

Hands-on work with endangered wildlife in South Africa

Project Overview

Are you desperate to visit a magical place where friendly cheetahs roam free and curious monkeys swing gracefully from the trees outside your bedroom window?

If so, you're in luck! When you work at the wildlife park, you be surrounded by tons of endangered, hand-reared animals who want nothing more than to eat out of your hand and be lavished with your attention. You will be involved in hand feeding young cubs, preparing food for the animals, general upkeep of the park enclosures and monitoring game on the reserve. If your passion for animals comes in second only to your love of beach, this trip is perfect for you - some of the best surf beaches in South Africa are just a few miles away from the park. You can spend your work days caring for animals in need and then head off to the beach to catch some glorious waves. Does life get any better than this?



Trip Highlights:

- Nursing young wildlife back to health
- Waking up to the sound of exotic birds fluttering in your front yard
- Hiking through the game reserve to see zebra, giraffe, wildebeest and antelope roaming free
- Surfing or lounging on the golden sand beaches nearby
- Doing your bit to help conserve stunning wildlife for future generations to enjoy

What the project does and why it needs you!

This wildlife park is a result of one man's passion to conserve his natural surroundings and was created with the aim of rescuing and treating all injured or orphaned wildlife brought to his attention. Even after extensive treatment, some animals may never be able to return to the wild so the park provides them with a safe home where they can live out their final days in peace and comfort. With so many animals to care for and new ones being born on a regular basis, the park needs your help to look after the ever-growing population of hungry tenants currently including monkeys, giraffe, zebra, impala, crocodiles, emu's and over one hundred species of birds!

Who is it for?

- Do you want to get up close and personal to some incredible wildlife?
- Like the sound of experiencing the great outdoors in South Africa?
- Ever thought of hanging ten at one of the world's greatest surf spots or simply lazing away weekends on stunning beaches watching the dudes in the surf?
- Or even simply looking to enjoy some time in South Africa - an incredible country with hospitable people and amazing scenery?

If the answer to any of the above is yes then this is the trip for you!

What you'll be doing

You have a chance to get involved in all kinds of fun and exciting tasks. You will be working 5 days a week from 7:30am to between 4 and 5pm. Not to worry though, you will have plenty of break times for lunch and snacks.

A typical week may include activities such as:

- Hand-rearing of orphaned wildlife including bottle-feeding
- Checking and counting game on nature reserve
- Preparation of food and feeding wildlife
- General upkeep and cleaning of enclosures
- Assisting with building of new enclosures
- Checking the state of game park fences

Where you'll be staying

This may be the best work commute of your life since you will be staying in a comfy lodge right on the reserve grounds. You will be in a dormitory style accommodation - a great way to get to know other travellers! The lodge itself is well equipped and has modern amenities such as hot water and showers!. You will also have access to a lounge with a fridge and kettle. Local shops and post office are a 5 minute drive away. The beaches of Jeffrey's Bay, and the pleasant town of Port Elizabeth are all a reasonable taxi ride away - and all yours to explore on days off from the reserve.

What you'll be eating

Enjoy the pleasure of having your breakfast, lunch and dinner prepared for you. You will be provided with three delicious meals a day. Dinner will be your main meal so you can look forward to some authentic South African braais (BBQ) as well as some traditional international favorites such as pasta and roasts. Please note that no alcohol is able to be brought on to the project however it can be purchased on site.

Advice and what to bring

It is a good idea to bring the following items with you:

- Torch / flashlight
- Walking shoes
- Sun hat
- Sunglasses
- Sleeping bag

You may also want to bring some items from home to keep you entertained in the evenings. Books, DVDs and music players are great choices. Be sure to have clothes for both warm and cool weather as it can get chilly in the evenings.

When you arrive

Please book your flight to arrive into Cape Town International Airport (CPT) before 4pm on your arrival day. You will be picked up from the airport and taken to the volunteer house where you will have orientation at 5pm. After a cozy night in the volunteer house, you will get an early start to the day. You will leave the house at around 6am to catch a 7am bus to Jeffreys Bay. The bus ride is about 10 hours, a long but scenic ride and a great way to see the beautiful country landscape. You will arrive around 5pm in Jeffreys Bay and be met at the bus station by staff from the wildlife park and taken to your accommodation.

NOTE: If you would prefer to fly to the project after orientation this is possible but will be at your own expense. You will still need to arrive in Cape Town on your arrival date but then book a flight from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth in the morning of the day after orientation (Tuesday). If you would like to take this option please ensure that you contact us for further information.

At the end of your experience, you will take a shuttle bus to Port Elizabeth Airport. Please book you flight home to depart from Port Elizabeth Airport (PLZ).

