



# Estancia Los Chanares

The Cordoba area of Argentina is the center of the universe when it comes to high volume dove shooting. Actually, I love shooting in Uruguay as well, if not more, but there is no question there are more doves around Cordoba as the ideal habitat is even more expansive. Because of the huge expanse of this Argentine area, many dove lodges have sprung up to enjoy the dollars that USA-based wingshooters bring. I've shot at probably 10 different dove lodges in this area, I have found them all to be outstanding. I have not been with one outfitter there who takes any advantage of American shooters. Just the opposite—they cater to a wing gunner's every need.

I found this particularly true late last March at Estancia Los Chanares. Chanares is the Spanish word for a tree that is prolific in the Cordoba area. Long thorns abound on these trees. Many of them grow in close proximity to one another and are called chanares groves. They do not grow tall—at least the ones I've seen do not. Chanares groves

are the preferred dove nesting and resting habitat. As you might be starting to guess by now Estancia Los Chanares is a pretty spectacular lodge situated right in the midst of a dove roost with chanares trees galore.

You are probably also beginning to guess why this lodge has special appeal. You are correct if you guess that there are no long drives to the dove shooting grounds. I was told that this lodge sits on 1500 acres, a lot of which is the dove roost I just spoke of, but the owner and manager plant 150 hectares of sunflower seeds—all just for the doves. The sunflowers are never harvested for market; but these 150 hectares of sunflowers are not in one big patch. Instead small tracts of sunflowers are scattered all through the 1500 acres.

Further, the lodge leases the shooting rights to 10,000 additional acres, all very close by. A typical Estancia Los Chanares shooting package involves a first day arrival in time for an afternoon hunt. You can actually walk to that hunt, it's that close, but you are actually driven to your shooting blind.

The next two days are full with both morning and afternoon shoots. Lodge Manager Alex Mitri told me these drives are only about five minutes; that's because the doves at this roost have so many surrounding grain fields to feed in. At most Cordoba dove lodges, the drives to the fields are long enough that you do not come back to the lodge for lunch. Instead you stay in the field and enjoy an asado (barbecue over glowing wood coals) right in the field, which is always quite enjoyable. At Estancia Los Chanares you always come back to the lodge because it's so close to your morning shoot. Generally, you do have lunch outside, however.

On the final morning of your hunt, you shoot around the sunflowers that are right on the lodge property. Alex told me that they have numerous blinds on the property, and they have a program for moving shooters around so that the clients never shoot the same place twice, plus

Brian Kavanagh sees doves coming. His shotgun is a 20 gauge Benelli semi-auto rental.



blinds are selected for each hunt so that no small area is ever over shot. The same is true regarding blind selection at the shooting areas just outside their property – over the already mentioned 10,000 leased acres. The lodge even has a very high tower where scouts can see which areas are under heavy dove use before the shooters leave each morning or afternoon.

It is this close proximity to all their shooting that sets Estancia Los Chanareos apart from many of its competitors. Interestingly, the doves on this roost do migrate several hundred kilometers north in April and May. The lodge takes advantage of this by simply shutting down for two months. During this period staff can vacation plus any maintenance concerns are taken care of.

## Do the Math

I shot this lodge late in March of 2009 with two shooters from Baltimore and one from Camden, SC. We never left the lodge property as we hunted those little sunflower patches every morning and afternoon shoot. All three of these companions managed to have days when they killed more than 1000 doves. Yes, that's in one day – not for the whole trip. The "top gun" shot over 1800 birds in one day. But I was with more than one shooter on this extended trip (I shot three different lodges and over 10 days of gunning) who shot more than 3000 doves in one morning!

How can the doves around the Cordoba area take this amount of pounding? One major factor is that these doves are sexually mature at only three months. Do the math. In three months a new born has two young, six months later two more young, nine months later two more young, 12 months later two more young. And don't forget that the bird that had two young at three months of age – there was a dove female at six months of age that was having two young, yet another dove at ninth months of age that was having twins, etc. So it's an exponential thing.



Because of the endless nesting, resting and feeding habitat, this dove production goes on and on and on. Very few locals shoot these doves; the shells are too expensive. It's only the Americans (a few from Great Britain and other countries) that gun here. While plenty of Americans do shoot here, most outfitters say they are not keeping up with dove production as they swear they see more doves every year.

