



Alpine

Two of the major ways red stag are hunted in the Bavarian and Austrian Alps is by still-hunting and using a *Rockitz*. The *Rockitz* closely resembles a Texas deer stand and is used in much the same manner.

Stag Hunt

Hunting Red Stag In Europe's High Country Offers Similar Challenges To Elk Hunting In Colorado — With Some Interesting & Exciting Differences.

The regal stag seemed to glide into the lush green Alpine meadow with two hinds. They were over 600 meters away and moving at a slow walk. Another stag roared out a challenge from the opposite side of the mountain. My Bavarian guide and I sprinted across the rocky terrain to get within rifle range.

We breathlessly arrived at the edge of the meadow just as the sun was sinking behind the jagged peaks. My guide told me to shoot. I looked through my four-power scope, and in the clear air the antlers of the majestic animal appeared enormous. I centered the crosshairs about 12 inches over its back and squeezed the trigger. The recoil of my .270 slammed the rifle's stock into my shoulder, and then I lost sight of the stag.

The red deer stag is one of the most stately big game animals in the world. It is found in many European countries and the opportunity to hunt this fine trophy animal is available to most sportsmen. Stalking the stag high in the Bavarian or Austrian Alps is an experience well worth the expense.

The red stag or *Hirsch* is similar to the American elk. Its color is reddish-brown in the summer, changing to brown during the fall and winter months. Weighing 250-300 pounds it stands about four feet high at the shoulder. In its second year, the stag develops spike antlers; at three years, six to 10 points; and at the age of four, six to 12 points. A young stag has thin antlers and carries his head high. Older stags have thicker necks and



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heavier body lines. After a stag reaches his prime, about 12 years old, his antlers start regressing. By the time he is 12 years of age he may just have short, thick spikes. Antlers are shed annually during February and March.

There are several ways to book hunting trips in the mountains of Austria and Germany. In Austria, contact Heinrich Seewann, 1070 Vienna, Mariahilfe Strasse 86, or the National Tourist Agency in Vienna. In Germany, there are numerous agencies: Zurheide, 4902 Bad Salzuflen, Postfach 868; Jurgen Josch, 543 Montabaur, Kirch Strasse 48a, and many others. These agencies can book hunts in almost any country where *Hirsch* are found, including Scotland, Poland, Russia,

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Yugoslavia, and Hungary.

In some *reviers* (hunting areas), you can hunt from a comfortable hotel, with a sauna, indoor swimming pool, and all the comforts of home. You are given the choice of hunting from a *Hochsitz* (high seat) or stalking in the mountains. The isolated alpine *Jagdhuette* (cabin) is best for the *Jaeger* (hunter) who is in good physical condition and likes to rough it. In this way you will see more game and revel in the splendor of the alpine landscape.

In many *Reviers*, you may also have the opportunity to shoot roe deer and chamois. The trophy fee for *Hirsch* ranges from \$1,700 for an excellent 12 pointer or better, to \$600 for a minor stag. Prices are approximate and depend upon the *Revier* owner and trophy weight. In addition to the trophy fee, you must also pay the guide fee that seldom exceeds \$20 per day.

An interesting point to remember: in most Austrian *Reviers* you must pay for missed or wounding shots. This can be very expensive. Before the hunt you will be required to test fire your rifle and shooting is normally limited to 200 meters. Under these circumstances, it is wise to wait until your *Hirsch* is standing broadside before shooting.

The *Hirsch* will make a fine addition to your trophy room. *Hirsch* antlers are seen in most of the old castles, where in the past shooting was reserved for kings and noblemen. Other trophy from the *Hirsch* include the prized eye teeth that are used in hunting style jewelry, and the long hair (*Bart*) on the neck. The *Bart* is made into brushes that are placed on hats. The longer the hair, the more valued the brush.

Rifle calibers used for Red deer by Americans in Germany are the .270 Win., .30-'06, .308 Win., and 7 mm Remington Magnum. Calibers lighter than the .270 are not recommended. German *Jaegers* prefer the 7-64, 8-57, and some of the 9 mm calibers. The 150-grain bullet is the

most popular load. I have used a Sako Finnbear in .270 with 150 grain Norma factory ammo for the past six years. I have taken wild boar, *Hirsch*, chamois, roe, and fallow deer with excellent results. A telescope sight is mandatory and should be four or six-power with good light gathering capabilities.

Completely Furnished

Other equipment for a successful alpine hunt from a *Jagdhuette* is a rucksack that will hold enough food and clothing for at least a three-day stay. Essential items are a warm water-repellent coat, good hiking shoes that are well broken in, sweater, hat, camera, toilet articles, and a change of clothing. Normally the *Jagdhuette* is completely furnished with dishes, cooking utensils, and bedding.

