



DEBRETT'S

LONDON 1769

THE DEBRETT'S
GUIDE TO
COUNTRY PURSUITS



CONTENTS



- 2-3 COUNTRY DRESSING
Iconic country clothes and their history; countryside dress codes
- 4-5 EQUESTRIAN STYLE
How to cut a dash on horseback
- 6-7 COUNTRY ENTERTAINING
How to be a country house guest
- 8-9 COUNTRY LIFE FOR CITY SLICKERS
How to behave in the countryside if it's not your natural habitat
- 10-11 COUNTRYSIDE RULES
How to respect the Country Code and get the most out of the countryside
- 12-13 COUNTRY DRIVING
How to adapt your driving style to narrow lanes and country hazards
- 14-15 A SHOOTING PARTY
Shooting guide, dress codes and etiquette
- 16-17 THE GLORIOUS TWELFTH
How to cook and serve a feast of grouse
- 18-19 FISHING
Game Fishing and Coarse Fishing; Angling etiquette and dress codes
- 20-21 FALCONRY
History, how Falconry terminology entered the language; Raptor etiquette
- 22-23 ARCHERY
History, Women in Archery; etiquette on the range; dress codes

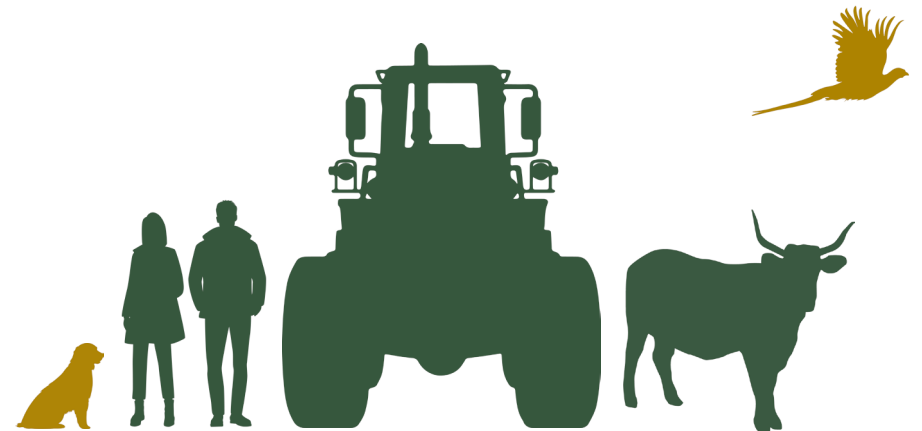
PREFACE

WITH A HISTORY that dates back to 1769, Debrett's is the ultimate authority on Britain's titled aristocracy and a widely respected commentator on modern manners, British pastimes, formal and informal events, entertaining, correct form and protocol. The countryside is an integral part of our heritage and we are delighted to bring together the Debrett's Guide to Country Pursuits, providing insights into the idiosyncratic history of field sports and customs, country etiquette and rural dress codes.

THE GAME FAIR | 26-28 JULY 2024
BLENHEIM PALACE

This booklet is produced in association with the Game Fair, a veritable cornucopia of country sports and activities, displays of horsemanship, local crafts, country clothing and gourmet British entertaining, all set in the magnificent grounds of Blenheim Palace, the ancestral home of the Dukes of Marlborough.

If you are interested in visiting the Game Fair, click here  for booking information and you can also find out more about camping and glamping on-site. If you have any questions about the event, visit the FAQs  for a wealth of information.



COUNTRY DRESSING

DRESS CODES in the country are, first and foremost, practical, providing all-weather protection. Clothes will need to be suitable for country pursuits, drafty houses and inclement weather, and are above all comfortable and functional.

DRESS CODES

- Black is traditionally seen as a city colour; men wear brown rather than black shoes and may choose a robust tweed rather than a fine wool.
- Women will probably only wear black for formal evening events. Tailored jackets are discarded in favour of gilets, jumpers or cardigans.
- Outdoor weatherproof jackets are worn in preference to woollen overcoats.



- The countryside colour palate is muted, tending to browns and greens rather than black and navy.
- Scarves and woollen or fake fur hats are frequently worn by women, while flat caps for men may be worn.
- Walking shoes, boots and wellingtons are all practical country footwear. Discard muddy shoes at the door and revert to slip-on shoes such as loafers indoors.

TWEED CAPS

In 1571 an Act of Parliament decreed that on Sundays and holidays all males aged six and over, who were not members of the nobility, should wear a woven wool cap. Although this Act was later repealed, the cap had become the mark of the working man. At the other end of the spectrum members of the aristocracy and Royal Family adopted the tweed cap as practical headgear when out shooting. In the post-war years, working men discarded their flat caps but the eminently practical country cap survived and – fifty years on – has become a fashion icon.

WAXED JACKETS

Waxed cotton was first invented for the clipper fleet when linseed oil (extracted from the flax plants used to make linen) was used to treat cotton sails and seamen's clothing. The treated cloth was waterproof but became stiff in cold weather.

