



Rusa on Mauritius

By Frank Berbuir



What, you might ask, can one hunt on Mauritius, the “star and key of the Indian ocean”, that lies in the southwest of the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar, nearly 2,000 km off the African continent?

Some time ago, on a hunting show in Germany, I met Lionel Berthault, the founder, and Nicolas Chauveau the director of Le Chasseur Mauricien. Their booth offered an attractive combination of hunting and holidays on the island of Mauritius. I had always associated Mauritius as a tropical paradise and vacation destination with white sand beaches and palm trees. It never crossed my mind that there might be a hunting opportunity on this Indian Ocean paradise out of a 5-star golf resort and spa. It sounded very interesting indeed, so I got acquainted with the gentlemen. (www.lechasseurmauricien.com)

I am addicted to bowhunting in southern Africa, that is for sure, but I have to admit that I was captivated to be and hunt on this beautiful island. There's an old and important tradition there of hunting the rusa deer (*Cervus timorensis rusa rusa*) that were first imported from Java by the Dutch Colonial Power in 1639. You can also hunt Indonesian wild boar, Japanese hare, guinea fowl, pheasant, francolin and, if you want, peacock.

A male rusa deer is a bit scraggy but nevertheless a gracious stag with heavy, six-point antlers.

During the rut, which starts at the beginning of July and lasts roughly two months, they sometimes "decorate" their antlers with tufts of grass, branches and leaves. In 2010 we were there during the rut, and I collected two gold-medal rusa and a pheasant with bow and arrow. We returned in 2013 in the beginning of November when it is nice and warm and I was lucky again to shoot an old rusa stag. End of October 2016 we made it back to Mauritius – this time I wanted to hunt on an abnormal or "non-typical" rusa stag and an Indonesian wild boar that I did not get previously.

Our 11-hour flight from Frankfurt took us overnight to Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport where Lionel was waiting for us early in the morning. The sun was shining and it was comfortable 24°Celsius. The hour's drive through small villages and large sugar cane fields, with the Indian Ocean to our left and interesting mountain scenery to our right, led us to our resort, the five-star Heritage Le Telfair Golf & Spa Resort in Bel Ombre, (www.heritageresorts.mu) a beautiful property right on the Indian Ocean with a private magnificent beach.

We spent the first day settling in and relaxing. The following noon Lionel, a certified professional hunter and bowhunter, picked me up and we drove about forty minutes to one of the three huge hunting grounds. As I mentioned, I wished to hunt an abnormal stag this time. Abnormal or non-typical would be less or more than six-point antlers. Less than



Strike one – guinea fowl.



Strike two – non-typical rusa stag.

six points are more easily found than more than six-point antlers, and I wanted to hunt one with more than six-points, which made it even more challenging.

Upon arrival at the beautiful hunting lodge we enjoyed a Mauritian coffee and discussed our hunt. We checked my bow and equipment and took some practice shots at several distances before Robby, a game warden and professional hunter, drove us deep into the hunting grounds where we started our glassing and stalking – hunting is only done by glassing, walking and stalking.

The vast area has some impressive

mountains, savanna, pine and eucalyptus trees and sugar cane fields. We walked up a small hill and climbed for a better view from a high-seat, a "mirador". We glassed for quite some time when suddenly three guinea fowl and a white duck sneaked in.

"Do you want to shoot a fowl?" Lionel asked. Why not, I thought. They can make a good eating - in Europe they are a delicacy.

"You can shoot a fowl, but don't shoot the duck! I know her, she has been living here for eight years," he added. Silently I pulled the arrow off the quiver and put it on the rest. The birds were standing at twenty metres. Slowly

Bowhunting: Mauritius: 2016

I pulled the bow to full draw and the green dot pin of my sight was focused on the breast of the left bird. When my release fired the carbon arrow, it smacked into the bird within a split second, killing it on the spot. Wow, a great start for the hunter and the guide. We could not see any deer so we climbed down and radioed Robby to pick up the bird. We went up and down hills, over some meadows and through a dense forest. At the edge of the woods we paused for a moment to glass the

area. We were lucky to spot a small group with two stags, an old big rusa, and a young two-year-old.

Lionel was excited. "Look at him. It is a non-typical male and has five points on the right and four on the left and a nice big rack too." Unbelievable – impressive to see through the binoculars, the kind of rusa we were looking for – great. But now we had to find out how we could approach them.

We were at the edge of the woods, and they

were on their way walking out on the other side. Between us and them were some small trees on dry grassland, and one high-seat built in a tree in the middle. That was maybe our chance to make it over there, as Lionel said that they might cross over to get to the small creek behind us. The wind was in our favor, so we stalked, crouched over, to the top of the stand. We stood up very slowly to check where the deer were, and were relieved to see them on their way, crossing our position. The wind was still good and the sun was shining bright behind us. The arrow was quickly and quietly placed on the arrow rest. The deer came closer and were at about 70 metres when I slowly pulled my bow to full draw. Lionel was focused on the rusa stag with his rangefinder-binoculars and whispered the distances ...50...45...40.

