



Know Before You Go

## PLAN TROPHY HUNTS IN ADVANCE

Planning that hunt of a lifetime isn't something a sportsman can typically do in a month or two. It's going to take ample research, time to apply for tags where necessary and, for a lot of us, time to save up the money.

So how far in advance should a hunter begin the planning process? A lot of it depends on how hard it is to secure a tag for the game he or she intends to hunt. If you have your heart set on hunting monster Whitetails in Iowa, New Mexico elk, or Shiras Moose in Wyoming, or some other hard-to-get tags you may need to plan your hunt many years in advance!

But, truthfully, for most hunts, beginning the planning for a big game hunt should begin at least two years in advance (one year minimum) and for winged game such as South Dakota pheasants or Florida's Osceola turkeys at least a year in advance.

For most hunts you want to start planning a year in advance," says Gregg Severinson, director of Cabela's Outdoor Adventures Division. "But for some outfitters you may even need to plan two and three years ahead because they take few hunters and enjoy high success."

Clearly, the more quality outfitters will be booked up thanks to repeat clients and referrals, which means you need to work your name in their early to get the week or

slot that you want. That means getting on his list not for next year, but for the year after. Where tags must be drawn, you also have to be sure to apply by that year's deadline.

"There are a lot of deadlines through the first four months of the year," says Severinson. In fact, many western big game tags are due by deadlines in February and March. Miss a deadline and you're out for the year unless you can score leftover tags or landowner tags in some states after the drawing—and that is only if there were not enough applicants for tags, a much rarer phenomenon even in the current economic situation.

You can also save money by beginning your planning more than a year ahead of your trip. As some outfitters look to increase fees each year, some may lock in "this year's prices" if you put a deposit down on next year's hunt now. You will also have better odds of getting the week or days of hunting you want.

J.T. Kreager, founder of NextHunt.com believes that you should stack the odds in your favor when traveling "Regardless of your budget, do your homework and pick the best state, unit, season dates and outfitter for the game you're after.

Either way, start that search early to secure your best option for that dream hunt.