

ROXTONS

FIELD SPORTS

Adam Bromfield reports on his recent trip to Argentina

To ensure that we offer the best shooting in Argentina, in April I travelled to Argentina to visit some of our existing lodges and visit a couple of new lodges.

The direct flight from Heathrow to Buenos Aires was very straight forward. While it is a long flight, the late evening departure and early morning arrival worked well. I travelled straight from the International Airport in Buenos Aires via a quick lunch break in the Palermo district of the city, to the domestic Aeroparque airport. After a short flight north to Cordoba on a brand new Aerolineas Argentina 737, I was sitting in Rio de Piedras lodge having a coffee by 5.30pm. I was on a tight schedule but recommend that clients spend the day of arrival and a night in Buenos Aires before heading, rested and fresh, to Cordoba.

Rio de Piedras lodge is new to us and is located an hour north of Cordoba Airport in the heart of dove country. Run by the charming owner/operators Octavio Crespo and Ramiro Gonzalez Allende, the lodge is much more like a home than a commercial lodge. Each group is exclusive to the lodge and is hosted personally by Octavio or Ramiro who provide a fascinating insight into Argentina, its history, its politics and its future. The lodge is conveniently located just north of Villa de Tortoral, which means easy access to shooting fields in both the winter when the birds are in the fields and the summer when the birds are in the hills to the north and west of the lodge. The lodge has eight en-suite bedrooms, four of which are in the main lodge and four more which are located in a separate house, 150 yards away. A golf buggy is on hand to ferry you back and forth. The drinks cabinet was fully stocked, the food delicious and varied and the hospitality second to none.

I was lucky enough to enjoy a day of shooting doves in possibly the trickiest month of the year. April is when the harvest begins and the birds have a lot of options as to where to feed, so the scouts are doing double time to ensure that the guns get the best shooting possible. The shooting was everything one might expect; a huge variety of shots, with some very high and long crossing birds and plenty of them for the first



couple of hours of shooting. The volume of doves tailed off towards 11.00am and as I was shooting on my own, we nipped back to the lodge (25 minute drive) for a delicious BBQ lunch (normally taken in the field on days with full lines of guns).

The afternoon shoot was excellent with some very testing doves flying high over a belt of tall trees. Many people like to time their shooting trips to Argentina for the high birds all day long, when they are in the hills during their summer months; but I have to say even in the winter months when the birds are in the fields, there is an excellent variety of shooting and there are so many doves that you can decide how difficult you want to make it. I had two very pleasant nights at Rio Piedras before moving on further north.

By coincidence I had a team of guns down in Argentina at the same time as my visit, who had shot at Jacana, our favoured duck lodge in the Buenos Aires Province, with great success and had flown up to an airstrip close to Rio Seco Lodge, where I joined them. Rio Seco has just undergone a complete refurbishment and I have to say that it has transformed the lodge into a wonderful, first class venue from which to shoot doves. There are six rooms, all of which are en-suite and a fantastic fire pit on the terrace where the odd G&T after shooting was enjoyed. I was with the group for two days and two nights and they shot their socks off, ate too much delicious beef (if that is possible) and had the odd glass of delicious Malbec. The shooting was excellent with an amazing number of doves, plenty to satisfy even the most enthusiastic shot. It is an excellent lodge with great staff to match and small enough to be able to take exclusively with a group of friends.

I then drove 35 minutes south to Guayascate, which in my experience is one of the finest shooting lodges anywhere in the world. It was built from scratch to provide luxurious accommodation for dove shooting guests and it does exactly that. The lodge has ten bedrooms all of which are a good size and have large king size beds, en-suite bathrooms with baths and walk in showers. It is a lodge for those who want the best, so some might prefer a more personal atmosphere. Availability is an issue and in order to take the place exclusively, all ten rooms must be paid for, whether they are used or not. However, smaller groups can share the lodge and facilities with other teams of guns. Sadly I was only there for one night but we have used the





lodge many times. The shooting is always excellent – guns travel north and west to the hills for high birds in summer and east to the agricultural fields in winter – all of which is very accessible.