In the 1930s a new process was invented, when cotton cloth was treated with cupro-ammonia and coated with paraffin wax. The new, more flexible, fabric became indispensable for rugged outdoor wear, much favoured by farmers and gamekeepers.

The chemical treatments meant that the fabric was originally only available in black or dark olive. The olive could vary considerably, so it became traditional for olive waxed cotton garments to boast a standardised brown corduroy collar.

Now adopted as the uniform of Britain's country classes, waxed cotton jackets have moved beyond their beginnings as practical workwear. They are essential at any social gathering in the countryside where protection from the elements is paramount – especially horse racing, horse trials, point to points and country fairs, and are often accessorised with tweed caps, silk headscarves and wellington boots.



THE WELLINGTON BOOT

ARTHUR WELLESLEY, first Duke of Wellington and the general who led his nation's troops to victory at the Battle of Waterloo (1815), instructed his shoemaker, George Hoby of St James Street, London, to fashion a boot out of calfskin leather. The boot was an adaptation of the traditional 'Hessian' design, cut lower on the leg for comfort when riding.

Leather 'wellingtons' proved enduringly popular – practical in battle, but appropriately stylish for evening wear.

Their transition to rubber boots followed the invention of the vulcanisation process for rubber by Charles Goodyear (1800–60). Wellingtons proved invaluable in the trenches of World War I, while in peacetime they kept fishermen's feet dry and protected farmers from mud. Made of natural rubber with non-slip soles they were the ultimate practical footwear.

Now made in fashionable colours and patterns, wellingtons have become the must-have footwear for country events, festivals and rainy days – a fashion icon for a nation that enjoys the outdoor life.



EQUESTRIAN STYLE

SEVERAL ICONIC ITEMS OF British tailoring owe their origins to riding practicalities.

The long Regency tailcoat was an adaptation of a gentleman's hunting jacket, with a pronounced centre vent for ease of sitting in the saddle, and it soon found itself in civilised drawing rooms, allegedly introduced by the dandy Beau Brummell, paired with tight breeches and knee-length boots, and finished off with a 'stock', a kind of cravat fastened with a decorative pin. All these items of dress can still be seen on display in the refined world of dressage.

Today, the well-dressed equestrian can showcase the best of traditional British tailoring traditions, which rejoice in the perfect marriage of form and function. For general purposes, a tweed hacking jacket is a traditional, stylish and pragmatic choice.

Named after the 'hack' or 'hackney', a saddle horse chosen for everyday riding pleasure, this serviceable jacket, with its plentiful pockets and comfortable fit, was *de rigueur* for British landowners and aristocrats. Its



flattering fitted silhouette became the model for the modern suit jacket.

Ladies' hacking jackets are fitted, hugging the torso with room over the seat and hips. High-cut arm holes aid ease of movement and a slightly longer sleeve length provides protection against the elements. Modern innovations

use lighter, more weather-resistant material and may even provide extra pockets for mobile phones.

HACKING JACKET HERITAGE

- Made from tweed, single breasted with pronounced shoulders
- Cut quite long, with three or four horn buttons
- It boasts short lapels and a long centre vent
- It is well endowed with side pockets, a chest pocket and a large poacher's pocket on the inside
- It has a ghillie collar, can be buttoned at the neck, and a throat tab can be fastened across the neck when the collar is upturned.

IF THE BOOT FITS

The *piece de resistance* of the equestrian ensemble is a beautiful pair of knee-high leather riding boots. These are generally black or brown (the convention is that hunting boots sport a tan cuff). Riding boots can be bought off the shelf, but for those who take their riding seriously, bespoke riding boots, handmade by specialists, are a lifetime's investment.

Dressage boots tend to be stiffer and straighter as they emphasise a tall, elongated figure and keep the legs still while still allowing good feel. Boots designed for showjumpers are usually made of a close contact, soft leather and have a more contoured fit.

COMPLETING THE ENSEMBLE

The hacking jacket can be paired, for everyday riding, with a classic cotton or wool button-down shirt, or a neutral coloured lambswool sweater, and riding breeches. These fitted trousers are made of four-way stretch material and will usually be worn in white, beige, navy, black or olive, tucked into riding boots.

All-weather riding is facilitated by the wide range of waterproof clothing now available, from waxed or Gore-Tex jackets to paddock jackets – these quilted, boxy jackets, with their contrasting velvet collars, are ubiquitous. Waterproof riding gloves are a useful addition. The finishing touch is a specialist riding helmet.

"No hour of life is wasted that is spent in the saddle."

