

# Top partridge *shoots*

It can cost as much to shoot a poor partridge as a stunner. With that in mind, *The Field* has compiled a list of 25 shoots guaranteed to present birds that are truly sporting

**B**E he English or French, a well-shown partridge can test the best of shots. Presented in the traditional style over hedgerows, greys and redlegs encapsulate the motto, "the race is to the swift". Hesitate and your only resort is a scabbled shot behind. Alternatively, drive the Frenchmen like pheasants and they can sail over the line as high as any steepling *phasianus*.

But there are too many shoots where the partridges may extend the shooting season but do little to challenge the sportsman other than in his wallet. And a poor partridge is seldom cheaper than an excellent one.

The British shoots cover both styles but have one thing in common: they show truly sporting, testing birds. Wild shoots are proliferating and we may aspire to facing our native grey partridge. Shoots such as Peppering are

showing what can be achieved. Truly wild birds are uniquely testing to produce and to shoot; they offer a challenge that all sportsmen should experience at least once in a lifetime.

We do not hold a monopoly on excellence, so there are also five Spanish and Portuguese shoots for you to consider.

**Partridge-shooting at Bereleigh, Hampshire, with the trees still in leaf and the views glorious**





**FIFIELD BAVANT  
DORSET**

*Price* £31 + VAT; no overage  
*Bag* 250-300 birds  
*Tel* 07122 780600

Free-draining chalk downland, this is ideal partridge habitat and is popular with non-corporate teams of guns who repeat-book for "testing shooting in a friendly atmosphere" over 1,100 acres. This season is already taken and each team will receive a menu before the day, from which to choose its three-course lunch and tea.

**AUDLEY END, ESSEX**

*Price* £28 + VAT  
*Bag* 150-250 birds  
*Tel* 01799 541354 (estate office)

Part-syndicate/part-commercial. Four pure partridge days are let per season, run from good rolling ground in the middle of the shoot. Pheasants are shot from mid November but you are unlikely to be bothered by them on a partridge day. Keeper Geoff Garrod says it's "for people who want to shoot sporting birds".

**CASTLE RISING, NORFOLK**

Invitation only  
*Bag* 150-500 birds

A day at Castle Rising, auctioned for Help for Heroes, was snapped up, so the rest of us don't stand a chance. Marching with Sandringham, it has, over the past 12 years, been turned from an incongruous pheasant-shoot to a brilliant partridge one - supporting a healthy population of greys. Though not yet on the game list, 150 were seen in a single drive last season.

**CAWDOR, NAIRNSHIRE**

*Price* on application  
*Bag* 150-500 birds  
*Tel* 01667 402402

Heather-clad hills and moorland ravines are the backdrop for one of the finest high driven partridge-shoots in Scotland. Technical excellence is needed to make the bag, but the atmosphere remains jovial and good-humoured. Guns can stay at the estate's Drynahan Lodge, which is popular for two-day shoots. ➤

**BERELEIGH, HAMPSHIRE**

*Price* on application  
*Bag* 200-300 birds  
*Tel* 01730 823486

Eight guns and their partners can stay in the Georgian house before shooting. There is a waiting list for both pheasant and partridge days but owner Bill Tyrwhitt-Drake is a fan of the partridge: "The days are much more comfortable; people appreciate the downs." And so they might: they give the birds lots of height.

**BRAXTED PARK, ESSEX**

*Price* £30 + VAT  
*Bag* 250-300 birds  
*Tel* 01621 892305 (Duncan Clark)

This shoot is brilliantly handy for London but still prides itself on providing a family atmosphere. With relatively small enclosures and undulating land, set in 2,000 acres, the shooting is really challenging. Birds are shown over hedgerows and from mature woodland. There are 20 partridge-only days and 20 pheasant-and-partridge days later in the season.

**DRUMLANRIG, DUMFRIESSHIRE**

*Price* £37 + VAT  
*Bag* minimum 300 birds in September, scaling back to 150 birds in January  
*Tel* 01848 600415

Although only six years old, this partridge-shoot on the Queensberry estate has a formidable reputation. The birds are described as being very strong from the start of the season and "barely visible" but guns are adamant they are shootable - just. Having been boggled by the birds, they can go on to relax in luxury at Drumlanrig Castle.