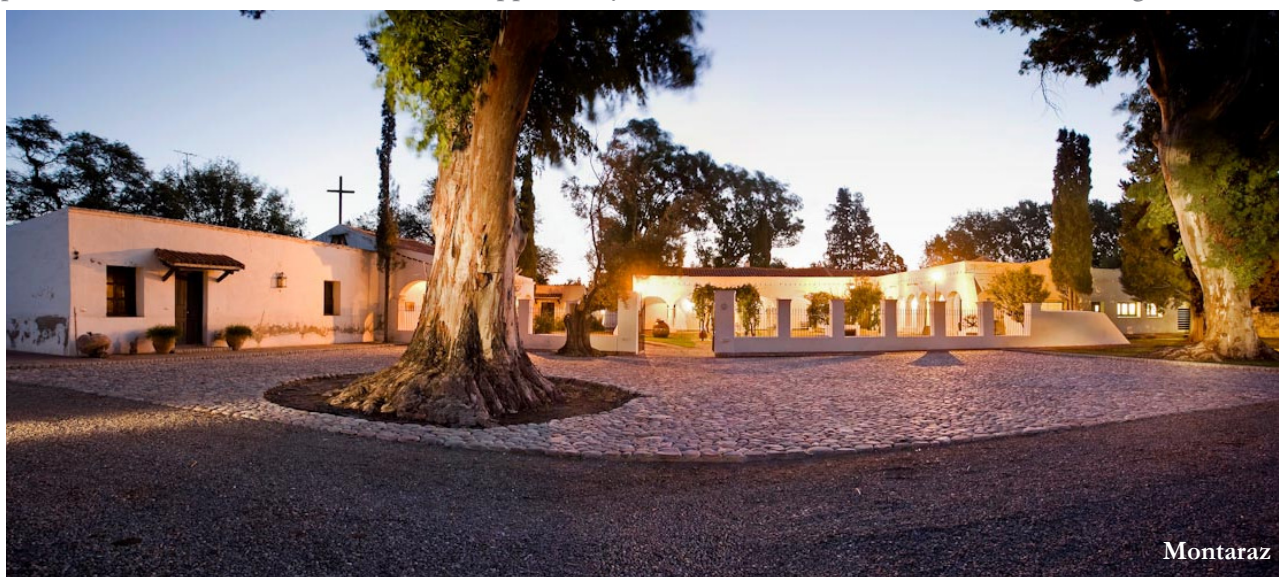
Next on my itinerary was to meet with Tomas Frontera at his flagship lodge La Zenaida. This lodge is different in that it is located a long way from any of the hills in the west of the province and the doves in this area do not migrate and are therefore plentiful in number in the same area all year round. The lodge has eight en-suite rooms, a large dining/sitting room together with a games room complete with bar, pool table and large satellite TV. All of the shooting is in the fields and they play with large lines of eucalyptus trees and the wind to get the best out of the dove flight lines. In doing so, some very good shooting can be had, with birds leaving and returning to the roosts. The day I was there, the guns who were staying walked to their shooting line in the morning, returned for lunch and then walked from the lodge to another shooting line for their afternoon shoot. All very convenient and this happens all year round. Both Guayasbate and Rio Seco have the ability to do this too but mostly in their summer when the birds are in the hills where the lodges are located.

Off again, this time to the north of Cordoba to visit a wonderful lodge called Montaraz which is located on a 5,000 hectare ranch in the north west of the province in the valley between the Sierra Chicas and the Sierra Grandes. The country here is much bushier, with less intensive agriculture than in the other two areas that I visited in Cordoba and with some spectacular views of the Sierra Chicas. The lodge was built as a monastery in 1670 and is laid out in a Spanish Cortijo style. For most of the year it is a private family ranch but for the winter period it is used as a lodge for pigeon shooting. Each of the eight rooms are en-suite with

modern bathrooms, several having open fire places which are used during the colder periods. The decoying of pigeons in Argentina is much like shooting pigeons here in the UK - they are tricky and great fun. However, unlike the doves there is a limit per gun of 200 pigeons per day – which is still a great day of pigeon shooting in anyone’s book! This is an excellent option if you are looking to shoot something other than doves but ducks don’t tickle your fancy. The lodge is an hour and a half drive (with some lovely scenery) from our dove shooting lodges.

The dove, duck and pigeon shooting in Argentina is without doubt on the bucket list of shooting experiences. The quality of the shooting is excellent and the accommodation, food and wine has improved beyond recognition from when I first went there 17 years ago. It is very evident that the operators, having provided very good shooting, are now understanding that the lodges, cuisine and staff have to match the shooting and that clients are not just looking to fire a lot of cartridges.

On this point, it should be noted that you do not have to fire thousands of cartridges when shooting in Argentina. It is just as enjoyable firing 500 cartridges a day (which is actually not much on the doves) and select the birds you want to shoot. It can be some of the most relaxing shooting available; there is no need to perform on a drive and there is lots of opportunity to shoot with a friend, shoot 100 cartridges and then



take a rest, practise your right to lefts and then left to rights. There can be no other place in the world where you can really straighten up your shooting skills with the variety of shots that the doves provide.

I believe that we offer the best shooting in the best lodges in Argentina. We recommend them with first-hand experience as we have stayed and visited all of them. Roxtons has been offering shooting in Argentina for nearly 20 years and with our expertise we are able to offer not only great shooting, but with our fishing hat on, Argentina provides fantastic fishing and is the perfect ‘blast and cast’ destination too. With our sister company, luxury travel operator Bailey Robinson, we can offer a first class all-round Argentine or South American travel experience.

Adam Bromfield