

PREPARING FOR YOUR HUNT MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY

It is so easy to get caught up in what caliber to bring, which bullet to shoot, and which brand of hunting gear to buy, that clients often forget the two most important things they need to do to prepare for their hunts: physical and mental preparation.

The hunts we offer are all fair chase, in what can be described as challenging terrain in highly inclement, sometimes terrible weather conditions. The more you prepare yourself physically and mentally for a hunt, the greater your odds of success will be, and the more enjoyable your hunt will be for you.

MENTAL PREPARATION

Hunters on Kodiak Island and the Alaska Peninsula should be prepared for harsh weather. Sitting on a glassing hill for up to 10-12 hrs, day in and day out is difficult, especially when the weather is bad and game is not moving. Rain and wind can be expected, sometimes every single day. Having good gear is important, but so is knowing that you will be facing challenging weather. Even with the best gear, nothing is completely waterproof, and “breathable” waterproof just means it will eventually soak through. You can expect to be damp at times, certainly cold once in a while, and to spend many hours in difficult conditions.

Weather in these locations is some of the worst in the state, and it is not uncommon at all to lose 2, 3, or even 4 days, sometimes all in a row, of hunting due to bad weather conditions. I always tell people to look at the pictures of the animals we have taken, then look at the sky. It is almost always nice out. Animals are harvested mainly when you get a break in the weather. Hunters should know that although it may be slow hunting when the weather is bad, or perhaps it is so bad that it is not smart (or safe) to hunt at all, when the weather finally turns nice, that is usually when we score our animals.

It takes patience, determination, and a willingness to work hard and not give up. This is what having a positive mental attitude is all about. The client who shows up with and maintains a positive attitude and goes with the flow is more likely to harvest an animal, and will certainly enjoy their hunt more. And with all hunts, remember, PATIENCE is key. Sometimes it happens on the first day, and sometimes on the night of the last day.

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

With regards to physical preparation, moose and brown bear hunts are certainly not the most physically demanding hunts out there, but they can be challenging. We tailor each hunt according to your individual needs. We are able to put an extra guide or packer with you if needed, or put you in a spot that may be less physically challenging than our other spots, or provide you with additional items in camp to help you stay comfortable if needed (such as heaters for your tent, cots, etc which are pretty standard in all of our bear and moose camps).

That being said, there is no substitute for pre-hunt training. Never expect any game to come easy, as this is fair chase hunting and we cannot control the animals or the weather. Exercise before your hunt. Practice carrying your pack and hike. The better physical condition you can get yourself in, the more enjoyable your hunt will be. You do not have to be an elite athlete to do this, but you do have to be able to walk on what is usually soft, uneven ground and put up with bad weather.

Though we do not walk far to get to our glassing hills (expect anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour each way depending on the camp), if we see an animal a ways out, you still have to be able to get there, and sometimes in a hurry. Being in the best shape you can get in will only up your odds of success. Remember, you don't have to be in amazing physical condition to do this, but you need to be mentally tough and have a good attitude. That goes farther than anything.

Sheep and goat hunters need to prepare even more for the physical dimension of the hunt. While hunting these mountain animals may not be as mentally taxing as moose and especially bear hunting due to the fact that we are not sitting in the bad weather, (weather on sheep hunts is usually quite nice compared to our other hunts), on a glassing hill day after day, they are certainly more physically challenging and are not for everyone.

Fair chase backpack mountain goat and especially dall sheep hunts are the most physically challenging hunts in North America. The terrain is difficult, especially on goat hunts, where it is not only difficult but downright dangerous if you are not careful. We are all very experienced mountain guides and will ensure your safety on these hunts, but it is up to you to prepare physically. Clients need to hit the gym prior to these hunts and get on a good exercise regimen well in advance. Do calisthenics such as jogging, biking, etc. Weight training is always good, as is body resistance training such as pushups and sit-ups etc. Exercises that focus on balance are especially useful – squats, lunges, etc.

Finally, get a pair of boots that fits, try them on until you find a pair you like. There are many good options and what is good for some is not good for others. Once you find a pair that fits you well

(several good options are on the gear list), put your pack on, load it with 25 lbs, and practice hiking several miles, gradually building up the amount of weight till you reach 50 lbs, and can hike for several miles without issue. Make sure your boots do not give you blisters. Nothing kills a hunt faster than boots that give you blisters.

If possible, hike on natural ground, not sidewalks or groomed trails. What may seem easy on a groomed trail, golf course or street is a completely different ballgame when you are hiking in the hills, off-trail. This is the best way to prepare for a mountain hunt, test your boots, and get in shape. These training methods are great for bear and moose hunts as well. It will only benefit you to get in shape and be ready for the challenges of the hunt. As I said, these mountain hunts are very challenging, and nothing you can do is going to completely prepare you. But it will definitely help a lot.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Finally, always remember that you and your guide or guides (often times you will have two guides with you on these hunts) are a team. Communication is critical. A guide can not always know what you are thinking, if you need help, or if you need a rest, or what you expect. Don't hesitate to talk to your guide and know that he will do anything in his power to help you succeed. Your success is his success and there is nothing he wants more. Our crew of guides are professionals, the best out there. You can count on them to safely get you through your hunt and help you with anything you need.