Due to unpredictable weather conditions, it is wise to take scope and rifle muzzle covers. A sling for your rifle will free your hands for climbing the steep and narrow trails. A light pair of binoculars is recommended even though the guide will make the final determination of the animal to be shot.

The *Bergstock* (mountain stick) will be furnished by your guide. It is very light and about five feet long. Without this support an alpine hunt would be difficult. It is a great aid in ascending and descending the rugged terrain.

The best time to hunt the *Hirsch* is during the rut (*Brunft*). In some *Reviere*, 10 to 20 *Hirsch* can be heard roaring out their challenges. Fighting takes place between stags of equal strength, but the battle is seldom to the death. Younger stags are seen near the *Rudels*, but do not fight with the older males. They try to cut out a *hind* when the old patriarch has his back turned or is resting.

Because only 83 stags were available to U.S. Forces hunters, names were placed in a lottery. I was lucky and won in the drawing for a hunt in the Berchtesgaden area of the Bavarian Alps.

On 15 September, I was notified by Herr Worbs of the local hunting and fishing office that he had booked a hunt for me from 17 through 20 September. He told me the foresters

had heard the *Hirsch* roaring in the high Alpine forest—the *Brunft* had begun.

I hurriedly prepared my gear and departed Wiesbaden for the seven hour drive to the Alps. I met Herr Worbs and we spend several hours discussing hunting in his area. He issued me a hunting permit and then I drove to Ramsau, a scenic little village not far from Hitler's famous retreat, "The Eagle's Nest." There I met my young *Revier Jaeger*, Michael Groll. He is a professional hunter employed by the Ramsau Forestry Office. After a cup of coffee, Mike checked my gear and discarded unneeded food and equipment. When he finished, my rucksack still weighed about 50 pounds with just the essentials.

I discovered the *Revier* was located on top of a high mountain. The only ways up were by a German Army cable car or a six hour walk. We took the cable car. After a 10 minute ride, we arrived at the top.

It was a beautiful sight. The rocky plateau was over 6,700 feet above sea level. On both sides of us there were cliffs with a sheer drop of over 1,000 feet. Patches of snow could be seen on the surrounding mountains.

Mike decided we would spend the first night in a large cabin near the cable car station because it was another four kilometer hike to the *Jagdhuette*. After settling in, we began the evening *pirsch* (stalking). We walked about two kilometers to a high pinnacle overlooking a large pine dotted alpine meadow. This was a *Brunftplatz* (rutting place)

The best time to hunt red stag is during the rut. At this time, the stags fight fiercely but seldom kill each other.



where the stags came to collect and fight for their *Rudels*. About six o'clock we heard the first *Hirsch* bellow out his challenge.

Three other stags answered from various points in the surrounding hills. The meadow was rimmed by rocky peaks and pine forests, and the stags booming calls echoed and were amplified by the bowl-shaped basin. None appeared in the meadow, but Mike was certain we would see many stags in the next few days.

The next morning we got up at four o'clock and stalked along a trail bordering a sparsely forested hill. This was a good feeding place for red deer and chamois. Five minutes after we started, Mike suddenly stopped and peered through his binoculars. Standing broadside, about 50 meters away, was a hind. She watched us for a few seconds and then trotted up the hill. Two more hinds and a calf joined her - but no *Hirsch*.

Ready To Shoot

Continuing for a few hundred meters we spotted two chamois in a ravine below us. We stopped and watched them graze; then 15 more chamois appeared from another ravine and joined them.

Later a *Hirsch* bugled from the top of the knoll. Mike was scanning the hillside when he exclaimed, "*Hirsch Schiessen*" (stag shoot). I had been watching the chamois and didn't see the stag. I looked in the direction Mike was pointing and saw a small eight-point *Hirsch* heading down the hill toward us. The landscape was criss-crossed with deep ravines. I was ready to shoot, but Mike wanted me to use his rucksack for a rifle rest. By the time we got situated, the stag had disappeared behind a small rise. We waited five minutes and didn't see it again. I was disappointed, but Mike was certain we would see a better trophy animal.

After the morning hunt was over, we returned to the cabin and had breakfast with some of the German Army Alpine troops. We then packed up and struck out for the *Jagdhuette*. The trek through the alpine scenery was wonderful. With rucksack and other gear, it proved to be quite a chore.

The *Huette* was situated in a long narrow valley hemmed in by lofty peaks. It was really isolated! There were *Hirsch* and chamois tracks 30 meters from the door.