One of the most popular aspects of dove shooting in Argentina is the gunning of very high birds. Shooting high pheasants probably first became popular in Great Britain, as well as with high or long targets in sporting clays. While a good day for a very expensive driven pheasant shoot with some high birds might produce several hundred roosters and hens, that number doesn't even touch the figurative iceberg of possibilities around Cordoba. Mitri says his lodge can present high doves on a regular basis on their outlying 10,000 acres of leased shooting grounds. This is important to most shooters as the gunning for doves around the Estancia's sunflower fields were mostly lower doves.

More and more I have come to love shooting the very high doves in South America. I have found it amazing how far one can reach out with a 21 gram load of #7 shot with a full choked 28 gauge. With figurative bus-length leads, the doves can be hit very, very hard so

*All the dove lodges around Cordoba tend to be show places, and this is certainly true of Estancia Los Chanareos.*

that they collapse stone dead where they were hit. Prior to watching others shoot high doves, and trying it myself, I never thought full choked smallbore guns were capable of doing what they do.

## Exceptional Lodges

I never did favor dove lodges that catered to bigger groups. While there were only four of us shooting Estancia Los Chanareos late last March, typically a group here is six or eight gunners.

No matter what lodge you visit in the Cordoba area you are going to enjoy great food, and this Estancia is no exception. Ditto for the accommodations. I have never stayed in a bad room down there; all are exceptionally well furnished and comfortable.

Like many others, Estancia has a big swimming pool, so bring your trunks. You won't need much clothing. Though their seasons are the opposite of ours, Cordoba has a very agreeable, temperate climate. Further, clothing is washed daily, so you need to pack very little.

Being a shotgun writer I always take my own guns. Fifteen years ago 80 percent of the Cordoba gunners brought their own shotguns, but these days there has been a dramatic



Gunning sunflower fields around Estancia Los Chanares. All those little black dots are doves.

.410s it is tough to find 3-inch shells, and the 2 1/2-inchers have less than 1/2 ounce of shot. I'm trying to get RD, the Argentine shotshell manufacturer in Tucuman, to make 3-inch .410s with 20 grams of shot (about 3/4 ounce). If that ever happens I predict that .410 shooting will become much more popular down there.

**T**he bottom line is that no real wingshooter ever regrets a trip to Cordoba for high volume doves. Because of the excellent lodge at Estancia Los Chanares and the fact that you never are faced with long drives, this one is a top consideration. Their booking agent is Jeri Booth, Detail Adventure Company, 3220 Audley, Houston, TX 77098, phone 800-292-2213, web [www.detailcompany.com](http://www.detailcompany.com) or email at [info@detailcompany.com](mailto:info@detailcompany.com).

Contact Sisley at [nicksisley@hotmail.com](mailto:nicksisley@hotmail.com).

change. Now fully 80 percent of the visiting hunters rent guns from the lodge. Usually you have a choice, depending upon the lodge, 12 or 20 gauge semiautos from Beretta and/or Benelli and some offer over-and-under use.

A 20 bore is all you will ever need for these doves. The 28 gauge is becoming increasingly popular, but not all lodges have 28 gauge rentals. If they do it's usually only a few. The 28, 20 and 12 gauge shells are all excellent. With



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**September 18-20, 2009**  
ROTATION SCHEDULE

Rotation	12	20	28	410
1	Sat.9:00a	1:30p Sat.	Sun.10:30a	Sun.3:00p
2	Sat.10:30a	Sat.3:00p	Sun.12:00p	Sun.4:30p
3	Sat.12:00p	Sat.4:30p	Sun.9:00a	Sun.1:30p

Registration Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ NSSA #: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_ Day Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Night Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I will referee Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Indicate your choice of Doubles time (1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice)  
1:00 \_\_\_\_\_ 2:30 \_\_\_\_\_ 4:00 \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate your flight preference (1 thru 3) for the main event

Rot 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Rot 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Rot 3 \_\_\_\_\_

I will be attending the dinner Saturday night. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Guests \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this completed form to the address below. If you have a full squad, copy this form for each member and send together. PRE-REGISTRATION is encouraged. Pre-registration will be taken by mail only. Send registration to:

NC Skeet Shooting Association  
c/o Barry Allen  
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