

# Kentucky's Premier Hunting Resort: Deer Creek Lodge

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Sportsman's News

Destinations are coveted for many different reasons. Many factors come into play including lodging, food, quality and quantity of hunting and fishing opportunities and of course the quality of service associated with all of the above. Five star destinations have to look at every possibility when catering to possible customers from every walk of life. All of these factors come into play when we, the Pro Staff members at the Sportsman's News, visit one of our lodges or outfitters with the hope of elevating them to our prestigious Platinum Approved Status.

When we visit and then evaluate an operation, our staff must also take into consideration the many levels and tiers that constitute a great portfolio of quality outdoor opportunities and operations. In each of these cases, what we are truly looking for is the operations that offer the best quality experience for travelers of every walk of life. If that operation can deliver on what they advertise, while offering a fair price associated with the final product that is exactly what we are looking for in our endorsed operations.

Well, among our list of Platinum Approved Lodges and Outfitters are many of the "best of the best" operations around the world. These operations excel in every category and not only leave you with lasting memories of your completed trip, but have you booking your return trip before you finish the one you're on. The fall of 2008 found us at just one of these operations, Kentucky's premier hunting resort, the Deer Creek Lodge.

Preparations for my trip were arranged early in the year with Willie Eblen, general manager at the Deer Creek Lodge. Dan Staton, our archery editor and I arrived in Louisville, Kentucky, rented a car and proceeded the 140 miles to our destination in Sebree, Kentucky. Willie greeted us at the door and proceeded to give us the grand tour of their gorgeous lodge, complete with a well stocked pro shop, beautiful dining and lounging areas, lavish guest rooms and "mud room" and the colorful accents of fall around us in all its splendor.

We quickly settled into our room, broke out our camera equipment and proceed to the main level dining area to meet our fellow quests for the week and to partake of our first of many great meals presented by the well qualified kitchen staff. After a great lunch, we headed to Deer Creeks' thirty acre duck pond for an afternoon shoot. Hundreds of mallards filled the air as our party quickly filled our limit of six ducks apiece while concealed in one of the well placed blinds situated around the pond.

After another "perfect meal" we met with our guide, Heath Roy and plotted our strategy for the next mornings whitetail hunt. Dan and I would alternate as shooter and cameraman, with the hopes of one of us getting a shot at a Kentucky bruiser. Expectations were high as we mingled with the other guests and exchanged hunting stories of past adventures.

Our first morning was a little uneventful, with about a half dozen does and a couple of small bucks working our tree stand. At about 9 am a group of about 15 turkeys broke the silence of a beautiful late fall morning and rooted their way past us, after which we headed back to meet Heath and make our way back to the lodge. Two o'clock quickly came and we again headed to the same tree stand for the evening. Again, deer worked us from every direction in our secluded woods stand, but no shooters presented themselves and our first day of hunting came to an end.

One of the problems that hounded us on this adventure was the unseasonably warm weather. As in many parts of the country, the fall of 2008 never seemed to cool down, making the rut slow to formulate. We were experiencing daytime temperatures in the low 70's and nighttime temps around forty degrees. Some of the other hunters at the lodge had seen a few nice bucks, but it was still too early in the week to settle for anything less than a monster. And, with the unique stipulations that Deer Creek Lodge enforces on the size of deer taken, 130 inches for eight points and at least 140 inches on nine pointers or better, hunters are assured of having the chance of harvesting a nice Kentucky whitetail if they have a little

patience and of course a little luck.

Days two and three again produced quite a few deer, no shooters, but with

some nice deer starting to be spotted by some of the other guests. With our Kentucky licenses offering the opportunity to harvest a whitetail buck along with a doe, a couple of the hunters took the opportunity to secure a little venison for their freezer. Cooler weather was forecast for the coming days, with the hopes that it



The Lodge is first class in every way.

would get the rut rolling into high gear.

Our forth morning presented us with cooler temps and a little mist in the air. Dan and I headed to another of our four stands near a small food plot. As soon as daylight arrived, so did a number of deer. For almost two hours, deer worked our

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area from every direction, with about a half dozen bucks worked their way by us, most in hot pursuit of a doe. We spotted two nice bucks sparring on the small ridge to our left, but they never presented an opportunity for a shot. Things were starting to happen and we knew it was only a matter of time, something that we were getting a little short on.

Willie set us up for a late morning bird hunt with upland manager, Tracey Lieske. I quickly traded my bow for my Browning over and under and we headed for one of the seven dedicated hunting areas on Deer Creek's 1950 acre "Hills" property. I will have to say, I have never hunted any better maintained cover anywhere in the country. We spent the rest of the morning watching Tracey's spectacular dogs work as a pointing/flushing team, producing a great mixed bag of quail, pheasants and chuckars. I had heard great things about their upland and waterfowl opportunities and my experiences during the week left

me wanting for more in the near future!

Our last morning found us back in our most productive stand, with Dan behind the bow. By 6:30 am deer started rustling leaves all around us in the gorgeous hardwood setting of Western Kentucky. Dan tapped me on the shoulder and whispered "Here comes a shooter"! I slowly stood up and clicked on the camera. A mature, thick horned buck was headed in our direction. Dan gave a few grunts, quickly getting the attention of our buck. The buck quickened its pace and soon worked his way to about 30 yards. Dan drew and gave a quick grunt, stopping the deer in his tracks. The only problem...The buck stopped with a four inch diameter tree right smack dab in the vitals, leaving only a shot at the shoulder for Dan to take.

Dan's release was good and his G5

found its mark. The buck spun to its left and sprinted through the trees and out of sight. After a couple of high fives, we headed down from our tree stand to find the first trace of blood. We then waited



Guide Heath Roy displays a nice 150" class buck.

about 30 minutes before starting our track. Dan found his arrow about 100 yards away, with about six inches of the shaft and the broadhead gone. The penetration looked to be about 10 inch-

es total, looking good for at least one lung and hopefully two.

We followed a good blood trail slowly and methodically for more than an hour, expecting to come upon the deer at any moment. But to our avail, abruptly the blood trail stopped, with no deer in sight. Dan and I searched in every direction from the last drop of blood, but the damp

leaves that covered the ground gave us no help and offered no sign to follow. Dan grabbed his cell phone and called the lodge to let them know we had a deer down and our location and we waited for our guides to help us continue to look for Dan's buck.

Heath and Lance soon arrived and we again searched the entire area for any sign of the deer or its blood trail. It was now 12 pm and we had been tracking and searching for nearly five hours. Alas, we had to abandon our efforts and head back to the lodge and our drive back to the airport for our early evening flight.

Although we didn't end up with venison for our trip home, we did pack our bags and leave the spectacular Deer Creek Lodge with some great memories and a booked returned trip for this fall. Our experience was everything that we had hoped for, with Willie and his staff making our adventure perfect in every way. We are proud to endorse Deer Creek Lodge as one of our Platinum Approved Outfitters and we hope maybe too see you there on our next trip. Deer Creek Lodge, 888-875-3000 and visit them on the web at [www.deercreeklodge.com](http://www.deercreeklodge.com). 🍄

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