



Steve Tool/Chieftain

If you've got the time, Del Sol has the tack. Barry Cox placing some gear back on the rack in his extensive tack shed.



Steve Tool/Chieftain

Shirley and Barry Cox on the Del Sol homestead with just a few horns from previous hunts.

Get the latest local news online at Wallowa.com

Get your hunt on at Del Sol

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

If you're looking to bag that special animal, or even just head up to the high country and enjoy the reverie, Del Sol Wilderness Adventures may have your ticket to paradise. Owned by husband and wife team Barry and Shirley Cox, the Wallowa enterprise offers a high quality wilderness experience.

Barry Cox started life in New York state and began coming west at the age of 16 and ended up cowboying out of Imnaha for some years before his foray into the packing and outfitting business. "I was just interested in traveling around horseback in the mountains, so I got handy at packing on my own," Cox said.

After running his own cattle, Cox discovered packing professionally offered more money than raising cattle, so he sold his cattle but kept his

large horse herd. "They needed a job to do, and by golly, I put them to work," Cox said.

After working for percentages with another packer, Cox bought the business and set up shop on his own in 2007. He is also highly regarded for his horsemanship/training skills.

Although Del Sol offers a number of animal hunts and pleasure/trail rides, elk hunting is king. "Elk is our big moneymaker, and bow season starts at the end of August and we have a busy month packing bow hunters into the Eagle Cap and Snake River units. I have permits for both," Cox said.

Following the bow season is the rifle season for deer, which in turn segues into elk rifle season. Currently, Del Sol is doing summer vacation pack trips and drop camps, which makes up the bulk of their August business. "We also offer some spring bear hunts in April and May, and we get the occasional sheep hunter as well. We pretty much shut down for a few months after the middle of November," Cox said.

Large groups are not a worry either, as Del Sol had 20 saddles and at least as many pack saddles in their tack shed. Del Sol has accommodated groups as large as 50 people.

Even though hunts are not offered year-round, gear and stock maintenance as well as horsemanship clinics take up the rest of the Cox family spare time.

Surprisingly, most of the hunters Del Sol caters to are from the west side of the state, although he caters to a few locals as well. "We get a few from California or Washington, but it's mainly from the west side — they love it here, and they look forward to it."

"We're providing a service to these folks to go to a place they can't normally get to on their own," Cox said.

Del Sol has several wranglers and one apprentice working through the season.

"The logistics of placing all the different camps and gear and people on a hunting season time-frame takes a huge endeavor by all of us," Cox said.

Individual guided hunts are available where it's just the customer and a single guide. "They just opened up a new muzzle loading season on the Minam unit. We've got a guy already scheduled who's coming in to do a one-on-one guided hunt for that, and we have several other scheduled for this year too," Cox said.

Although there are reasons for guided hunts for people unfamiliar with Wallowa County, local hunters can benefit as well. Bow hunting seasons tend to be warmer than rifle seasons and meat spoils quickly. "What I run into during bow season is when it's warm, and a hunter gets a bull. That's 500 pounds of meat and they're back in there 15 miles. You have a time-frame to get that meat out. If you don't have five friends willing to drop everything and help you pack it out, you're in trouble," Cox said.

One client killed a bull down low in the Snake River in 85-degree weather. "He called me and said, 'We're in trouble.' He didn't think we could get mules down in there, but I found an elk trail and packed it out. Without an outfitter, they'd have lost the meat. I've seen that quite a bit," Cox said.

An outfitter-guided hunt also includes many amenities, including a wall tent with stove, not to mention the ride in and ride out of the area with Del Sol packing the meat in a timely fashion. Advice as to the location of game animals is helpful as well. "It's hard enough as it is, and we've learned a lot because we've been in this area for a long time, and you learn where deer, elk or bear are at certain times of the year. We want our clients to be successful," Cox said.

We are ready for your game processing needs - hanging, smoking, cutting. We do it all!

208 S. Main, Joseph, Oregon
541.432.0740

MT. JOSEPH FAMILY FOODS
"Our Family Serving Yours"

JOSEPH HARDWARE

Hunting, Camping & Fishing Gear
Credit Cards Accepted for ODFW Tags & Licenses
Gun Sales & Consignment
The Best Firearm Prices In Wallowa County
Ammunition & Accessories
Bore Sighting & Optics
10% Over Cost on Special Order Firearms
FFL Transfers



JOSEPH HARDWARE



Award-winning chocolates, crazy-good mochas made with Stumptown coffee and fresh chocolate out of our melter, and a menagerie of other sumptuous delights all made in-house by a happy, enthusiastic crew. Come visit!



Open every day, 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.
100 N Main St.
Joseph, OR 97846
arrowheadchocolates.com

541-432-2271

101 S Main Street
Joseph, Oregon

www.johard.com

WORK HARD. PLAY HARD. JO HARD.®