Asiatic Ibex

EXPERIENCE A MEMORABLE HUNT AND CONTRIBUTE TO NATURE CONSERVATION!

In Tajikistan healthy populations of Asiatic ibex are the major prey of the magnificent snow leopards. In several conservancies ibex are the only large game species. Sport hunting on few old ibex provides the financial opportunities and incentive for the protection of this important species and thus the basis for the conservation of the endangered snow leopard and its entire ecosystem! The presence of this secretive cat species is most often detected by the tracks it leaves in the snow but it has also been seen on rare occasions during hunts and hikes.

The Asiatic or Siberian ibex is distributed from southern Siberia (Altai) to the Himalayan chain. Due to harsh environmental conditions horns of ibexes in Tajikistan rarely reach the size of their relatives in the northern neighboring countries. The Asiatic ibex in Tajikistan are morphologically rather different from those in other countries, and also between the different areas of Tajikistan considerable variation in horns and coloration can be found. We propose for hunt only animals of 8 years and older, which as a rule have representative trophies. To keep the population stable and provide enough prey for snow leopards, the hunting quota is only 1-2 percent of the recorded population size. To avoid reducing the genetic fitness of the population only one out of four to five old ibex can be taken by sport hunters.

Ibex hunts are demanding and adventurous mountain hunts, and success depends strongly on the physical condition of the hunter. Stalking the animals or reaching a hide from which the hunter waits for the animals often requires a considerable ascent. Ideally the hunter should
plan for an overnight stay at the hide with a hunt in the early morning hours. Depending on
the condition and ambitions of the hunter different locations can be chosen. Typically ibex
hunts take place in winter at altitudes ranging between 2200 and 4000 m in the ravines of the
Pamirs. These high mountain hunts take place in some of the most impressive mountain areas –
the “Roof of the World” – and provide an unforgettable experience.

Prior to the arrival of the hunter the local rangers organize the places of residence and
recognize the best hunting sites. In good snowy conditions the ibexes stay at least in the
morning and afternoon hours in the lower slopes. The hunting area can be reached after a few
miles walk, gears being transported by donkeys or yaks. Since there is no poaching in the
areas, it is not unusual to approach the desired animal to less than 100 m. However, more
frequently the shooting distance is closer to 200-500 m. Sturdy shoes, warm clothes, a warm
sleeping bag and a well-to-carry backpack are required. Guns with bolt action (no combined
arms) of a caliber suitable for wide shots (e.g., .300 WM) are recommended. We also recommend
range finders and binoculars.

WHEN AND WHERE?
The most favorable hunting period for Asiatic ibex is from September to December (although the
hunt at that time may prove difficult if the animals remain in the snow at high altitudes) or
in February-March when animals use lower slopes. A seven- to ten-day-trip including five
hunting days is recommended to achieve success. The community-based wildlife conservancies
offering Siberian ibex hunts are located in the Pamirs mountains of Gorno-Badakhshan
Autonomous Province (GBAO), in Bartang Valley (Ravmeddara community conservancy), in Wakhan
(Darshaydara and Zong community conservancies) and in the Eastern Pamirs (Alichur community
conservancy).

SERVICE, ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS
For the journey a cross-country vehicle is rented. On site hunts usually take place on foot,
with the help of guides and donkeys. Local rangers are very experienced traditional hunters
who know very well the area, speak basic English, Russian as well as local languages. The
group is also accompanied by a young translator who speaks English. Accommodation is organized
either in traditional family guesthouses in villages located at the edge of hunting areas, in
simple isolated guesthouses or in solid clean South African safari tent. Communal lodging is
the rule. For the overnight stay in the field, if necessary, a small tent available. Hunters
should bring their own warm sleeping-bags and insulating mats. For spring hunt of wild boars
the weather is usually nice with mild temperatures yet with sometimes significant rainfall.
Daytime temperatures in summer are very hot, up to 40°C, nights are cooler but still warm.
Depending on location the sanitary facilities of the guesthouses may include WC and sauna or
be rather simple (dry-toilet and bucket shower).

SPECIES