



Aventura Argentina

Join Ben and hunting companions Casey McCallum and Mick Ridolfi as they journey to Argentina in search of a South American hunting adventure!

By Ben Salleras

Whether through questionable decision-making; genetics, or just pure chance, I've ended up in some pretty hairy situations during my life, particularly in the hunting arena. I'm probably the only person I know that might give Mr. Jarrod Vyner a run for his money, and that's a big call. Our trip to Argentina was one of the wildest experiences of my life, during which there was an unusually high density of mishaps, and I'd like to share with you a few tales from this particular hunting trip. Rather than going into the usual intricate detail about the stalks and the encounters with game, I want to relive a few of the craziest parts of our adventure; share my thoughts on the Argentine hunting experience overall, as well as provide a review of the exceptional outfitter our crew hunted with – Poitahue Hunting.

Blackbucks have been a species of fascination for me for quite a few years. We've all heard the stories of that mythical population still existing in WA, and the herd that once persisted up the Cape, only to be shot out by the QLD Government (allegedly...), amongst a

few rumours of sightings here and there. Over the years I have reached points of absolute obsession with these animals, as have many of my mates. About 5 years ago I started to learn about the bowhunting scene in Argentina, and soon realised that this was the premiere destination worldwide to hunt true free range Blackbuck. Originating from India and surrounds (where they are a highly threatened species), they also live wild in Texas, with very small localised populations in Hawaii and Australia. As I really got stuck into researching hunting in Argentina, I started to see many parallels between the hunting there and here in Australia. We share quite a few of the same species, which are predominantly introduced (feral) species, and for that reason the hunting is much less regulated compared to other countries. The red stag hunting is world class and the biggest attraction for international hunters, with many other interesting species also running wild, including water buffalo, fallow deer, chital (axis) deer, various wild sheep, wild boar, capybara and puma (mountain lion) just to name a few. My mate Santiago Rossi



Persistence ultimately rewarded Casey with an impressive black buck antelope.



The incredible Poitahue Estancia (homestead) is well over 100 years old and home to a variety of antiques and mounts.



Ben with his 4 horned (Jacob's sheep) wild ram.

wrote a very informative article on bow-hunting in Argentina in a previous edition of South Pacific Bowhunter magazine, which goes into further detail.

I first made contact with Santi Rossi and his amigo Santiago Diaz Mathe back in early 2011. Santi R has been the Head Guide at Poitahue for several years now, while Santi DM is the Manager of Poitahue Hunting. Both are absolute legends, who live and breathe bowhunting, and know how to have a laugh. The urge to hunt in Argentina was very strong, and the stories and photos provided by the two Santis fuelled my fire big time. I finally found the time to make this dream trip happen in 2015, and was keen to share the experience with some good mates. Before long, fellow blackbuck addicts Casey McCallum and Mick Ridolfi and his lovely girlfriend Karla had signed up for the journey, and plans were in motion. Karla happens to be originally from Chile – which was an absolute blessing for us three blokes, who could not speak a word of Spanish. She saved our asses on a daily basis, and was an incredible help with organising logistics, as well as basic survival anywhere outside the Poitahue ranch. I honestly believe, that without Karla there, we probably would have died. I'm not even joking.

After meeting up in Sydney, we flew direct to the city of Santiago in Chile. We had figured the most cost effective and adventurous (yep, we got that right) option was to hire a car from Santiago, and drive across the border into Argentina, through the mighty Andes, and across half of Argentina to the vast La Pampa region smack bang in the middle of the country. Our misadventures started almost immediately, when the guy dropping off our hire car to the airport connected with another vehicle en route, smashing a side mirror off our Suzuki SUV. As a result, he had to come back with us to the hire company's base office in the middle of Santiago, which meant one less seat; this now meant that we were crammed in with our bow cases and suitcases like sardines. I carried my suitcase on my lap, it was jammed up tight against the windscreen, and I had zero view of anything in front of me. It was an interesting ride into the city, the sights, sounds and smells of this city are so totally different. Santiago was a real eye-opener, so endlessly huge and bustling, life was much different here to anywhere else I'd been before.