WINSTON CHURCHILL



SHOW EVENTS

When it comes to formal equestrian events, riders really cut a dash:

- Show jacket with 3-5 buttons made of elastic, skin-fitting material with a double slit at the back in the following permitted colours: black, red, navy blue, green, grey, brown
- White competition breeches
- White, long-sleeved shirt with a stand-up collar
- White horse-riding gloves
- Horse-riding helmet
- Riding boots

COUNTRY ENTERTAINING

FOR A TRADITIONAL weekend in the country, guests are expected to arrive on the Friday night in time for dinner. If it is not going to be possible to arrive in time for dinner, they can suggest they will arrive late on Friday (having already eaten) or come on Saturday in time for lunch.

If you are running late, call ahead in good time. If you are arriving by train you will probably be met at the station, but check first, and offer to get a taxi.

The usual time to leave would be after lunch on Sunday, or possibly after tea, but do not expect a Sunday night supper.

Know the code: "Stay for lunch on Sunday" means "leave soon afterwards".

Always let your hosts know your plans in advance: if you cannot stay for Sunday lunch you should definitely alert your host.



COME BEARING GIFTS

Wine is usually very welcome, but don't be offended if the wine is put away and not offered – it might not go with the menu or other wines. A bottle of chilled champagne is always a safe option.

Bringing food and drink is not suitable for a very formal or grand house party, but may be much appreciated on other occasions.

You can always avoid any potential awkwardness by bringing small gifts for the hosts' children. Alternatively, it may be more considerate to offer to take the hosts out for lunch on Saturday.



"Guests, like fish, begin to smell after three days."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

COME EQUIPPED

Your hosts may have informed you in advance of their plans (horse-riding, golf, a long walk etc). If not, at least make sure that you have got all-weather, all-terrain footwear and waterproof clothing.

Dress according to the grandeur of the house. A country cottage won't require black tie, but a stately home just might.

WHAT ABOUT THE DOG?

It is essential to ask your hosts first as the host's dogs may not like other dogs on their territory. The exception would be a shooting dog, but always ask first.

Guests should bring their own dog's food, basket etc. They should not bring dogs that are used to sleeping on the bed; this may be beyond the pale for many hosts.

THE IDEAL GUEST

The ideal guest is always easy-going and compliant and fits in enthusiastically with plans made for their entertainment.

You will be told to "make yourself at home" but don't interpret this literally. That means following the rhythm of the hosts, getting up in time for breakfast, being sociable, and not expecting hotel-style facilities – plumbing, for example, may be antiquated and unpredictable.

Don't help yourself to food and drink and ask before you make a cup of tea. Offer to help the host (even though you will probably be turned down).

SAY THANK YOU

Write a note of thanks within a day or two of your departure (no texts). As well as showing your gratitude, you should refer to something specific about the weekend that you enjoyed (a particularly delightful walk, delicious dinner, fascinating outing etc).

If you have transgressed in any way during your visit (eg drunk too much or spoiled the evening because of a strident argument with a fellow guest), now is the time to apologise.

Don't leave your possessions lying around in communal spaces and remove muddy footwear before entering the house.

TIPPING

If there are household staff, they should be tipped. On departure, a tip is left on the dressing table, either in an envelope or just on its own, or ask the host for advice.



COUNTRY LIFE FOR CITY SLICKERS

ARE YOU AN URBAN ANIMAL who feels adrift in the countryside? Follow our Guide for city slickers:

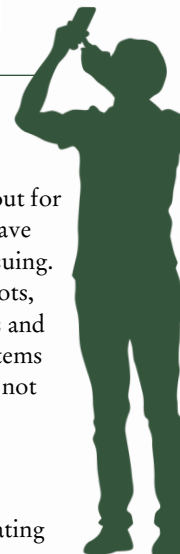
DO

- Come prepared for all eventualities, not least inclement weather. Waterproof clothing and wellington boots are essential. Warm sweaters are advisable.
- Remember that – unlike the mean streets of our big cities, where everyone does their utmost not to engage in conversation or eye contact – in the countryside it is customary to smile, greet people and even exchange a few words of greeting.
- Accept that life in the countryside is much more slow-paced, and that includes the driving. Hurling through country lanes at breakneck speeds is extremely dangerous. Step off the treadmill and take the time to really appreciate the tranquil sights and sounds.
- Remember that visiting the countryside is an olfactory experience. If you're accustomed to nothing more than traffic fumes, you will be beguiled by the scent of wildflowers and freshly cut hay but also assaulted by less pleasant odours – animal droppings, manure, cow pats, silage. Gagging into your handkerchief is a real give-away.



DON'T

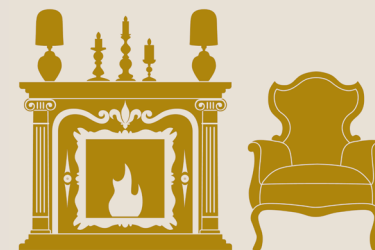
- You will be a bit of a laughing stock if you visit the countryside kitted out for activities that you have no intention of pursuing. Jodhpurs, riding boots, thigh-length waders and so on are practical items of country clothing not fashion statements.
- Banging on about yourself and your wonderfully stimulating city life isn't going to cut any ice at a country house dinner. Do people the courtesy of showing an interest in their stories and preoccupations, ask plenty of questions and listen attentively.
- Wandering disconsolately around a country house or garden with your mobile raised above your head as you try and get a signal is not a good look. Everybody knows that the WiFi signal is dodgy in rural areas; making a song and dance about it is just rude.