Outside the *Huette*, Mike practiced using the *Hirschruf*, or call, to imitate the bellow of a rutting stag. The *Hirschruf* was made from a cow horn which amplified his voice resulting in a sound exactly like *Brunft Hirsch*.

The afternoon hunting was an entirely new and slightly painful experience. Mike said we would stalk behind the *Huette* for an hour or so. He was going to use the *Hirschruf* in the pine thickets to try to find a responsive stag. There was one catch: we would not wear shoes to assure a quiet stalk. In our socks, we covered about four kilometers along game trails. Visibility was limited because of the thick evergreen bushes. Mike used the call several times, but no stag took up the challenge. In a small glade we found a well-used waterhole with numerous fresh tracks, but we didn't see one animal.

"We breathlessly arrived at the edge of the meadow . . ."

Returning to the *Huette*, we changed clothes and ate, then began the steep and difficult climb to the large meadow, where we had heard the stags on the first evening. The mountain side was interspersed with deep ravines and a forest consisting of widely scattered pine trees, none of which were over 30 feet high. Along the trail, we saw many chamois with young *Kitz* but reached the top without sighting a single red deer.

It was late when we approached the meadow, and in another hour it would be dark. We were walking very fast along the only road in his *Revier* when Mike suddenly stopped and said, "I smell a *Brunft Hirsch*." (A rutting stag emits a strong deer odor that can be smelled over 200 meters when the wind is in your favor.) Looking to our left we saw a red deer hind. Then the stag



Equipment for stag hunting will include a scoped rifle with a muzzle cover, rucksack, binoculars and walking stick.

appeared! All I could see was his large rack and head, as he was behind a stand of small pines. Mike made a quick decision and said, "*Hirsch Schiessen*." But before I could raise my rifle, the stag quietly vanished. We went into the forest where the *Hirsch* had stood, hoping it hadn't gone too far.

Mike was looking toward the meadow, and then I saw the stag with his *Rudel* about 600 meters away. For some reason, the *Hirsch* had circled the meadow instead of seeking the security of the dense pine forest. We ran across the rocky terrain to get within rifle range.

We breathlessly arrived at the edge of the meadow, the three red deer were standing under a large pine tree about 350 meters away. Apparently they hadn't seen us. Even though they were over the normal 200 meter shooting limit, Mike told me to shoot. (Later, he said that it was too good a *Hirsch* to pass up and that he had confidence in my shooting ability.) I was out of breath, but the *Hirsch* started walking so I quickly settled down, rested my rifle on a grass-covered mound of earth, took a deep breath, let it half out, and squeezed the trigger. With the recoil of the rifle, I lost sight of the animal. I saw the two hinds running up the hill toward the forest; however, the stag veered to the right and ran straight across the meadow, disappearing behind some

scrub pine. Mike told me he thought I had hit the animal in the hindquarters, because it had kicked with its rear legs when I fired.

We waited five minutes and then started toward the spot where we had lost sight of the stag. Mike posted me on a high rock overlooking the entire meadow while he looked for the *Hirsch*. He found the animal about 100 meters from the spot I had shot at it. We discovered the 150 grain bullet had hit the upper part of the heart. I found the bullet lodged in the skin; it had not exited as I had expected. The *Hirsch* was nine years old, with five points on one side and four on the other.

Mike presented me with the shooter's branch which I placed in the band of my hat. He also placed a pine branch in the mouth of the stag. This is called the last bite. These traditions are carefully followed in Germany and Austria. Most of the colorful customs have been passed on for centuries.

We field dressed the animal and left it in the meadow, because it was almost dark. Two stags began roaring near the edge of the forest a few hundred meters away. Mike was hoping for a shot at a minor stag. We waited 30 minutes, but they didn't leave the dense stand of pines. It was a moonlit night and we walked about five kilometers back to the *Jagdhuette*. It was so clear that we could follow the trail without any problem.

The next morning the German Army helped us take the stag back to the cable car station. It weighed about 260 pounds dressed. For an Alpine *Hirsch*, it was a large animal.

The *Hirsch* is a wary and intelligent animal. Hunting them in the high forests, just below the timberline, is a thrilling experience. In the *Brunft*, there is a very good chance of taking home a fine trophy even though it takes a lot of climbing and effort. If you want a new and totally different type hunt, try for a royal red deer stag in the high country of the Old World.

Only 50 of the 83 *Hirsch* allocated to American Forces *Jaegers* were taken. In the Land Hesse Trophy Show, I was awarded a silver oak leaf; at the annual U.S. Forces Trophy Show, a bronze medal for this fine *Hirsch*.