After waiting around in a strange office for several hours, with Karla leading



Hunters, Mick (left), Ben (centre) and Casey (right) ready to take on the Poitahue hunting estate.

up the communications with the hire company, we were finally on our way to our hotel in another part of Santiago. The next morning we got an early start and headed for the Chile-Argentina border crossing, located right up in the middle of the Andes. Excitement levels were fully amped as we started our 1200km journey across the middle of South America. A couple of hours in, we hit the border crossing, and were faced with (what we thought was) a fairly huge line-up of vehicles of all shapes and sizes being processed by the immigration authorities. The processing facility was basically a massive shed with multiple lanes of traffic entering. It was pure chaos like I've never seen before. After a two-hour wait, it was finally our turn to be processed. Panic ensued fairly quickly, when we realised that we'd somehow all overlooked the requirement to obtain a specific visitor's visa prior to arriving at the Argentina border (we were supposed to have organised it online before arriving). After a few hectic moments with border security, Karla convinced them to allow us to use their computers to apply for the special visas online in their office, which we managed to do, each taking our turn on a single computer. After another hour or

so, the much-relieved team finally made it across the border and onto Argentine soil for the first time.

Later that day after making it through the winding pass across the Andes, which were stunningly huge but extremely harsh and dry, we entered the city of Mendoza. Navigation around the city was difficult, even with our in-car GPS and at least two iPhones running Google Maps, we struggled to make any sense of anything. Finally after an hour of driving around, and consistently awesome driving (on the 'wrong' side of the road) by Mick, we found a good hotel and checked in. The next day we'd be travelling the second leg from here to the hunting area near Santa Rosa in the La Pampa province.

Challenges ensued for the remainder of the journey. Instead of getting a bunch of pesos out right at the beginning, we relied on our credit cards, which were very hit-and-miss. Sometimes they worked, sometimes they didn't. Some service stations had ATMs, some didn't. Some accepted our debit cards, some didn't. The challenges around simple tasks like refuelling and buying food entertained us to no end, nonetheless

the 'blackbuck-mobile' stayed in motion and we kept ourselves fed and watered. We journeyed through the heart of Argentina's rural interior along several dead straight highways, we were entertained by spotting foxes and all kinds of new bird species along the way. Late in the afternoon we finally hit the driveway of Poitahue's free range hunting concession, and the serious game spotting began!

We were greeted by Santi R, it was awesome to finally meet him, a moment that had been a long time coming. The Poitahue Estancia (homestead) was incredible, well over 100 years old and like nothing any of us had seen before. The walls of the quarters where we stayed were adorned with all kinds of antiques and hunting trophies, from puma skins to gigantic red stag mounts to old rifles and all kinds of ancient tools, the displays were magnificent. The old building had a very historic, rustic feel to it, representing a bygone era of early settlement in Argentina.

The scents wafting from the kitchen were out of this world, and soon we were treated to beers and our first feed



Mick with a cunning fox taken during the hunt.

of incredibly tasty authentic Argentine tucker. The food was a real highlight of our stay, we were treated to amazing feasts each day, all sorts of things I can't remember the names of now. The ladies in the kitchen were skilled beyond belief; we were all in heaven when it came to breakfast, lunch and dinner. We shot our bows late in the afternoon, Macka and Mick showing off their long-range skills, ready for the challenge of the blackbuck. Soon we would learn just how tough these little buggers were going to be!

Poitahue means 'lookout point', and the hills at the ranch were an important lookout for the local Indians many centuries ago. They to this day provide a very important glassing spot for scanning the many plains below. The terrain in the hunting area was very unique compared to anywhere I've hunted before – exclusively sandy soils; extremely dry, and no watercourses, rather some small soaks here and there. The vegetation was not dissimilar to parts of South Africa or central western Queensland. There were a few rolling hills, and some thick patches of scrub near the soaks. The majority was very open though, with minimal grass or shrub cover for stalking. I could tell

straight away the stalking difficulty was going to be next level.

