

Bryan Bailey (WA) submitted this fine report about his Kuban (Western) tur hunt in Karachayevo-Cherkesiya, Russia in fall 2011:

*The day started cold and clear as we sat down for breakfast consisting of oatmeal, bread, cheese and tea. A typical breakfast for a sheep camp, but this spike camp was situated in the Caucasus Mountains, a Russian mountain range located halfway around the world. At 8,600 feet elevation the temperatures were dropping cold enough at night to freeze the water in our water bottles. After breakfast I went back to the two-man tent I was sharing with **Larry Lewis**, the other hunter in camp, and climbed back into my sleeping bag to try to warm up some. An hour later Alexey, the interpreter, came and said it was time to go. Since Larry had killed a ram the evening before, Alexey was staying in camp to finish caping his ram, allowing both of the local guides, Ali and Evon, to guide me today.*

We headed back to the same area where we had seen three rams in the previous two days of hunting. The night before, Ali and I had put them to bed on a rocky peak at the north end of the canyon, but when Evon and I started up the draw I suddenly heard the shrill whistle of a spooked tur. To our surprise we spotted the same three tur from the night before going up and over a steep ridge on the south side of the draw. I had thought we just blew it. If we had gone to the spot Ali and I were glassing from last night, the rams would have been only 250 yards down slope from us.

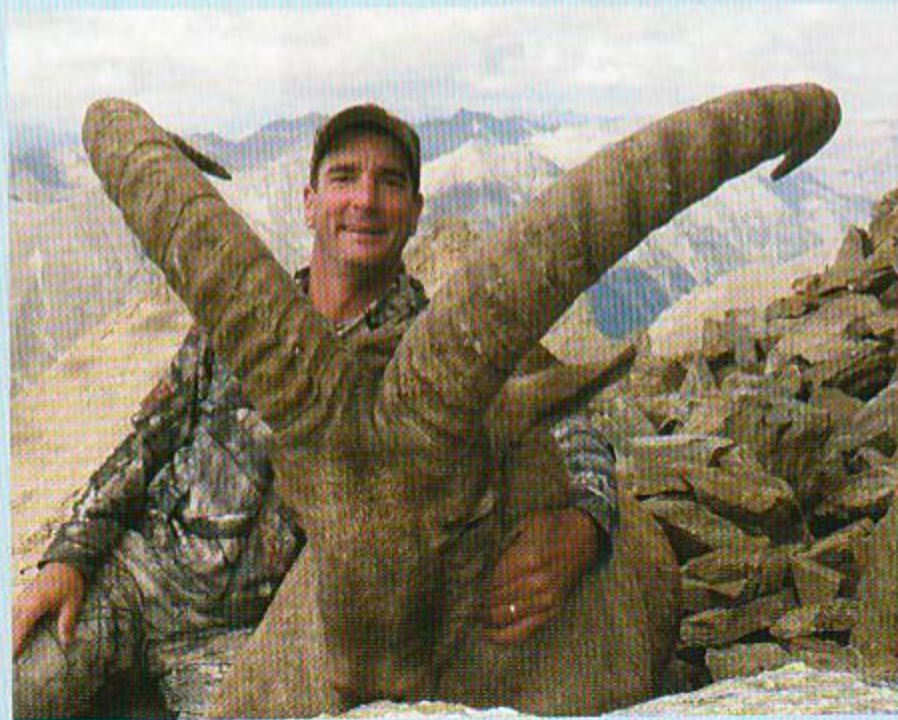
Evon took off to a spot where he could look up the draw and I went back to find Ali. By the time Ali and I got back and found Evon, he had spotted the ram. The three were picking

their way along the nastiest section of cliffs. This area was seriously vertical! Twenty minutes later the rams bedded down. It was time to go. I knew getting to the rams was going to be difficult, but that was what I had trained all summer for. I just hoped we could get up the mountain and find them before they decided to move again.

