

Bullish trade boosts index

The stock market climbed to a new peak after the National Day holiday.

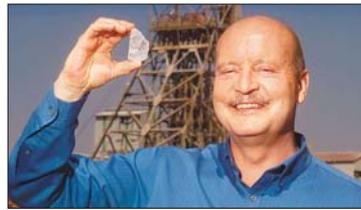
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Zeroing in on a new form of vacation

Increasing numbers of Chinese are seeking exotic experiences abroad

By MARK HUGHES
CHINA DAILY

MUNNIK, South Africa — The long, thin, gray muzzle poked out of the makeshift hide. A gimlet eye focused through the telescopic sight fixed to the Steyr Mannlicher .338 caliber rifle. The target was a male plains zebra grazing with its herd some 200 meters away. Following a sharp crack the magnificent 340 kilogram beast leapt into the air before collapsing dead, a bullet through its heart. The rest of the herd scattered. Hu Guoyong broke into a big smile and raised his thumbs.

This was just one of several trophies to be shot over three days by four hunters in what is proving to be an increasingly popular sporting holiday for the growing number of Chinese with deep pockets.

By the end of the week in early September, they had additionally bagged blesbok, bushbuck, impala, ostrich, gemsbok (also known as oryx), kudu, baboon and wart-

hog. After skinning, curing and taxidermy they, or part of them, will eventually adorn the homes of the men involved in the property business in Yanqing, on Beijing's northwestern outskirts.

Hu Guoyong, 39, Li Jun, 25, Li Jianzheng, 46, and Niu Xuemin, 42, had each paid 49,800 yuan (\$7,465) for the round trip, visa, food, drink and accommodation in a hunting lodge in Munnik, Limpopo province, in northern South Africa. Included in the price was the right to kill three animals each. Taxidermy and curing fees range from \$390 for a gennet rug mount to \$20,350 for a fully mounted rhinoceros. Hu was forking out \$2,120 on a fully mounted bushbuck and a total of \$2,785 on shoulder mounts of a kudu, a gemsbok and a bushbuck.

The hunting safari was organized by Scott Lupien, a 42-year-old professional hunter from the United States who now lives in Beijing. His company, 52safari has established exclusive rights to guide Chinese hunters to several of the

world's finest hunting destinations. These include expansive game reserves in South Africa, picturesque mountain ranches in New Zealand, a luxury yacht for bear hunting in Alaska, several huge wilderness hunting concessions in Canada, and an ultra-luxury seaside mansion in Mexico for world-class big game fishing.

Lupien, who speaks fluent Putonghua, says there are two types of clients in China: "Those who have hunted before in China and those who have the means to go and heard by word of mouth or saw it advertised."

He said South Africa was a relatively inexpensive option. "There is a huge variety of game. It is strictly controlled within the letter of the law. The climate is good. I am seeing more people taking up the sport and more repeat customers," he said.

So far this year, Lupien, who has 30 years of experience as a hunter, has accompanied three groups to Africa and his order book is already filling up for next year. He brings a Chinese chef and another translator on every trip. "When you put monetary value on game, people conserve it," he said, adding that animal populations had



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A Chinese hunter undergoing rifle-training in South Africa. International hunting clubs have found it is a lucrative business arranging for Chinese hunters to visit the world's finest hunting destinations, where they can each spend hundreds of thousands of yuan. Organizers say the money from hunting is ploughed back into the environment and wildlife to maintain its viability.

risen by millions since hunting became controlled.

Hu, the two Lis and Niu were booked by Lupien with Theo de Marillac Safaris, named after its founder. De Marillac, 37, has been in business since 1993 and runs a 40,000-acre (16,187 hectares) hunting concession

around Munnik, which he has held for nine years. He has two senior professional hunters on his staff, Riaan Drotsky and Philip Botha, another professional, Jaco Cronje, and an apprentice, Fanie Malan. One hunter accompanies two guests on safari with two local

African native trackers and general helps. He has worked with his head tracker, Falton Mondolme, for 17 years.