NOT A FAN OF THE COUNTRYSIDE?

Here's how NOT to be invited back:

- Inflict your latest food intolerances, fads, diets and fitness regimes on your fellow guests. Your fastidious and self-indulgent lifestyle choices will betray you as a real city slicker.
- Announce that you are a vegetarian. Time your revelation to coincide with the carving of Sunday lunch.
- Country-dwellers pride themselves on their hardiness. If you really want to put their backs up, moan about the lack of central heating and double glazing and sit hunched next to the fire in multiple woolly layers.
- Make loud comments about the one-toothed local in the village pub. Then order a martini.
- Refuse to walk anywhere and insist on using your car. Then complain about potholes, mud splattering and the paucity of EV charging points.



“O Lord! I don't know which is the worst of the country, the walking or the sitting at home with nothing to do.”

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

COUNTRYSIDE RULES

WHEN YOU'RE VISITING the countryside, consideration and respect should always govern behaviour. It is simply a matter of being keenly aware of your surroundings, noting the impact that any of your actions may have, and regulating your behaviour to ensure that nothing you do interferes with other people's well-being or enjoyment.

THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE was first launched in 1951, in anticipation of an increase in visitors to the countryside following the creation of national parks in 1949, and rapidly became the accepted tool for managing the behaviour of visitors to the country.

The latest version of the Countryside Code sets out three general pleas for visitors to the countryside:

Respect *Showing consideration, following signage, closing gates, parking carefully*

Protect *Caring for nature, keeping dogs under control, removing litter*

Enjoy *Planning ahead and understanding local conditions, enjoying the visit and 'making a memory'*



"Britain still has the most reliably beautiful countryside of anywhere in the world. I would hate to be part of the generation that allowed that to be lost."

BILL BRYSON

NEW PURSUITS

NEW PASTIMES, from mountain biking and off-roading to hang gliding, paragliding and drone-flying, are likely to have an impact on people who live and work in the countryside, and should be undertaken with the utmost discretion, in places where they are permitted only.

Due consideration should be shown to other visitors, and politeness, rather than an air of entitlement, will go a long way – thanking walkers for standing aside as you pass on your mountain bike is clearly preferable to peremptorily shouting a warning as you hurtle past.

PHONES

MOBILE PHONES have many uses in the countryside, not least mobile mapping apps, weather forecasts, or sites that give up-to-date information about access or livestock. But use your phone considerately – this means not having loud, shouted conversations on windswept hilltops when other visitors are trying to drink in the view, or elbowing fellow-walkers out of the way so you can take the perfect selfie.

DOGS

DOG OWNERSHIP is at an all-time high. If dogs have not been properly trained, they can be a real liability in the countryside, especially if they tend to race out of sight and enter fields full of livestock as soon as they are let off the lead. Only let your dogs off the lead if they are well trained

and biddable, and never do so near fields containing livestock.

Bagging and binning dog mess is the only considerate way to behave, especially at a time when litter and fly-tipping are blighting our countryside. Dumping plastic bags in hedgerows when no bins are immediately available is unacceptable.

COMMON COURTESY

IT IS GENERALLY acknowledged that life moves at a slower pace in the countryside, so there is more time for pleasantries and for passing the time of day.

When you are out walking, greet others even if you do not know them, with a cheerful "hello", "good morning" or "good afternoon". You can make a friendly remark about the weather, the beautiful view, the toughness of the climb, the muddiness of the paths etc. You may glean some useful information.

People who live and work in the country, especially near beauty spots, may feel that they are being inundated with visitors. If visitors are friendly and appreciative they will feel much less intrusive.

APPRECIATION

THE COUNTRYSIDE is a resource we all share and should all value. Above all, visitors should respect the people who live and work in the countryside and ensure that their visit does not in any way impede or have a negative impact on the rural economy or lifestyle.

COUNTRY DRIVING

THE KEY TO SAFE and well-mannered driving in the country is patience. When roads are narrow and visibility is poor, you will find any number of hazards – from herds of livestock to groups of hikers – to slow you down. Accept that country driving is slow, sit back and enjoy the scenery.

- Keep to your side of the road, and don't let reduced visibility tempt you into wandering into the oncoming lane.
- If you see a horse and rider ahead, slow down to a crawl and creep behind. When it is completely safe to overtake, pull out, giving the horse a wide berth, and driving very slowly.