Then we were introduced to the 'rosetas'. The skin-piercing prick each time another one found my knee still makes me shudder! Think of goat's head (or cat's head) burrs, except completely surrounded in those same spikes, not just two. The ground was literally covered with them, there was no escape! You just had to grit your teeth and bear it, until after about 50m of belly crawling, your entire knee would be so thickly coated in them that no more could penetrate. I was pulling splinters from my hands and legs for months afterwards. The stalking was seriously testing; you had to be 1000% committed to the cause each and every time!

Over the first couple of days we saw plenty of blackbuck, including several monster rams. Blackbucks are an animal that seem to never stop running around, a bit like a dingo. They are rarely walking, or casually feeding, and only rarely did we find them bedded. When they did bed down, they made sure it was right out in the middle of a completely open paddock (covered in rosettas of course). They are

a plains animal by nature, and effectively use open terrain to their advantage. We all had half chances, Macka and Mick had painstakingly close shaves a couple of times. We spotted the odd red deer, including a really huge stag on the first morning, and saw the odd herd of buffalo feeding off in the distance in the forested areas. Herds of wild sheep were also occasionally spotted, they frequented the hilly areas. Amongst them were some cracker wild rams, and a few 4-Horn rams also. I had my heart set on trying to take a hybrid mouflon ram (there was some mouflon bloodlines mixed in the wild sheep herd), and planned to take any opportunity that presented on such an animal. There was literally action all around us, it was so much like being in Africa again – so many different hunting opportunities, all presenting their own unique challenges to the spot-and-stalk bowhunter.

The native wildlife we encountered was a continuous blowout; the foxes particularly were thick, with sharpshooters Macka and Mick scoring a few each. I missed the only two chances I had unfortunately! The birdlife was quite incredible; we saw burrowing owls, rheas (large flightless birds) and the noisy but beautiful parakeets. The armadillos were entertaining, their burrows were everywhere, they were quick to scurry back down them when spooked. We were always on the lookout for pumas, which live in the area also. One of the gauchos came across some fresh tracks on one particular day we were there, but we didn't manage a sighting. Pumas rarely allow themselves to be seen.

One of the most entertaining parts of our hunt was our night time viscacha hunting missions. Viscachas are a native rodent that's something like a cross between an Australian bilby and a capybara, they create huge underground tunnel networks, and only emerge at night. They drag sticks to their tunnel entrances, able to completely block certain entrances to their own design and desire. The best part – they were incredibly tasty. We managed to nail a couple each with our bows under spotlight, and also quite a few with the .22, providing quality meat for the kitchen. It was an awesome bit of fun on some nights chasing these completely random but tasty critters.

The main reason I'd come all this way, was to primarily hunt blackbuck, but after a few days, the urge to hunt a South American water buffalo became too strong to resist. The buffalo in Argentina are technically the same species to our

own water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*), but are markedly different in their appearance. The horns are generally much smaller, with a tighter curl. The facial features are notably different also. To the target butt I marched, and after some tuning I had the 250gn VPAs hitting sweetly, and was ready to take on a bull. We had sighted a big herd of maybe 50 animals frequenting a scrubby area a few kilometres from the Estancia, and Santi knew there was a particularly big trophy bull in amongst them. Santi took his video camera and off we went in search of the herd. By mid-afternoon we located them in a forested area, we could hear their snorts and grunts from a distance. Steadily sneaking in, we soon realised the herd was slowly feeding right in our direction, and before we knew it we had buffalo feeding our way left, right and centre. Amongst them – the big bull! I split from Santi and kept edging in closer, finding a tree I could use for cover. I got to the base of the tree, and had the bull feeding pretty much towards me but at a slight angle, about 100m out. Other cows and young animals near him fed in our direction also. The wind was spot on, and the scene was set for a perfect ambush. He came in broadside at about 30m, but stayed behind branches

and shrubs, frustratingly each time he stopped to feed for a moment he was obscured. He made one last move into a position broadside at about 30m, again stopping behind a bunch of branches; there was no clear shot. I was at full draw, but had to let down. At that moment, a cow that had fed to within 10m behind me spooked, and without hesitation 50 buffalo set flight into the thicket, the ground shook for a good few moments as they thundered out of there to parts unknown. There was no hesitation, these things were wired!

