pay for any booze you drink. He is also able to provide some guns for those who don't have them, or don't want the hassle of bringing their own. Personally I always take my own as it seems pointless having the hardware and not putting it to the ultimate test. Also taking firearms overseas is not that bigger deal! It's not just boar either as he can sort any species out, just ask!

We arrived in Zagreb and once we had got the guns through customs and sorted the hunting permits a luxury coach took us to a very nice 4-star hotel. Tomo explained this was a bit different as normally he uses guest houses for accommodation. But this was a new area and the hotel was in the middle of it, I have to say that although I'm happy roughing it, coming back to all the mod cons was nice after a day's hunting.



## WHAT DO I NEED?

Kit wise you need decent boots and outdoor clothing, as it can be cold and wet and most important of all some form of hi-visibility (day-glo) jacket and or hat. Some people prefer blaze orange camo, whereas others go for a simple vest or even hat band. A small folding stool is worth the effort as you can be on your feet up to three hours per drive, a lot of which is just waiting. What you don't need are binos, rangefinders etc, though a decent knife is always useful. One of our party Big Dale took this to heart, as he had a massive dirk which he used to dispatch a wounded boar when the dogs had it at bay and a shot was too risky... That takes some cojones I reckon!

Gun and calibre-wise I have my own views but a 308 or 270 Win in the right place does the job admirably. Oddly enough, and given we were all Brits, I saw more double and combination rifles than I have ever done when shooting with Europeans. One guy decided to go practical and took along a Mossberg Slugster 8-shot pump-action shotgun with iron sights firing 12-gauge rifled slug. Again it's up to the job... I took my Trusty Mauser M03 Extreme (PH cheekpiece stock) in my favourite boar hunting calibre 8.5x63mm. Tomo supplied a number of rifles, most interesting was a Steyr Pro Hunter in 376 Steyr and my favourite a Benelli

Argo semi-auto with 10-shot mag in 30-06.

## TAKE YOUR CHANCE

The terrain was not too hilly and heavily wooded. Most of the shooting is either done from the many dirt roads that cross the area or not far off them. Physically it's not that demanding either. Like any driven shoot it's labour intensive with near as many beaters as hunters. On that point for every drive you pull a number out of a hat that allocates your peg. Yes there are a few choice positions but in truth you are in woodland so an open space with fewer trees is to be preferred. As when those pigs are running and jinking at high speed you are as likely to shoot a tree!

Drive 1 saw us lined out at the base of a hill, normally you are about 100-yards apart and in heavy cover you soon see the sense of orange clothing. Your gun handling and spatial awareness need to be exemplary as when the pigs run it gets very exciting and you need to know where your neighbour is. This happened on the first drive, as after about an hour of hearing gunshots, dogs barking and beaters shouting a group of pigs burst out from the bush at the base of the hill. The classic - not there one moment, there the next!

## 50%

Determined to shoot like a Croatian (as advised) I swung on to the leader and looking up saw my neighbour (Carl Cox) doing the same. Immediately we both pulled our guns upright

# MY KIT LIST

**Rifle** - Mauser M03 Extreme, with 8.5x63mm Solid barrel with iron sights. I took two 5-shot magazines and as always the M03 proved reliable and hard hitting - Open Season Ltd, 01865 891773

**Optic** - Zeiss 1.2-5x35 Duralyt illuminated in M03 QD mount. Brilliant driven boar scope compact bright with a superb low mag of just x1.2, which is great for close in pigs. Maximum mag of x5 allows you to reach out if you have to - Zeiss Sport Optics, 01707 871350

**Ammunition** - Handloads using a Barnes 185-gran TSX bullet. This is generating 3000 ft/lbs + Edgar Brothers Ltd, 01625 613177

**Clothing** - Harkila ProHunter trousers - tough, breathable and all-round good design - Simon Esnouf 07887 99788hhh

**Browning** Grande Passage Parka - if it's cold this is a great coat! - BWM Arms Ltd, 01235 514550

**Lowa GTX Hunter boots**, great for this sort of work as they give good support and are superbly comfortable, warm, breathable and waterproof - TKC Sales Ltd, 01380 872950

**McWet Climatic gloves**, light and tactile great for shooting in - McWet, 01902 701219 1902 701219

**CENS digital hearing protectors**. These electric plug-ins allow full hearing ability yet shut down at gun shots, so you get 100% audible acuity with instant safety - 01634 719427