- Driving along with your windows open and music blaring out is an inconsiderate assault on rural tranquillity. It is also dangerous when, for example, encountering horses, who may well be startled by loud noises. Honking horns is frowned upon on country roads.
- Where there are no verges, pedestrians are often forced to walk in the road. Slow down if you see a pedestrian ahead and overtake gently. Aggressively racing past with just a hair breadth's clearance is the height of bad manners.
- If you encounter a car coming in the opposite direction on a narrow lane, the convention is that the person who is nearest to a gateway or pull-off should tuck their car into the side. Large vehicles take priority, and you must manoeuvre yourself out of the way.
- Nothing winds up locals more than a visitor parking in a passing place or not acknowledging someone who has pulled over to let them pass – a wave of a hand or raising a finger from the steering wheel is all it takes.
- Park considerately; a gateway might look like a convenient spot to pull off the road, but you may well be blocking a farmer or a resident.



ANIMAL ALERTS

British road signs alert motorists to a number of wildlife hazards – swerving to avoid wildlife is the cause of many accidents. In 2019 the UK government introduced a “small mammal warning” sign, depicting a hedgehog, intended to protect vital crossing routes.

One of the most dangerous wild animals for motorists is the deer. Recent research indicates an annual tally of 74,000 deer-related accidents on UK roads. Most accidents occur during the deer's rutting season, from around October to December, with dusk and dawn being high-risk times of day. Be particularly vigilant at these times, especially on roads that run close to woods and forests and take note of deer warning signs. If you do see a deer at night, dip your headlights, which will prevent the animal from ‘freezing’.

THE UNFORTUNATE PHEASANT

Exotic pheasants originated in Asia and were brought to the British Isles by the Romans, where they have thrived and become an integral part of the country scene. Unfortunately, they are particularly vulnerable on British roads, especially in the autumn, when captive-bred birds are released from their pens. Not noted for their intelligence, such birds have little experience of living in the wild or learning from other birds; they are mainly land-based and only fly when startled, with an alarming tendency to head across roads in front of traffic.



SATNAV SLIP-UPS

In-car navigation systems have prevented many a long and scenic detour, but they are not infallible: listen to that inner voice of doubt before you gamely follow your SatNav's instruction to turn off an A-road onto a narrow dirt track. Remember, in areas with limited satellite coverage, such as remote rural areas or deep valleys, GPS accuracy may be impeded. Listen to instructions from residents and bow to their greater knowledge of rural highways and byways and always carry a physical road map; a craven dependence on technology may well leave you seriously disorientated.

A SHOOTING PARTY

THE UK has some of the best shooting in the world and the shooting season is steeped in traditions. The popularity of shooting reinforces the need for maintained habitats, such as moorland, generating a substantial income for the rural economy.

WHAT TO SHOOT

Seasons specified below are for England and Wales only. There are minor variations for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Ducks and Geese An excellent shooting challenge and a chance to explore wetlands.
Season: 1 September–31 January (inland)

Grouse One of the most difficult birds to shoot, the alluring red grouse, which mainly eats heather, is only shot in the uplands of Scotland and northern England.
Season: 12 August–10 December

Partridge Shoots are frequently both spectacular and demanding and provide the best alternative to grouse shooting in England.
Season: 1 September–1 February

Pheasant The staple of driven shooting in England and Wales, a high pheasant provides a challenge for any Gun.
Season: 1 October–1 February

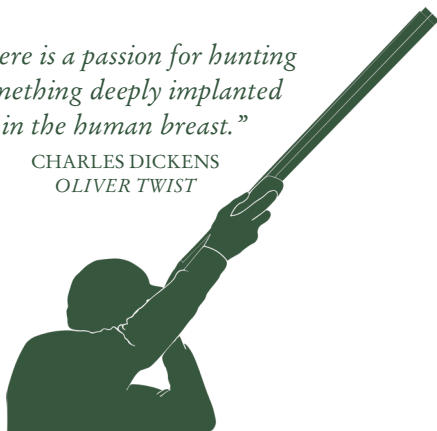
Pigeon These birds are typically shot by decoying on newly sown fields in spring or on stubble fields later in the year. They can also be shot by waiting for them to roost in woods in the evening.
Season: All year round as they are considered an agricultural pest

Deer Stalking red deer provides one of field sports' greatest challenges. Broadly, hinds and does can be shot during the winter months (starting in November), whereas stags and bucks can be shot over the summer season.

Common Snipe and Woodcock Both technically waders, snipe are flushed from bogs and marshes; they are small and difficult to hit. Woodcock are an elusive and crepuscular bird that jink in flight. They are found in woods and copses.
Season: Common Snipe 12 August–31 January; Woodcock 1 October–31 January

“There is a passion for hunting something deeply implanted in the human breast.”