Finally, at 32 metres, the stag was alone, when a left step forward exposed his vital zone nicely broadside, and I sent the arrow on its mission. The broadhead cut through the chest and flew out on the other side – full penetration. He kicked with his hind legs before he jumped and ran off, followed by the rest, to collapse after seventy metres' flight. Lionel and I couldn't believe it. We pulled down our face masks, gave high-fives, and hugged enthusiastically. What an amazing performance of bow and arrow. Before we descended from our high-seat I needed to sit for a moment to calm my blood pressure.

We found the arrow full of lung blood, and the follow-up was easy. A big, non-typical rusa stag with five and four points was lying in front of us. We were silent for a while to absorb the atmosphere of this special moment before we honored him with some nice trophy pictures. Robby arrived to fetch us, and we loaded the rusa on the pick-up. Luckily, Robby had brought three ice-cold "Phoenix" Mauritian beers, which tasted brilliant on that sunny, warm and special afternoon.

The next couple of days were spent on a bicycle tour exploring the region and enjoying the many attractions Mauritius has to offer, including a visit of the capital Port Louis with its shopping malls; the Blue Penny museum to see the original "Blue Mauritius stamp"; the spice market; the Pamplemousse Botanical Gardens; Casela or Vanilla Park; the Underwater Sea Walk; dolphin watching and deep-sea fishing.

Then it was time for Indonesian wild boar in the hunting grounds of Bel Ombre, not far from the resort. The lodge is on a mountain with a tremendous view of the hunting grounds, down to the beach and Indian Ocean.

These pigs were introduced to Mauritius during the English, French, Dutch and Portuguese colonial era. They have small



Spectacular sunsets on Mauritius.



Strike three – Indonesian wild boar.

Equipment:

Bow: Mathews Z7x @ 70 lbs

Arrow Rest: Mathews Down Force

Arrow Quiver: Mathews 5-arrows, detachable

Sight: TruGlo Range Rover Green Dot

Peep-Sight: G5 Magnesium

Stabilizer: Sims Limbsaver Modular

Arrows: Carbon Express Maxima Hunter 350

Broadheads: Silverflame XL 125 & Slick Trick 125 Grain

Release: Scott Wildcat

Optics – Binocular: Zeiss Victory 10 x 40

Optics – Rangefinder: Nikon Archer's Choice



5 points antler.

bodies, and a boar of 30 to 40 kilograms is considered a big one. They can have nice big tusks – some, up to 20 centimetres. We drove deep into the hunting area before we left the car to start our stalk from a hilltop. The terrain made it exciting and physically demanding. Stalking in closely 30°C uphill and down, always keeping the wind in your favor, with many detours to prevent spooking deer or pigs, was extremely challenging. We went through little woods and grassland, crossed a small creek, and saw wallows that the boars frequented. We pushed through a bamboo forest that had arm-thick stems. We had stalked for several hours when we suddenly spotted a group of wild pigs moving uphill on a meadow. Excitement!

We followed them at a safe distance.

Without making any noise I extracted an arrow and placed it on the rest.

“They probably want to go to a wallow and eating area on the other side of the hill,” Lionel whispered. So we made our way there in a big circle, not to disturb or spook them. We had to go through a dense forest where there would be no shooting opportunity because of the thick foliage. Fortunately, close to the wallow was a tree-stand with good cover. Although some female pigs had arrived at the wallow, we sneaked to the stand and climbed up silently. The wind was perfect. Without making any noise I extracted an arrow and placed it on the rest. Then we saw the male boar coming and chasing the females around.

At snail's pace I drew my bow, put the sight pin on his vitals and followed him. When the bruiser was standing still and broadside, I released the Silverflame XL-equipped carbon arrow. It hit the pig exactly where I aimed, behind the right shoulder, penetrating the animal's body. The pig screamed and jumped up before it ran back into the woods. Both of us kept quiet, following the noise of cracking branches and leaves before there was silence. Interestingly, the females were still around and did not run away. I took a deep breath. Lionel gave me a tap on the back and whispered: “Well done, great shot. You shot your first wild boar on Mauritius.”

What an experience! Slowly my excitement

subsided and my blood pressure and adrenalin level went back to normal. We waited for about twenty minutes before we climbed down, went to the shooting spot, and picked up and followed the blood track which was clearly visible. Dusk was falling, but with the flashlight we could keep on the track, and after several circles we found the dead boar roughly sixty metres from where I shot him.

We were overcome with elation. I had got my first Indonesian wild boar on Mauritius. What an awesome experience and hunting day. We pulled the boar out of the woods and placed him on an old anthill for some nice trophy pictures. Lionel walked back all the way to get the car to load the boar. Luckily, he had a cooler box with two beers - a welcome end to that magnificent hunting day.

After a few more days at the beach and sightseeing on the beautiful island, we had to leave again, and as we drove to the airport I relived this memorable time. Once more we had enjoyed a great combination of bowhunting and real vacation. Thanks to all who made the trip happen, especially Lionel, Nicolas, Kathleen and Vanessa and the other nice people from Le Chasseur Mauricien. We will come back, for sure.

Always, good hunting and all the best.

Frank

German hunter Frank Berbuir is passionate about the outdoors and hunting – especially bowhunting, which he has practised for more than 17 years. Although he's bowhunted in several countries, he's become addicted to hunting in Africa since his first safari in 2004. Frank is a mechanical engineer and risk manager in the automotive industry. 🇩🇪



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