Ali and I started up the backside of the ridge and left Evon where he was to keep track of the rams in case they moved. The climb wasn't bad for the first hour. Yes, it was steep rocky ground, but footing was good as we climbed over the 9,500 feet elevation level. With frequent rests Ali and I continued up. Once we reached the crest of the ridge is where things got real interesting. In base camp, Alexey had warned me about some of the dangerous areas we would be hunting. I was a little unsure of exactly what he meant so I asked, "By dangerous do you mean steep?" With a very serious look he said, "No. Steep is steep, but dangerous is dangerous!" Now I understood what Alexey had been talking about. The ridge fell off on both sides in steep cliffs.

Ali and I slowly picked our way over around and through some of the worst ground I have ever hunted. Since Ali spoke very little English, he would point out a route and then turn to me with a questioning smile and thumb up. I would give him thumbs up back and we would continue up the route he had pointed out. I have to admit to have had some serious shaky legs several times in navigating the routes Ali had chosen for us. I can't begin to explain how difficult this stalk was. I just kept following Ali and kept replying with thumbs up.

Finally we hit the top and we started to cautiously poke our heads over the ridge, trying to spot our rams. We



Brian Bailey (WA) took this Kuban (Western) tur from Karachayevo-Cherkesiya, Russia in fall 2011. Brian hunted with ProfiHunt.

moved and glassed three to four times before Ali quickly jerked his head back and pointed excitedly right below the ridge. I chambered a round as I slid my rifle over the top in time to see two of the turs making a run for it. Even with my bare eyes I could tell the second ram was the better of the two and quickly centered the cross hairs on him. He turned slightly quartering away and that was all I needed. At the shot the ram humped up and turned down hill. I was ready to shoot again when Ali grabbed my shoulder and shook his head. Just then my ram tipped over. The missing ram then came into view below us, slowly following the remaining ram over the top.

What a relief I felt when I realized I had accomplished this seemingly impossible stalk. I was shaking so badly, I had to sit down for a few minutes to collect myself. Ali was all smiles and with a handshake he gave me thumbs up and said, "Good hunter, good trophy!" That was the most English I heard Ali speak on the entire hunt.

After collecting our gear, Ali started to make his way over to the fallen tur. Riding on my adrenaline rush, I followed Ali with little concern other than getting my hands on those horns. It was a challenging 30 minutes getting to him, but it was well worth the risk. The bodies on these animals are just huge. Ali and I struggled getting him into a position for pictures and skinning. Once we had him secure I really had a good chance to look at my trophy. The 31" horns showed 13 years of hard abuse the Caucasus Mountains had given the ram. He was everything I could have hoped for in a Kuban (Western) tur. A beautiful thick coat and stylish beard completed his regal look.

After pictures the work began taking care of the caping and prepping the meat. Once ready, Ali led out and once again I followed, trusting his skill in choosing a safe route. Forty minutes

later we were sitting on the ledge from which I had shot. Evon had made his way up to us to help take some of the load down the mountain. As we rested and had a bite to eat, clouds started to roll in and in no time at all it started to snow. The snow started slowly but by the time we had made it back down to spike camp it was coming down hard and the wind was picking up. We had a few celebratory toasts of vodka as we ate our dinner of Cup-a-Soup, bread, meat, and cheese before turning in for the night.

All night long the wind whipped the walls of the tent, making sleep impossible while stacking the rain fly full of snow. Around 6 a.m., Alexey came and told us to get our things together because we needed to pull out quickly. An hour later the horses were saddled with tents, gear, and tur loaded. With 10" of new snow on the ground, everyone had to walk out leading the horses. To say we were tired five hours later when we reached base camp would be an understatement. With a hot bowl of stew and dry clothes on we all were feeling much better. We packed the rest of our gear into the jeeps and started the eight-hour drive to town. After a relaxing evening and night's sleep, Alexey, Larry and I boarded a plane back to Moscow. The next afternoon I was loaded on another plane headed back to the States with my trophy.

When I booked this hunt with **ProfiHunt**, Alexey told me it would be a great adventure. He sure didn't disappoint. I can tell how much Alexey, Ali, and Evon love to hunt this area. They worked extremely hard in some of the nastiest mountains in the world and always had a smile on their faces. ProfiHunt's success over the years shows their commitment in making every trip a success. I am very thankful for all their effort in helping me harvest my trophy Kuban (Western) tur.