Over the next couple of days Santi and I had some really close shaves, on one occasion I had several buff feeding past me at under 5m while hidden in some really thick bush, it was a huge rush getting so close to them. We just couldn't quite get into position again on a good bull, no matter how hard we tried. Eventually we came across a smaller herd of bachelor bulls, and amongst them were a couple of nice trophy bulls. They were feeding out in a very open area, with almost zero cover. I had learnt over the previous few days that these bovines were clueyer and edgier than any other bovine I've hunted, with eyesight equal to a fallow deer. I was genuinely shocked by how much

different they were to scrub bulls, buffalo and banteng back at home.

There was just enough undulation in the open plains for me to belly crawl into position, and before I knew it one of the better bulls was feeding my way. In fact he came my way so quickly that he spotted me out in the open before I even had time to string an arrow. As he edged closer, staring straight at me in quite a threatening fashion, I ever so slowly pulled an arrow out. As he propped at about 40m, death staring me straight down his nose, I decided to slowly rise and shoot, opting to take the front-on shot which I knew was very effective on buffalo if placed correctly. Unfortunately the arrow dropped a couple of inches low, and while bleeding heavily the shot was not fatal. That sickening feeling overcame me as I watched the bull trot across the open hills with his two mates. Running on a big shot of adrenalin, I circled out wide to try to cut him off. It didn't quite work out, and it wasn't until the next day, after some stressful hours trying to relocate my bull after some epic tracking, that much to my relief I managed to put him down for keeps. I was stoked with my first animal on South American soil, he was a nice trophy bull and one I've dreamed about



An ecstatic Ben and guide Santi Rossi with a prized South American water buffalo.



Lengthy waits at border crossings proved to be most troublesome as the hunting party tried to keep to tight time schedules.



A group of wild sheep encountered in hard to stalk open terrain.

for quite a while now. One of my long-term goals is to take all of the bovines of the world with bow, so this was a big box ticked. With the help of Macka, Mick, Santi and the other guides, we removed the cape for a shoulder mount, and field butchered him, taking home all edible cuts. The job took us well into the night and the cervezas back at camp that night were well deserved.

After getting the job done on my buff, I resighted my bow back to blackbuck arrows, and the hunt for these crafty little buggers continued. It was seriously tough going, without any doubt the hardest stalking I've ever experienced. They were onto us from miles away, never stopped still, and pretty much made us feel like complete idiots on a daily basis.

Eventually I decided I needed a change of game and focussed my attention on the wild sheep, taking a really nice wild ram with a huge spread, and also a 4-Horn (or Jacob's Sheep) ram. Both were beautiful trophies, and being a sheep freak, I was over the moon with them. Macka also nailed a really nice hybrid ram, with some

mouflon bloodline in him. The wild sheep were tough to stalk in the open country, but once they entered the forest it was game on! I spent a huge amount of time belly crawling across the open rosetta-infested plains trying to get into position for shots on rams, only to be busted at the last moment. Over, and over again. I'll save the full story for the campfire sometime!

At one stage while putting in a stalk on a group of rams, I took a bedded fallow buck by surprise in thick scrub, which stood up out of its bed and stared at me for a millisecond too long. I already had an arrow on the string, and drilled him quartering on, he barely made it 20m before collapsing. He was huge on one side and malformed on the other, an interesting trophy and one I was not passing up in that moment.

As our Argentine hunting adventure began to near its end, we were beginning to realise that the reality of taking a blackbuck by stalking with a bow and arrow was far more complicated and difficult than we ever imagined. Mick had come so

painstakingly close, hitting a twig on his best shot chance and missing by inches. In standard Macka fashion, he managed to make the magic happen on the second last day, securing a beautiful trophy ram – what we'd all been dreaming of. The ram had been injured fighting (blackbuck are ferocious fighters), and was a little worse for wear, but Macka managed to pull a beautiful long shot to secure him.

