

## Dateline: Oregon

### Pheasant, Chukar Partridge, Valley Quail and Hungarian Partridge

- **Timetable:** Sept. 15 though March 31: walk up shooting over dogs; November through January: driven pheasant hunts
- **Accommodations:** Five-star lodge
- **Food:** Fine cuisine
- **Hunt:** Easy to moderate

Looking for the best? **Highland Hills Ranch (HHR) in North Central Oregon has it all and was one of the finest wing shooting adventures I have ever experienced**, surrounded by immaculate customer service and flawless operational efficiencies.

Located amidst an incomparable ecosystem of a high desert roaming plains, **HHR's overall experience, which is enhanced by the creative vision of founder Dennis Macnab and organizational talent of ranch managers Tyla and Scott Kuhn, is recognized today by Beretta's Trident Program**, an innovative quality-rating system providing an objective assessment of the complete guest experience. HHR has been awarded two tridents and is one of only four hunting complexes to receive this rating in the United States.

I visited HHR in October 2011.

HHR's lodge is stunning. Its western design and pine construction offers spacious rooms and lounges, and guests enjoy oversized stone fireplaces, sporting decor, fully stocked bars, large screen TVs, and elegant and comfortable furniture. Other features include six double occupancy bedrooms with fully

equipped private baths, a game room with billiard table, exercise equipment, satellite Wi-Fi, telephone and fax service. In addition, five double occupancy



guest cabins close by deliver the same elegance and comfort as HHR's main lodge, yet with additional privacy. Spacious porches in the lodge and cabins offer spectacular views of the cultivated land and rim rock canyons below. **There are no TVs in the bedrooms, as camaraderie between guests is one of the many perks promoted at HHR.**

Hunters arrive in the early afternoon and are treated to a round of sporting clays. **Simulating highflying driven pheasants, the last round offers vast numbers of targets presented at high elevations, making this a challenging shooting opportunity.**

The next day, walk up hunts begin at 9 a.m. Highly trained and courteous guides deliver a safety talk while obedient and effective dogs anxiously wait in trucks that comfortably transport guests to nearby hunting areas.

Birds are found in creek bottoms, flat cultivated fields and high rolling grasslands. Guests will hunt in groups

of two or three, and guests' parties will not be mixed. Hunters will take turns at shooting, and no shots may be taken at birds flying close to or directly over the heads of fellow guides and hunters. As German shorthair and English pointers go on point, field-bred English cockers are sent in to flush the birds. All low shots are strictly prohibited. All birds retrieved are subsequently handed to the shooter for inspection and comments. **An HHR Grand Slam consists of a shooting a pheasant, a Hungarian partridge, a valley quail and a chukar partridge on any morning or evening hunt.**

HHR has an abundance of wild birds and also practices an early release program. **Unlimited upland game bird shooting is possible due the skillful way in which HHR manages its bird habitat.** Habitat management procedures include erosion control, protection of native grasses, establishment of food plots, predator relocation and the development of water supplies. So effective are HHR's bird management procedures that birds breed naturally at the ranch.

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The result of these efforts is strong flying birds yielding exciting flushes.

**Driven pheasant hunts are held five times a year from November to January, requiring a shooting line of nine guns minimum.** Several thousand pheasants are released five days prior to the hunt. The actual hunt is four days. A shooting clinic is conducted on the first day to sharpen swing-though-shooting techniques and there are three drives a day for the next two days. Beaters and flushing dogs push the birds over the line of shooters. **Approximately 400 birds pass over the shooting line per drive.** A good average is one downed bird for every three shots, leaving vast numbers of birds in the fields below for after the shoot.



Hunters then engage in fantastic walk up shoots on the fourth day.

Bagpipes, traditional meals of haggis, tatties and neeps, bull shots and other fine English drinks set the mood for this old world hunting experience. **Traditional British attire is recommended when attending these pheasant releases.**

The cuisine at HHR is unequalled. Dinners start in the lounge with drinks and chukar and pheasant hors d'oeuvres garnished with a variety of cheeses, hams, olives and other delicacies. Over a large wooden dinner table, Chef Keith Potter shares the menu with all and gladly responds to everyone's questions. Italian plates dominated the menus during my stay (fresh salads, minestrone, lasagnas and braised meats) with the last supper being a hearty beefsteak with potatoes and gravy. HHR's hostess Dawn Brown comments on the wines offered and serves the presentation plates boasting the chef's succulent creations. Rich fruit desserts, cakes and pies top off the evening meals, and if guests prefer, thick chocolate may be poured over any of these dishes.

Breakfasts and lunches are just as exquisite as dinner, with distinct homemade breads giving as special touch to all meals. No alcoholic drinks are served before any hunt. HHR's staff welcomes

individual food requests due to special needs or preferences.

September, October and March offer the warmest temperatures, allowing hunters to use light clothing. November, December and January provide cooler weather with the occasional skiff of snow and call for more layered apparel. Being a high desert region, it is usually cold in the morning, but temperatures rise rapidly as the sun comes out. Although HHR gets little rain, it is always smart to pack lightweight raingear. Hunters should also bring a game vest, upland pants, waterproof boots, shooting gloves, eyewear and hearing protection, toiletries, personal medicines **and slippers, as no boots are allowed in the lodge.**

Chaps, shooting vests, hearing protection, monogrammed shirts and other hunting gear and clothing may be purchased at HHR's Pro Shop. Shotguns are available for rent with prior reservation. An HHR cap will be given to all guests and long distance phone calls are complimentary.

The simplest way for out-of-state hunters to reach HHR is to fly into Portland International Airport and rent a car. From there take 1-84 east for approximately 137 miles to Arlington Exit 137; turning south on Highway 19 for 17 miles and left onto Upper Rock Creek Road for 10 miles. Finally, a left on Wolf Hollow Lane, followed by a quick right turn, and guests will have arrived to HHR's gate. This scenic drive will take roughly 2 1/2 to 3 hours. Airports closer to the HHR can be found in Pendleton and Condon. Rental or shuttles service cars are available at all these airports and cities.

HHR receives hundreds of guest a year, many of whom are repeats. Booking far in advance might be a good way to ensure a reservation.

For more information: **Jeri Booth, The Detail Company, 832-473-1474, [www.detailcompany.com](http://www.detailcompany.com); HHR, 866-478-4868; [www.highlandhillsranch.com](http://www.highlandhillsranch.com).**

— Charles B. Kenny Jordan



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