

This report comes in from **Bryan Bailey (WA)**, who calls it simply "A Trip for Ibex." Bryan writes:

*I was walking around a convention in Reno, Nevada when I ran into my friend **Josh Spies (SD)** talking with the folks at the **Profi-Hunt** booth. Josh said he was scheduling a trip to Kyrgyzstan and suggested I come along. Josh and I had talked for years about getting to hunt together and this looked like a great chance. I would be hunting Mid-Asian ibex and Josh would be hunting Marco Polo argali along with two other hunters. Wanting some company on the ibex leg of my journey, I called my friend **Tom Fischer (ID)** to see if he would be interested in coming along. Tom had a bighorn sheep tag in Idaho the year before that I had gone down to help on, and thought he might be up for the challenge. He checked on the hunt dates and then confirmed his desire to join in the fun.*

*The next two years were full of phone calls back and forth, planning and confirming plane tickets, equipment, permits, deposits and lots of excited talk. All seemed like it was going smoothly when I received a call from Josh. It looked like they weren't able to get CITES permits for the importation of their sheep and were going to reschedule their trip for 2008. My suggestion to him was not to waste all the planning and still go hunt ibex instead of Marco Polos. He made some calls to the people at Profi-Hunt and they were great at getting the arrangements made in such a short order. Josh and **Steve Stout**, one of the other sheep hunters, would be traveling to Kyrgyzstan with us to hunt ibex.*

I flew out of Seattle and met Tom in San Francisco. We then boarded the long flight to Istanbul, Turkey. Once in Turkey, a representative from Profi-Hunt met us to help us get through customs and on to our hotel where Josh and Steve were waiting. A short night later, we were back on a plane to Kyrgyzstan where Vladimir was waiting to meet us. As we were loading the vehicles with our gear, Tom and I were introduced to our interpreter, Demar. We said our good-lucks to Josh and Steve as they would be hunting out of a different camp and off we went.

After a 4-hour ride, a stop to change into our hunting clothes, stow our gear, check our rifles and a light snack we met our hunting guides Kuban and Jaylo. We then tied our gear on and saddled up for the 7-hour horseback ride to camp. The ride to camp was uneventful with the well-behaved and trained horses. Camp was a nice surprise consisting of three tents and a yurt for Tom and me. We were to hunt out of main camp each day as the guides thought it was too cold to hunt out of a fly camp. It was nice because the yurt had a wood stove and cots, but it was a 3 to 5-hour horseback ride in the dark each morning and night to get to the hunting area.

After the bone-chilling ride up the valley the next morning we started our hike up the backside of a ridge. I followed Kuban down to a point overlooking a lower section of a draw where I got to see my first live ibex. There was a group of 20 to 25 with several billies in the bunch. It was exciting to finally see what I had traveled halfway around the world after. None of the ibex was what I was looking for. We then made our way up the ridge to where Tom and his guide Jaylo were. They had spotted a group and Tom was going to try and take a billy in



Bryan Bailey (WA) took this Mid-Asian ibex in Kyrgyzstan during November 2007. Bryan booked this trip with Profi-Hunt.

the bunch, but as we were getting into position they spotted us. The extreme cold, distance, gusting wind and moving ibex all contributed to Tom missing his shot. We regrouped and continued hiking for about three miles so we could get a look into some other draws to the east. About 1 p.m. we stopped for lunch and some glassing. We were able to spot several good ibex billies that were just too far away to go after that late in the day.

Day two was a total bust because a front had moved in overnight leaving 10 to 12" of snow and zero visibility. Day three found us back in the saddle three hours before daylight. After the horses could go no farther, we hiked up to the west. The day was very cold and overcast. We saw lots of ibex but they were either in inaccessible spots or too far away to go after. We did make a stalk on a great group of billies but they caught us and were off to the nearest 14,000-foot peak. The next morning we spent the first five hours on the horses traveling to the back end of the main valley. We had been riding slowly for about an hour, stopping to glass around each new bend. The guides had sent one of the wranglers to the

other side of the valley to glass our side. He quickly returned talking excitedly to Kuban and Jaylo. Our guides motioned for us to quietly get off the horses and follow them. We started to hike up the hillside. The climb was slow and treacherous as there was a foot of snow on the steep frozen ground and at over 12,000 feet we weren't moving very fast. As we crept forward, my guide Kuban suddenly ducked down and started pointing into the draw ahead. I peeked between some rocks and saw the ibex. Sliding closer through the rocks and snow, I slipped off the glove on my shooting hand and found the nearest rock.

As I put the legs of my bipod down, I glanced back at Tom who looked to be lining up on the ibex. I quickly scanned the 10 to 15 ibex and was settling the crosshairs on a big-bodied, dark-colored one when Tom touched off a shot. I fired as the billy turned to leave, knocking him down. One more shot was needed for insurance measures. Kuban was then by my side, slapping me on the back with a big grin. We quickly went to my fallen trophy as Tom took up the trail for the billy he had shot. Tom's ibex suddenly jumped up 100 yards in front of him where he quickly put him down for good. It was awesome to walk up on my ibex. He was just as big-bodied as he had been in my scope. His 45" horns were all beat up and chipped from 12 years of surviving in this harsh climate. We all worked to get the two ibex to a flat place for pictures and caping. I was amazed that Kuban and Jaylo were able to spend two to three hours taking care of the ibex without gloves on in the 5 to 10° weather. They loaded everything onto the horses and off we went on the 5-hour ride back to camp.

Two days later, Tom and I had traveled back to Bishkek where we stayed and waited for Josh and Steve, who were also successful in taking ibex trophies. We spent a couple of days in town seeing Kyrgyzstan culture and enjoying the local restaurants. I can't thank the people at Profi-Hunt enough. Everything went smoothly to and from Kyrgyzstan with their help. They made me feel comfortable about making my first hunt out of North America. It definitely won't be my last.

It does sort of get in your blood, doesn't it, Bryan?