The closest I came was on the very last afternoon. I had been sitting in an ambush position on a well-used game trail late in the afternoon. Everything was quiet, I had only seen a few red hinds in the distance, when suddenly I heard the unmistakable sound of horns clashing in the distance. I could tell this was an epic and relentless fight, and it only took me a few seconds to realise it was definitely blackbuck. I decided to take the gamble and locate the fighting pair, heading up into the hills and soon spotting the two mature bucks engaging in their double sword fight from a distance. I stalked in using the minimal bits of cover available, and after allowing a few ewes to get out of the way, managed to get into 50m, with the rams continuing their epic fight in front of me. Tucked in next to the last available shrub, I ranged, drew, and waited for the rams to stop fighting to release my arrow at the bigger ram. The little buggers were fighting so hard and fast there was no chance of accurately shooting while they were fighting. At the moment they stopped, my arrow was on its way, but I had no chance. That ram had travelled at least 10m out of the path of my arrow by the time it got there. Not really 'jumping' the string, just running at the sound of the shot and getting well and truly out of the way with ease! Their reflexes are unbelievable, far more impressive than chital deer, and taking one of these animals with a bow is a serious undertaking spot-and-stalk. As I walked back to the Estancia in the dark, I looked up at the stars and could do nothing but smile after a week of humiliation at the hands of these beautiful little antelopes.

Our hunting days quickly disappeared, the action was thick and fast each day, and having such a ball, time went way too fast. We planned our journey back to Santiago to ensure we had ample time to make the flight – Macka and I would be flying out on the Sunday afternoon, while Mick and Karla were staying on a few extra days. Friday night was our final night at the Poitahue Estancia, we of course celebrated properly with Santi and the rest of the crew. It was going to be hard to leave, we would miss waking



Casey with his great hybrid wild ram.

up in this hunting paradise, and especially the incredibly tasty food, but not so much the rosettas! We got away on schedule reasonably early on Saturday after reluctant goodbyes, travelling north through the countryside. We made it to Mendoza well before dark, but were unsure whether the border crossing (a further 100km past Mendoza) would be open 24 hours. Because we had all purchased SIM cards in Chile, which by this stage had all run out of credit, we were unable to buy credit at local stores, and were unable to buy more credit online. This became very frustrating, and almost disabling! It's incredible how much you rely on having reliable internet access when overseas. We couldn't even use Google to check if and when the border crossing facility closed. We managed to find a park in the city, and went into a random hotel and asked to use the internet, they obliged, and we found out the border crossing closed at 5:30pm. It was about 4:30pm, and we decided it was going to be too tight – the best option was to stay the night in Mendoza and get a super early start in the morning. The border crossing reopened at 6am, so we figured we'd

leave at 4am so we'd get there really early and avoid any potential line-ups. It was a bullet-proof plan...

After finding a hotel Macka and I enjoyed a few rums down by the pool to celebrate the end of another memorable adventure. We were up early as planned, and in the darkness pointed the blackbuck-mobile in the right direction. Karla was in charge of the GPS, which had not been totally trustworthy at times. We headed off, in what immediately appeared to be the wrong direction – the GPS was sending us back East towards Buenos Aires. I was tracking our progress on Google Maps on my phone, and could clearly see we were heading along a major highway in the wrong direction. While I had no service (because I had no credit, and couldn't recharge), Google Maps had downloaded enough imagery on the first journey for me to be able to make out the major routes back to the border crossing, which I could see clearly on the map. Both appeared exactly the same in terms of their significance, except one looked less complex and more direct than the other. I piped up and decided to take

it upon myself to 'take over' the duty of navigation, having lost confidence in the GPS (we were going the wrong way!) and having trust in Google Maps. I started to call the shots, and Mick followed my direction. While we had left really early, we still had a long way to go to get back to Santiago in time for the flight, and didn't have time for any major errors. We headed along a fairly busy road, and I could clearly see on my screen this was one of only two 'major' routes that led back to the crossing...