CHARLES DICKENS
OLIVER TWIST



SHOOT RULES

- Never point your gun at anyone or anything but the sky or ground – even if it's unloaded.
- On a shoot you must either be licensed and insured or supervised by someone who is.
- If invited on a shoot, it is perfectly acceptable to borrow a gun.
- Always keep your phone off.
- Always carry the gun broken over your arm; always break your gun before handing it to someone else or crossing a stile.
- Keep your gun in a sleeve when you are not on a peg.
- Never shoot low birds unless you are on a grouse moor.
- Only shoot when you can see clear sky behind your target; never at close range.
- Never shoot a quarry that is nearer your neighbour.
- Remember where your birds fall to help the pickers find them.
- Don't overindulge at lunch if there is more shooting in the afternoon.
- Tip your gamekeeper well – ask your host about the going rate.
- Always keep your dog under control.

WHAT TO WEAR

At a formal shoot Guns typically wear shooting suits – traditionally a russet-coloured tweed suit with plenty of pockets for hip flasks, cartridges etc.

Stout boots or wellingtons are a must, and a cartridge bag is usually carried. Shooter's socks and gaiters often show a splash of colour; as they are covered up they can't scare the birds.

If you choose to go modern, make sure your clothes are waterproof, breathable and warm, such as a wax or quilted jacket. Above all, wear greens and browns as they will blend into the surroundings.

GUN DOGS

This term refers to a breed or type of dog that traditionally has supported human hunters to locate, chase and collect prey. Labrador retrievers and spaniels are typical gundogs and are enduringly popular as pets. Various breeds are particularly well adapted to specific forms of hunting: for example, spaniels have waterproof coats and plenty of stamina making them ideal for wetland environments. Gundogs make excellent pets because they are friendly and are bred to be obedient and submissive.



THE GLORIOUS TWELFTH

THE OPENING of the red grouse shooting season on 12 August is famously called the 'Glorious Twelfth'. In the days and weeks that follow, these lean and tasty birds are in demand as cooks and restaurants make the most of this seasonal treat.

PROCURING YOUR GROUSE

- Ensure that you are buying wild, rather than farmed, grouse by sourcing the birds from local farm shops, butchers and game dealers.
- It is usual to buy the birds 'oven-ready' but check them for age and quality. Young birds should be fresh-smelling, firm-breasted and sharp-clawed, with a pliable beak, legs and feet. They should also be plump and moist, with unblemished skin.
- Young birds are best roasted; older birds can be tough and are usually braised or used in rich casseroles, flavoured with thyme and red wine.
- You should allow a bird per person.



COOKING YOUR GROUSE

- Remove the wishbone and, for a tidy-looking result, snip the wings and legs at the second joint.
- Wipe out the inside of the cavity, stuff with some sprigs of thyme, and season inside and out.
- Tie the legs with string and, as an optional extra to protect the breast meat, place a couple of rashers of bacon around the bird.
- Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6. Cooking times vary according to the age of the bird: young ones take approximately 20 minutes, older birds can take up to 40 minutes.



SERVING THE BIRD

Grouse should be served rare; the breast meat should be springy but not too soft. Always allow the meat to rest for at least ten minutes before serving.

Grouse is traditionally served with gravy (made from the cooking juices), bread sauce, redcurrant sauce, game chips or game crumbs. A generous garnish of watercress is a classic accompaniment.

Purists often cook the grouse liver inside the cavity of the bird and spread it, like pâté, on a crouton, served with the roast.

Grouse is best suited to red wine; try a Burgundy (such as Gevrey-Cahambertin) or a northern Rhone (such as Côte Rhône).

VEGETARIAN OR VEGAN GUESTS?

You may delight in this gamey delicacy and regard it as a huge treat, but you can never assume all your guests will be like-minded. If a guest informs you that they are vegetarian or vegan, resist the temptation to reproach them or regale them with tales of shooting prowess. As a good host, cater for them as generously and with as little fuss as possible.

If you are making game chips or crumbs, they will be perfectly palatable for everyone; you can pan fry a fillet of fish for pescatarians or create a delicious vegetable and lentil casserole, which you can re-heat gently in the bottom of the oven while you are roasting your grouse.

CHIPS AND CRUMBS

Game chips and game crumbs are a traditional accompaniment to classic roast grouse. To make game chips, cut a large potato (Maris Piper works well) into very thin slices, preferably using a mandolin. Gently heat some oil and, when hot, fry the potato slices for three to four minutes, until crisp and golden. Drain on a piece of kitchen roll and season with salt. For game crumbs, fry two handfuls of white breadcrumbs in six tablespoons of butter until they are crisp and golden.



FISHING

FISHING IS A TIME for reflection and solitude. There are obviously practical reasons for this – fish won't bite when there's lots of noise – but it's the spirit that will benefit most from time spent gazing contemplatively out at a stream, a stretch of river or a lake.

GAME FISHING

Freshwater fishing for edible species such as trout and salmon is seen as the sport of kings (it is extremely popular with the Royal Family). It requires great skill but reaps delicious rewards. You will need a licence and you must fish in season, which runs from March–September (local byelaws will dictate when you can fish).

The most popular targets for game anglers are trout, sea trout, salmon and sometimes char, although the latter are quite rare.

