

Families Shooting for Fun in Middle Georgia

Even with ear defenders, the loud crack of the Ruger SP101 revolver as I pulled the trigger made my heart beat faster. For some, the sound of a gunshot represents liberty, safety, and survival. For some, it represents oppression, fear, and death. Love or hate them, for many Americans in the Southern US, guns are an inextricable part of their way of life and culture. For twelve Canadians posted to middle Georgia, on June 13th, our experience shooting guns at the Eagle Gun Range was about spending time together, supporting one another, experiencing the local culture, and having fun.

Our gathering commenced with lunch at Taki Japanese Grill in nearby Macon, GA. Our group of seven RCAF members and five spouses had our fill of Japanese-American specialties running the gamut of tastes from very raw sashimi to medium-well Hibachi grilled steak. Thanks to our Hibachi chef, some of our group had the chance to show off their mouth-eye coordination (or lack thereof) as the chef flung morsels of food in their direction with the instruction to catch with their mouths and not use their hands. Before long, it was time to transition from catching food projectiles in our mouths to shooting lead projectiles downrange.

In the classroom at Eagle Gun Range in Macon, GA, the instructor taught us about safety, and we told him about our individual goals for the day which included shooting a handgun for the first time and trying out different models of weapons including one of the many gun models seen in a "John Wick" film. Our instructor was surprised to learn that not one of us brought a gun to shoot, because we don't own any! This was no problem when it came time to shoot, as the range had plenty of rental options and set us up with a PPQ 22, Smith and Wesson 380 EZ, Glock 19, Glock 34, Ruger SP101, Smith and Wesson 649, and a Just Right 9 mm carbine. The carbine was probably the most surprising weapon of the bunch, as it was unexpected to see a long gun (with handgun caliber ammunition) in the indoor range we thought was just for handguns!

We donned our protective equipment and entered the half of the range (6 lanes) Eagle Gun Range set aside for us. The new shooters started in lane 12 with an instructor, shooting the PPQ 22 until they felt comfortable to move on to different weapons in the other lanes. The range staff were on hand to help us as needed, and those in our group more experienced with handguns helped out their less-experienced colleagues, spouses, and friends, bolstering feelings of support, comfort, and camaraderie. We encouraged one another, and took turns trying out different guns. Despite the event being for fun, and no scores recorded, there were some impressive groupings from both the experienced and the novice shooters. We shot lots of holes in paper targets, including one of the more memorable targets titled, "Susan", that depicted a gunman holding "Susan" hostage at gunpoint. When it was all done, and we'd expended all the ammunition we purchased, left the floor littered with spent casings, and taken numerous turns saving "Susan" (or shooting her), we were left with a feeling of accomplishment, both individually and as a group. I'm happy to say it was a fun day. Plus, the Toronto Raptors would go on to win the finals that night. A big thank you to MFSUS for your support helping to make our fun American range experience happen.