About 20 minutes into our journey, I started to get slightly nervous. The road appeared to be fairly significant, but we were starting to pass less and less vehicles. This definitely wasn't the major highway we'd used on the way here. In the darkness the city limits started to disappear, and the surrounds became more rural. The road became less and less significant, and the lights of houses off the road became fewer. I could see on my screen though that this road was the most 'direct' route to the next town (the last town before the border). The atmosphere in the car as we suddenly dropped



Casey also managed to take a fox during his hunt.

from a bitumen surface to a dusty dirt road was carvable with a knife. We started to pass State Forest signs on the side of the road, adorned with pictures of pumas and lamas. Should we turn around? Would we risk being too late if we turned around now? There were a million things running through our four heads as we ploughed along into the darkness of the night, alone on a road that was quickly diminishing in its level of maintenance.

Then we hit the Andes. What ensued next was the most nerve-racking couple of hours of my entire life. The road literally turned into a goat track into the Andes wilderness, there were boulders the size of wheelie bins on the mostly single-lane road, and this winding track was the scariest road I've ever traversed in a vehicle. I think it was a good thing it was still dark, because looking down at whatever was beside us probably wouldn't have helped the situation. There was absolute silence inside the car, no one dared say a thing. Seconds felt like minutes.

We were all thinking the same thing – we could hit a dead-end any minute; it was too late to turn around; I had chosen the wrong road, and Macka and I were now at risk of missing our flights back to Australia..... I will never be able to describe that sickening feeling, but Macka, Mick and Karla will remember it well! I kept my eyes fixed on Google Maps, we were still making progress toward Uspallata, and just as the first rays of light hit the Andes, we saw the first signs of approaching the small town, a road sign telling us we only had 40km to go!

The greatest feeling of relief came over us as we came over a rise and first sighted the lights of Uspallata in the distance, in

a huge valley below us. We got into town, refuelled (which was badly needed by this stage), and now only had 240km to Santiago and 8 hours to get there – we were going to make it easily! The mood lifted and Mick put the pedal to the metal as we cruised with pace towards the border.

Fear again struck us deeply as we rounded a bend, to be confronted with about 5km worth of vehicles bumper to bumper at an absolute standstill. The line of traffic literally disappeared out of sight around the side of a mountain, many kilometres further. I tried to remain positive, but with 5km of vehicles not even moving in front of us, it wasn't looking good. Our little 'detour' had landed us a lot later than planned at the border crossing, and we had no way of telling how long this line of vehicles actually was! Hours went by, when finally we came around a bend and saw the reason for this mass blockage—a toll point, with only one operator, charging just one peso per vehicle. The traffic was free flowing after this bottleneck and we dearly hoped that no further hurdles would lay ahead. A tiny shot of hope was enjoyed by all for a few minutes....

But once again rounding another bend a few kilometres further, another massive line up of vehicles as far as the eye could see. Our hearts sank as Macka and I started to realise the likelihood of us making our flight was dissipating by the second. We were entertained by a half-tame fox which had learnt it could get an easy feed from the waiting lines of traffic, and marvelled at the beauty of the gigantic Andes, which had a fresh coating of snow since our first journey across the range. Again the traffic was moving at snail's pace, with hours passing before we

finally got to the official processing facility at the border crossing.

Our troubles had only just begun. The processing area was absolutely chaotic, the craziest scene you can imagine. After getting through several different line-ups to complete different parts of the process, all the time stressing out about our flight, we hit a real hurdle. On the initial entry into Argentina, immigration had somehow forgotten to stamp our passports! This was now turning into an actual serious situation, we looked like four illegal immigrants, who had never formally entered the country. Only Karla could understand any of the heated conversations going on between her and the armed officials, we were put in a room and left for what seemed like hours. This was really not a good situation, we were sweating bullets. Eventually however, Karla the legend got everything sorted, and with much relief, we were on our way again, with only 60km left to Santiago. The whole border crossing exercise had taken over 6 hours, much more than we anticipated. Had we not taken the crazy detour through the Andes, we probably would have made it there earlier, and avoided much of the traffic and endless line-ups. The missed plane flight now seemed less of an issue after what potentially could have happened at the crossing....