Although there are general bylaws about the size and type of fish you can keep, most venues will only allow you to take fish away as long as you stick to their own rules about size and number limits. In some places this is not possible as the fish are protected and/or the fishery owners want to help numbers of wild fish to increase.

Fly fishing: The most common technique involves casting a thick plastic line which acts as the casting weight with 5 to 20 feet of fine nylon or fluorocarbon line attached to the end, and an artificial fly usually made from feathers and animal hair to attract the fish. Larger flies (lures) are made to imitate small fish and are pulled through the water or allowed to drift round in the current.

Spinning: A flashing metal spinner or a wooden or plastic lure either floats on the surface or dives to the bottom. The spinner/lure is pulled through the water to imitate a small fish or other creature that some species of game fish eat or attack.

COARSE FISHING

More accessible than game fishing, coarse fishing is freshwater angling for all other types of freshwater fish (eg pike, chub, perch, bream, eel, roach or rudd). It requires a "trout, coarse fish and eel" licence and the season runs from 15 March–15 June. You are required to throw the fish you catch back into the water.

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

CHINESE PROVERB

FISHING ETIQUETTE

- Do not 'skyline' (standing above a seated angler, which may give fish the chance to make out a large silhouette against the backdrop of the sky).
- Do not dump large quantities of unused bait in the river when you're packing up.
- Turn off or mute mobile phones – you do not want ringtones or alerts to shatter the riverside peace.
- Respect personal space. That means not setting up too near a fellow-angler and making them feel crowded.
- Tips about where the fish are biting are essential intelligence, but don't interrogate fellow anglers. Use subtle probing and open-ended questions to extract intelligence.
- It's gratifying when other anglers are helpful about fishing hot spots, but try to safeguard this precious information. You don't want their favourite spots to be inundated because of your loose lips.
- Fishing is a contemplative, introverted sport but that doesn't mean you should be grumpy or uncommunicative. Exchange greetings and a few words with passersby and fellow fishers, be friendly to dogs and tolerant of children. Remember you're in a shared space.
- Resist the temptation to exaggerate about your catch. It's all too easy to 'round up' a few ounces but bragging will make you unpopular. Improbable, boastful claims are called 'fisherman's tales' for a reason...

ANGLING DRESS CODES

Cut a picturesque dash on the riverbank with the traditional look:

Waterproof Jacket A waxed jacket is an excellent choice. Pack a waterproof poncho in your fishing bag, which can be deployed if there is a sudden shower.

Wellington Boots Invest in a good pair, preferably with neoprene lining.

Walking Boots Brown leather walking boots with a waterproof Gore-tex lining are sturdy and supremely comfortable, especially if you have a long walk over rough terrain to your fishing spot. Adding wax gaiters will give you the same protection as wellingtons.

Tweed Jacket A traditional tweed shooting jacket can be worn underneath the waxed jacket or as an outer layer.

• **Trousers** Choose tweed or moleskin trousers. Or opt for breeks, which are cut to finish below the knee. Comfortable when worn with wellingtons, but they might raise a few eyebrows if you dash into the petrol station!

• **Hat** Options include flat caps, deerstalkers, a felt Trilby, or a wide-brimmed straw hat for sweltering days.



FALCONRY

THE ANCIENT ART of using a wild bird to capture prey has a long history, originating in the Middle East in 1700 BC and reaching the British Isles in the 9th century AD. Like riding and archery, it was an upper-class pursuit and falconers, who looked after the day-to-day care of the birds, were much prized. The invention of gunpowder was a setback for this ancient sport: it was so much easier to use guns to bring down prey. By the 20th century falconry was practically defunct in the UK, but since then it has been undergoing a slow revival and is now viewed as a field sport. The Harris Hawk was introduced into the UK in the 1960s and is now the most popular bird of prey.

RAPTOR ETIQUETTE

- Never touch the falconer's bird without asking permission and maintain a respectful distance from the bird until the falconer invites you closer.
- Walk on the side opposite to the one the falconer has the bird on. Typically, the falconer will carry the bird on his left fist, so stay to the falconer's right hand side.
- Avoid making loud noises or a lot of movement near the bird unless you are trying to flush quarry. These are sensitive animals, and they prefer strangers to keep a distance from them.
- If the falconer hands you a lure or quarry, keep it well out of sight of the bird.
- Don't wear fur out when you're engaged in falconry. Fur-trimmed hoods or fur earmuffs will be warm and comfortable when you're outdoors all day, but the risk is that the bird may mistake them for quarry.

"My falcon now is sharp and passing empty, and still she stoop she must not be full-gorged, for then she never looks upon her lure."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



FALCONRY AND LANGUAGE

FALCONRY TERMS have entered the English language, reflecting the long history of the sport:

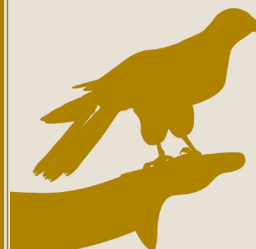
Bated breath: When falcons want to "bate from their block", or take off, but are held near their perch on a leash, they get out of breath, hence the term "with bated breath" used to mean holding your breath while waiting for something to happen.

