



# TROPICAL HUNTING SAFARIS

**After many fruitful trips, Bruce Read provides an insight into his preferred Top End hunting guide.**

IT WAS LATE in the season and we were forewarned by our guide that it would be hot and dry. My plane took off from Brisbane early in the am; nice day, sun shining, birds singing and a balmy 21 degrees. Destination Darwin via Alice Springs. The flight was uneventful other than the inevitable delay at Alice Springs.

We disembarked onto the tarmac at Alice and it was like somebody hitting you in the face with a giant piece of hot toast. It's not hot, it's roasting and you really know you've arrived at Alice because this is the only place on the planet where the flies don't just buzz around you they fly straight into your face.

After what seemed like an age we finally got back on the plane and completed the last leg. You have just got to love spending the entire day in aeroplanes and airports. The only saving grace is that you know that this is the beginning of a five-day hunt that will serve up a smorgasbord of some of the most pristine wilderness country that Australia has to offer and in this hunter's humble opinion, the best

feral pig hunting on the planet. Bar none. Anywhere.

Arrived at Darwin and trudged across to the domestic air charter hanger. Everything was pre-organised so we boarded the little single-prop Cessna puddle jumper with Nicky at the controls and were on our way to the bush strip in the middle of Arnhem Land. We could have been picked up by the operator and driven out to the camp but decided this time around to treat ourselves to the 80 minute flight and avoid a seven hour 4WD marathon. Been there, done that.

So, finally, after a day of trains, planes and automobiles we had arrived at base camp Eden just in time to take a shower, watch the sun sink slowly in the west and crack open the first of many ice cold beers on our first night.

Many a discussion and sometimes even an argument (or 10) has been had over where exactly in Australia is the best pig hunting. Hunters from each of the hunting disciplines, from one state to another and from all walks of life all have that great story to tell about that one unbelievable spot, that incredible trip, that huge pig and, of course, the one that got away.

I personally have had the good fortune, over the years, to have hunted feral pigs in a stack of different areas around New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory. Some of these hunts have been guided or on booked properties and some have been on private property with hunting mates. As a general rule, especially when hunting with a guide, I like to try a different location and/or operator each season.

There is one exception to this rule. Arnhem Land.





This place is, without a doubt, pig paradise. Several years ago an outfit called *Tropical Hunting Safaris* was recommended to us. We have been back with them every year, even to the point that last year we were back there twice in the same season.

I have penned quite a number of articles on different hunts and different locations and thought it was well and truly time to pass on my experiences of this particular operator. Tropical Hunting Safaris operates out of Darwin and is one of the very few hunting guides officially licensed by the Northern Land Council to operate in Arnhem Land. Our guide is Peter Lorman and this fella knows his zillion hectare backyard like the back of his hand.

Just as important, Lorman is organised. Very organised. None of this 'jeez, what'll we do today' stuff. No way. Every day is a different adventure going to different and diversified landscapes and styles of hunting. The only thing that is an absolute constant is the numbers of nasty big pigs. Even though we have been back to Arnhem Land on many occasions with Tropical Hunting Safaris, each season and time of year seems to make all the difference. Every time we return it's like no one had ever been there before.

So, what can you expect when you part with your hard earned dollars. Firstly, all you need bring is your rifle, ammo, personal affairs, booze and a pair of strong legs. That's it. Peter supplies the rest. You get a well set up bungalow smack bang in the middle of Arnhem Land, real beds, hot and cold showers, fans, fridges and three very large square meals a day (Peter does all of the cooking). You get a well maintained Yamaha Big Bear quad bike that will take you many hundreds of klics over the course of the week and you get Peter with his Glock pistol for safety and a video camera catching all the action on tape.

This bloke only takes a relatively small number of hunters each season. His hunting range is enormous; he looks after it and nobody else is allowed to hunt there. The general rule of thumb is you're not there to blast away at everything that moves. Just knock over the big fellas. Don't worry, there's plenty of them to go around.

This is God's own country, ruggedly beautiful and marked only by the scourge of the feral pig. Good news for us hunters because whenever you and your hunting mates decide to go on this adventure you can be



assured that you will hunt on floodplains and in paperbark forests, through canyons and caves, around amazing billabongs and swamps, up mountains and down channel country and all you will see is pristine country, prodigious amounts of wildlife and pigs. Lots of pigs. Oh, and some very tasty barra.

In the years we been going to Arnhem Land we have not had a disappointing trip yet and we have tried early, mid and late season just to sample the differences. What remains the same is we always come away with that overwhelming sense of satisfaction one gets having spent quality time with your mates and knocking over a stack of big feral pigs.

The Tropical Hunting Safari experience rates a consistent nine out of 10 for me and my hunting mates. For the record, my last trip was just John and I, it was mid October and bloody hot but I must say that the evenings cooled down to a somewhat more respectable temp that at least allowed a comfortable sleep under the fans.

Our hunt was for five days and they are very full days. At the end of the hunt you are well and truly knackered. The fee per person varies depending on the number of people so check with Peter when you call. We chartered a small plane that cost around \$1700 total for both the drop off and pick up flights. If the small plane is not an option then the trip in and out

**ABOVE:** Despite numerous return trips, the author has never failed to shoot loads of good pigs.

**TOP LEFT:** Arnhem Land is renowned as a top spot for trophy boars.

**TOP:** The operation's base camp is well kitted out for a comfortable night after a hard day spent hunting.





with Peter is included in his price (just allow a day either side of the hunt for travel).

Our rifles of choice were a Marlin .30/30 lever-action and a Weatherby Mk V Ultra Light .308 for me and John had his Remington .270.

Over the course of the five days we never hunted the same area twice and covered a couple of hundred kilometres on the quads and 50km or so on foot. We tracked, watched, photographed and stalked hundreds and hundreds of pigs of all shapes and sizes. Between John and I we would have knocked over around 50 quality 100kg plus boars and a few unlucky monster sows. Each trip you just have to spend at least half a day in the tinny with a rod and lure fighting with sizeable NT barra.

Tropical Hunting Safaris have been established up the Territory for donkeys years and is well respected by those in the business and just as importantly by the NT indigenous peoples. Peter looks after his domain, provides quality equipment and takes care of his customers with a view to getting them back year in, year out. ■

*For more information about Tropical Hunting Safaris, contact Peter Lorman on (08) 8945 5880. Mob: 0407 607 687*

**TOP:** Various types of terrain is encountered across the guide's concession.

**LEFT:** The author with another good Amhem Land boar.