Fast Facts

Project Information

- Project Duration: Min 1 week - Max 8 weeks
- Project Costs: £699.00 for 1 week, £250.00 for every week thereafter
- Location of project: *Thornhill, near Port Elizabeth, South Africa*
- Arrival Airport: *Cape Town (CPT)*
- Departure Airport: *Port Elizabeth (PLZ)*
- Activities: *Various types of feeding and caring for wildlife, helping maintain the reserve, hiking through reserve to monitor game and assisting in showing visitors around the park*
- Working Hours: *Flexible; usually 5 days a week, 7.30am to 4 or 5 pm, all other time is free*
- Getting to the project: *Accommodation is on site*
- Requirements: *Minimum age 16*

What's Included

- Accommodation: *Shared dormitory style room in lodge at project*
- Food: *All meals are included*
- Airport Pickup: *Included on arrival date. Ask us for details if you're arriving early!*
- Training: *In-country orientation and briefing on arrival at the project*
- Support: *Pre-departure helpdesk, Local in-country team and 24hr emergency support*

What's not included

- *Flights, Insurance, Visas, Return Airport transfer, Local Transport*

Country Guide - South Africa

A little bit of history...

A journey into South Africa's history is to haul through periods of racial tension, oppression and hope. Its multicultural mix originates from the earliest settlers, the San (also known as Bushmen) and Khoi-Khoi tribes, followed by Bantu-speaking groups, and through to the swarm of European traders. The Dutch were among the first European settlers and arrived in the 17th century, establishing their presence through their own dialect, Afrikaans, and religion in the form of the Dutch Reformed Church. By the end of the 18th century, the British began to push their presence forward into the country's towns. It was a period of flared tensions with Zulu chief Shaka renouncing war on neighbouring tribes. Meanwhile, the Boers (Dutch Afrikaner farmers) and the British became locked in conflict; the Anglo-Boer War lasted from 1899 to 1902, ending with the British taking control of the Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State (OFS) and consequently ruling the country.

By 1910, the Union of South Africa was created and gave political power to whites, while blacks set up political parties in protest, the African National Congress (ANC) the best known. It ushered in the beginnings of apartheid, which became widely ingrained after the Afrikaner National Party came to power in 1948. Violence against protests from blacks was enforced and the black population were evicted to so-called Homelands. In the 1960s, leaders of the ANC were imprisoned, notably Nelson Mandela, and the country became isolated having left the Commonwealth and declaring its republic status. After a long period of racial divide and conflict, in 1989 FW de Klerk came to power with the aim to rid the country of apartheid and instil democracy. The following year, Mandela was released from prison and in 1994 became president after the ANC won the country's first non-racial general elections; the country also returned to the Commonwealth. The country's democratic stance has steered it toward a more harmonious future, though economic inequalities between whites and blacks exist, but as the most developed economy on the continent it is in a good position to reconcile with its past.



Best time to go...

Naturally, South Africa's seasons are the reverse of the northern hemisphere with summer heat burning from November to March and cooler winter temperatures from June to August. Temperature wise, spring (September to October) and autumn (April to May) provide a happy medium. Certain must-do activities are restricted to specific times of year: safari is best from June to September and the whale watching season is June to December. The busiest time, hence the most expensive, is during the summer months, while the major school holidays are during December and Easter.

Getting around...

Given the distances involved, flying is the most convenient way to travel between the main destinations, while land transportation can efficiently pick up the rest of the mileage for exploration in and around. There are an assortment of domestic carriers to choose from that fly the main routes, with most running from Johannesburg or Cape Town; these include South African Airways, Nationwide Airlines, Kulula and 1Time. Booking early is advisable to secure discounted rates.

The country also boasts a comprehensive bus network that covers the main cities; the road trip from Johannesburg to Cape Town is around 20 hours (compared to a 2 hour in a plane). The main bus companies are Translux, Greyhound and Intercape. Baz Bus is aimed at the backpacker crowd and provides a hop-on, hop-off service and also travels to remote areas. It's a good way to discover the picturesque patch of coastline that is the Garden Route, which it services en route from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth.

Train travel can work out longer than by bus, with the trip from Johannesburg to Cape Town edging toward almost 30 hours. If you're after a little luxury, try the Blue Train or the Rovos Rail for a taste of stylish travel.

Car rental is an attractive option thanks to the good road conditions, great scenery and the flexibility driving allows. The big car rental companies like Avis and Budget have outlets and it's essential to be fully insured and have a valid driver's licence. It's also a convenient way to get around cities as public transport can be unsafe.