Boozer: When a bird of prey drinks it is called "browsing": a bird that drinks a lot is called a "boozer". Today the term is applied to humans who consume a lot of alcohol.

Fed up: A hawk is termed fed up when it has a full crop (storage pouch) and is not interested in food or flying.

Cadge: This was a padded wooden frame on which the hawk was carried into the field. The person carrying the cadge became known as the cadger. At the end of the day the cadger would go to the local tavern and recount the tales of

how the birds had flown and in turn expect money. To cadge now means to scrounge or beg.



End of my tether: When a young, inexperienced bird is bated from their perch and secured by a tether, they frequently struggle against it. The phrase is now used to mean that frustration level has peaked.

Haggard: A type of falcon that was caught in the wild as an adult and was therefore more difficult to train. The word came to mean wild or hard to tame, and in the present day has come to mean worn out and rough.

Hoodwink: To cover the bird's eyes to keep it calm and relaxed. It now means to fool someone into doing something.

Under your thumb: A falconer maintains control of the bird by holding the leash tightly under the thumb while the bird is perched on the hand. Today it means having control over someone.

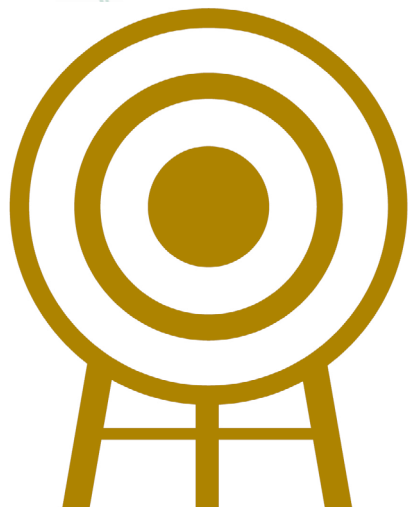
Wrapped around your little finger: When holding a hawk under the thumb, falconers would wrap the remaining strands of the leash around their little finger. Today, it means having firm control over someone.



ARCHERY

EVIDENCE OF THE USE of bows and arrows for hunting in the British Isles dates to the 3rd millennium BC; finds of flint arrowheads date back 20,000 years. But it was not until the Battle of Hastings in 1066 that Norman archers, who breached English defences, introduced the concept of archery as a weapon of war.

The yew longbow became famous at the Battle of Agincourt (1415), where some 7,000 longbowmen were successfully deployed and were victorious against a much greater French force. However, the bow and arrow were eventually rendered obsolete by the introduction of gunpowder in the 15th century. Archery became a recreational sport, with the earliest archery societies dating back to the 15th century.



WOMEN AND ARCHERY

In 1787 the Royal British Bowmen was the first society to accept female members, and women increasingly began to participate in the sport during the Victorian era. Archery was embraced as an elegant and healthy amusement, which also harked back to Romantic notions of pre-industrial Britain. Archery societies were set up across the country, each with its own conditions of entry and elaborate ceremonies, balls and dinners. Archery was almost the only sport practised by women in the early 19th century and was also one of the first sports in which men and women could practise on equal terms. No special uniform was required:

women wore what was fashionable at the time. Women archers mixed naturally with the opposite sex; flirtation and courtship flourished and even marriages were arranged on the archery range.



ARCHERY DRESS CODES

Historically, dress for archery was elegant rather than practical. In the late 18th century, gentlemen wore a tailcoat, breeches, boots and a plumed hat, while lady archers sported a simple empire line dress and a hat decorated with an ostrich plume.

These days, the dress code is eminently practical:

- Lightweight, long-sleeved shirt (to prevent sunburn)
- Arm and chest guards
- A hat
- Closed shoes or trainers; neither open-toed sandals or flip-flops are acceptable
- Loose trousers; when competing, jeans or camouflage are not acceptable
- It is advisable not to wear anything that interferes with shooting, including necklaces, dangly earrings, jackets with zips (which may catch on the bowstring).

“When the archer misses the centre of the target, he turns round and seeks for the cause of his failure in himself.”

CONFUCIUS

ARCHERY ETIQUETTE

- Always shout “Fast” if you spot any danger during shooting.
- Never talk in a loud voice when others are shooting.
- Always remain on the shooting line when a neighbour is on full draw; only move forward when they have finished shooting.
- Don’t walk up and down the shooting line comparing others’ scores.
- Always keep a count of how many arrows you have shot and how many are in your quiver.
- Turn off mobile phones or switch them to silent to avoid disturbing other archers.
- Never pack up your equipment until the last archer has finished so you don’t interfere with their concentration.
- It is unsporting to touch any arrow or the target face until all the arrow values have been recorded and checked.
- Wait until the scores have been taken before searching for missed arrows.





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