Would you believe it, it doesn't end there. After finally getting some Internet service (back in Chilean service), I started researching replacement flights (we arrived in Santiago pretty much the minute our plane took left the ground). They were all around the \$3000 mark, and didn't leave for a few more days. I was really stressing now, and poor Macka on his first international bowhunt outside of New Zealand was completely flipping out. We headed straight for the airport to try and sort something out. Being a Sunday, the Qantas office had closed at midday, so we couldn't speak to anyone there. Attempting to call the local Chilean Qantas office was fruitless – no answer. In desperation I called my sister Skye back in Townsville, it was 6:30am there. She luckily answered, I explained the situation, and in less than half an hour in an absolutely legendary and miraculous effort she had booked Macka and me replacement flights, leaving that same night, for about \$600 each – a great result considering what could have been. We were once again relieved and stoked that we would be getting back to Australia roughly on schedule, without breaking the bank. With time to burn we checked

into a hotel, went shopping in the biggest shopping mall in South America (it was stupendously huge) for some gifts for loved ones, and had our last dinner together as a team. Mick and Karla dropped us at the airport again, with plenty of time up our sleeve. We said our goodbyes, and Macka and I went to check in....

Macka had no dramas, but something had gone wrong with my ticket. The operator spoke very little English, but from what I could gather I didn't actually have a ticket! I called Skye again, who attempted to resolve the situation. She was on hold with Qantas for over half an hour, but finally got it sorted, Qantas had made an error with my booking. We had to run through security and through the entire airport to make our gate just in time. Could anything else possibly go wrong? You guessed it.

Arriving at the gate, we found our flight had been delayed, with departure pushed back by an hour. The departure gate waiting area was packed with people. Just down the hall about 100m was a bar – impossible to resist we headed straight there and downed some drinks. Reliving the hunt and enjoying a few rums for about 45 minutes, we decided to head back to the gate, which was literally just out of sight from our table. Rounding the corner, with an ample 15 minutes to spare, we found the waiting area

completely empty. There was one airline attendant at the desk, we ran up to him and said "We're on the Sydney flight". He responded, in broken English, "Sorry, this flight is closed". Our hearts sank for the 10th time this horrific day. I pleaded with him to let us on, but he wouldn't have it. I raised my voice and made it very clear we had already missed one flight today, and there was no way we were missing another one! He radioed through to someone on board, possibly the pilot, and the Spanish conversation that followed felt like it took hours. Finally he said "The captain has allowed you to board the flight, but you have to run!", and run we did! I was asleep in my seat before the plane left the ground, it had been the longest 24 hours of my entire life.

I almost kissed the dirt outside Brisbane airport when I finally got home, it had been the most hectic and stressful few days of my life, but all totally worth it. The lesson learnt – do what the outfitter recommends (which in this case was fly to Buenos Aires for them to pick us up and bring us to the hunting area)! It was all part of the adventure in the end, and at least we've got some crazy campfire yarns up our sleeve!

Our stay at Poitahue was like a dream – incredible hunting opportunities, a plethora of different game, in a unique setting unlike anything else in the world. The

hunting was tough, regardless of the species every stalk was a serious challenge, but that's fair chase bowhunting and that's why we love it. Hunting giant red stags during the roar would be a real buzz in that area, and I'll be returning one day to experience this for sure. The species one can hunt are many and varied, with the best wing-shooting in the world on tap for those interested. The entire crew at Poitahue are the best I've ever dealt with – excellent communicators, and more than helpful at every opportunity. The lodge and food was an experience in itself, the cultural experience we had was incredible, and has to be seen to be truly understood. This is big part of the reason I love bowhunting overseas – the travel component and experiencing totally different cultures is almost as enjoyable as the hunting itself. Bowhunting in Argentina offers a totally unique experience, in terms of the hunting and the travel, there is simply nothing like it anywhere else in the world. With good planning it would be very simple to avoid some of the challenges we faced!

If you've ever dreamed of hunting black-buck or experiencing your own Aventura Argentina – Poitahue is the place to go. You can check out their website (which has plenty of good videos) at www.poitahue-hunting.com as well as on Facebook. Feel free to get in touch if you want to learn more about this hunt.



Ben with his wild sheep, which carried an impressively wide spread.