**Maxpedition Malaga Gear Slinger bag** - this cross shoulder, single strap design carries just enough gear for a day's hunting. **Fallkniven PH knife** - not too big or small this laminate steel hunter is tough and efficient enough for all situations - Heinnie Haynes, 033 0300 0400

and let them get past us. They were by this time about 50-yards up the hill and running hard. I took a bead on the first and let fly and the next, then it was over! Thinking I had missed I turned back to my neighbour then heard a crashing sound, as a pig rolled back down the hill - result! As it transpired we had both fired at the animal from left and right and both hit it so either a kill each or 50% of the animal. I did not care, my first Croatian pig and I think



One of the better pigs on the trip Joe McLaughlin's 160-kilo keller from drive 1, he also got a sow a few minutes before



Not my first pig but my first one in Croatia, not big but I was as pleased as punch...



Tomo with his 376 Steyr ProHunter a great calibre for boar no doubt

[ HUNTING ]

Trees everywhere and you have to shoot quick and accurate when the boar are charging between them



DIY bacon and sausage barbecue for lunch plus hot food and beer, Artemis looks after its client's very well



At least 20% of our party had double or combination guns, Carl Cox who I shared my pig with as we both shot at the same time from left and right



And another two - Tomo (left) with Mark and Mark with their pigs from drive 3



Another decent pig and a happy hunter, the trip turned up a number of good animals

Tomo was happier than me and I wore my tree sprig in my hat with some satisfaction.

Drive 1 showed a good bag with Irishman Joe McLaughlin who got a sow, then a really nice keiler that weighed out around 160-kilos with a borrowed 308. We then stopped for lunch which consisted of DIY barbecued sausages and bacon along with a stew, plus bread and beer if you wanted it... for every drive you move location and I did not get lucky in the afternoon though others did so already the tally was in double figures. So back to the hotel to unwind, which was nice.

#### DAY 2

A repeat of day one saw us in open woodland, I saw a roe doe (off limits) and Dale next to me saw a few boar on the hill but in cover so no shoot. Drive 4 in the afternoon got my second pig and it was a good location. Just off the road there were ramps on either side a bit like large berm with few trees so a 180° fire zone. Listening to the gun shots barks and shouts for about an hour and I thought it ain't going to happen here. Then once again out of nowhere pigs running at about 60-yards, time to shoot!

They were going some, so I guesstimated lead on the first and shot, missed, I then adjusted my lead a bit shorter and hit one who staggered then carried on running then he stopped about 100-yards away and I rolled him over with my rifle braced on a tree for support. All good experience and adding to my skills for next time... It



was bigger than my first one but the beaters came up and dragged it away before I could get a picture – bummer! We got a good bag off this one and I think by the afternoon we were 35+.

#### LAST DAY

Sunday we had rain and it was cold. One of the tricks with driven is to be ready at all time, which means having the gun in the shoulder or near it at the low port. Obvious really, but as time goes by holding that rifle ready becomes a lot of work and no matter how hard you try, if nothing is happening you start to switch off. Standing there I suddenly noticed a small movement about 30-yards to my front, it was a boar sneaking through the cover. I had the rifle butt on the ground and as I brought it up he saw me and ran. I did not get a shot off, but in retrospect I should have done as if nothing else it would have alerted the shooter to my left. More colours for my paint box; but I still kick myself for not being ready – that won't happen again!

The last drive was a no show for me but there was plenty of guns popping and I think the tally for the three days went to 50+. I'd shot two, could have been three if I had been more switched on and maybe four or five if I was better at moving targets, which is coming on. No matter I had a great time and as always there are those who don't get anything, which is the way it goes. There were more than enough pigs but sometimes they are not in the right place or want to go, even when the beaters try to push them to you.

Tomo was a brilliant host and worked his nuts off making sure everything went as well as possible and I mean everything. When people did not shoot anything I think he was more upset than they were. All in all a great trip, excellent admin and timings, plenty of potential pigs and a good crew of beaters, smooth and easy through customs in and out so it's a big 10 from me. Some guys have been with Tomo five or six times which has to tell you something too. I will defo be back this year and am determined to do better and I would recommend it to anyone so inclined too. After all, I can almost shoot like a Croatian!



Animals are butchered after each drive and tissue samples taken to check for trichinella

- ✦ Price: £1500 including flights, accommodation etc
- ✦ Guns available
- ✦ Contact: Artemis Hunting (Tomo Svetic), [www.artemis-hunting.com](http://www.artemis-hunting.com)