De Marillac says there is a strict quota system on kills to keep the animal population sustainable. Money from hunters is ploughed back into

the environment and wildlife to maintain its viability. He says his business fully conforms with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), also

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Hobby's big appeal

By YU TIANYU
CHINA DAILY

BEIJING — Despite concerns over scenes of slaughter, wildlife hunting has become a craze among the wealthiest in China, a country that puts much value on Confucianism, a philosophy that values humanity and harmony.

LEISURE Yao Kaiming, a 40-something businessman in engineering and property in Beijing, is one of the new enthusiasts. He owns the large Cangshan Hunting Club in Shanxi province.

"China is a nation with a long history of hunting: There is culture and heritage here," said Yao. "Hunting actually embraces the theory of harmony and natural balance. In many countries, hunters stand at the frontline of animal protection."

As a senior hunter with nearly 30 years of experience, Yao and his friends have witnessed lots of misfortune suffered by local farmers in which overpopulated wild animals demolished their farmlands and ripening crops.

Nonetheless, he says his hobby is always met with alarm by wildlife conservation groups. He says he has tremendous difficulty explaining that hunting can help protect farmers' interests as well as the ecological balance if well-planned policies are instituted by the government.

However, his enthusiasm for the sport, which he has enjoyed since college days in 1983, remains undimmed. "At that time, hunting was just a very trendy activity for me to demonstrate my muscle," he said, his eyes gleaming. "I met my wife while hunting and she is also a very smart hunter."

Yao and his friends spend every winter lurking behind



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Niu Xuemin (right), 42, and John Wang, 45, an interpreter, with the former's prey, a warthog. Niu and fellow hunters paid 49,800 yuan each for the round trip, visa, food, drink and accommodation in a hunting lodge in Munnik, Limpopo province, in northern South Africa last month.

the forest undergrowth in sub-zero temperatures tracking their prey.

"Hunting is teamwork: Everyone has their own area of responsibility," said He Wei, a man in his 30s who is a team leader in Yao's club.

One senior hunter will travel to the hunting grounds and track the quarry by its footprints and excrement in advance, while another will stalk the prey and drive it to a mountain inlet where other hunters are waiting to shoot it, He explained. "We stay in touch using walkie-talkies."

Yao also owns an alcohol plant in Beijing where he produces a Chinese liquor branded "Old Head Hunter" to mark his hobby. "We light a campfire and dance and drink after a successful day's hunt. Sometimes we fish or watch old movies. It is a pleasure that money cannot buy," Yao said.

Yao's club is one of the largest in China. It has about 6,340 mu (423 hectares) of hunting land containing wild boars, pheasants, deer and some other animals that are authorized for legal hunting. The hunting season lasts from October to March, allowing time for the animals to breed.

Yao said hunting in China was still an industry in its infancy and that very few people knew about it — but it was profitable.

Yao's club signs up about 60 members a year. Any more, he said, would affect safety and service quality.

The membership fee at Yao's club is about 10,000 yuan (\$1,499) a year. Yao said: "Of course, if you hunt more, you have to pay more. Killing a boar costs around 1,000 yuan."

"It is relatively cheap to hunt in China because the market is not large and hunting in China is actually not a luxury only designed for the wealthiest, despite what many people think," Yao said.

"However, if you are planning a hunting trip in South Africa, you need to put aside at least 100,000 yuan," Yao added.

He said the most popular overseas hunting venues included North America, South Africa and Australia.

There are about 200 hunting clubs across China. In Shanxi, where Yao's club is based, there are four professional clubs currently in existence.

"While, the average price for joining a club for one hunt in China is around 1,000 yuan, the annual revenue of our club can be as much as 400,000 to 500,000 yuan," he said.

According to a report by Reuters, another popular Chinese hunting club, Yuquan

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