

Work with Lions and Cheetah in South Africa - 16, 23 or 30 days

Project Overview

Want to get the ultimate experience on a game reserve?

By working on this amazing reserve (which is also a 5 star venue with golf course and Spa!!!), you will be helping to care for wildlife ranging from lions and cheetah to snakes, reptiles, meercats and horses! You will be amazed at the experience that awaits you!



Trip highlights

- Care for animals on this awesome game reserve
- Experience cheetahs, lion and tiger cubs up close and personal
- Gain some amazing knowledge from the qualified rangers that you will be working with
- Enjoy activities such as quad biking, horseback safaris, games drives, game walks, mountain biking to name a few
- Have the use of the 5 star facilities at the venue including swimming pool, Jacuzzi, tennis courts, squash courts and fully equipped gym.

What the project does and why it needs you!

The game reserve is located around 1.5 hours North of Pretoria on 1600 hectares of malaria free pristine land. The reserve originally had the idea of combining a nature reserve with a golf course and letting the animals roam freely without any fences or separation. This has now grown and a 5 star health spa, an equestrian centre, bird aviary, and a snake and reptile park to name a few have been added to the reserve providing an amazing experience to visitors. Volunteers will be helping to care for lions, cheetahs and a range of other animals on the reserve and will be working alongside the qualified game rangers gaining experience first hand from their amazing knowledge. The reserve places a very high value on the care of the animals and aims to provide the best care possible to all on the reserve. Your assistance is highly valued in helping out with the care of wildlife and ensuring that enclosures are clean and well maintained and animals are fed and watered.

Who is it for?

Anyone who has a passion for working with animals and for making sure that they are well cared for - coupled with a desire to spend two weeks in one of South Africa's most stunning reserves. The reserve believes that there is never too much time spent on ensuring the well being of all the animals and is looking for volunteers who are passionate in this field. You will need to be flexible and able to work within the varied requirements of the project and be prepared to get stuck in and get your hands dirty too!

What you will be doing

You will be caring for the varied array of animals at the reserve making sure that they have sufficient water and food and that their enclosures are kept clean and well maintained. You will be working 5 days a week from 7am to 5pm with 45 minute break during the day, 30 minutes of which is for lunch. You will ordinarily have 2 consecutive mid-week days off to relax and enjoy the beauty of the reserve!

Below are some examples of what you could be getting up to!:

Lion and Bengal tiger cubs – caring and feeding for the cute cubs and making sure that their enclosures are clean and well maintained.

Cheetahs – feeding and caring for these graceful animals. The reserve also has a cheetah run on a Friday and Saturday evening where you will be able to see 'Taran', the star of the show, reaching 100km an hour in the 130m sprint – very impressive and amazing to watch!

Game – assisting the game rangers as required as there are over 600 animals on the reserve which are allowed to roam freely over the 1400 hectare reserve.

Snakes and reptiles – for those of you who like all things slippery, creepy and crawly you can assist at the Snake and reptile park.

Injured and abandoned game- there is a rehabilitation centre at the reserve that you may be able to help

with - there have been many successes here including red hartebeest, porcupine, black backed jackal and many birds.

Horses – there is a new equestrian centre at the reserve and if horses are your primary focus then you can spend some of your time here looking after these beautiful animals. The reserve operates horseback safaris allowing the guests chance to get up close to the game.

Bird aviary, baby crocodiles and meercats – general maintenance and feeding and caring for all of them!

There are other areas that you may get involved in if possible as the centre does have a range of activities such as game drives, game walks, quad bike safaris, horseback safaris, archery, clay target shooting, volleyball so check with the rangers and see what's going on for your days off!

Where you'll be staying

You will be staying in comfortable accommodation on site in houses consisting of 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms, a fully equipped kitchen and lounge. Bedrooms will be on a shared basis and bathrooms will have hot water, shower and toilet, with one bathroom per bedroom.

The accommodation is located on the reserve approximately 800m from the main lodge with transport to the lodge being from the game rangers, staff of the nature reserve or golf carts.

The reserve is situated 30 minutes drive from Bela Bela where there are plenty of restaurants and fast food places, shops and grocery stores. There are often members of staff going to the town so you should be able to get a lift!

What you will be eating

You will be eating locally prepared food - lunch and dinner are provided.

Advice and what to bring

You will need to bring your own toiletries and medicines and appropriate clothing for the work that you do not mind getting dirty. Ranger tops can be provided from the reserve at a 50% discount (approximately R75.), and 2 or 3 should be purchased as required. We recommend that you take sturdy 'walking style' books / shoes. Laundry is your responsibility but there is a free laundry service in the staff village.

When you arrive

Please book your flights to arrive into Johannesburg – O R Tambo airport (JNB). You must arrive by 4pm on your arrival date. You will be met at the airport and then taken to Pretoria Backpackers (a guest house) for an orientation at 5pm. After orientation you will have a lovely South African meal and spend the night at the guest house. After breakfast the following day you will be collected by the project and transferred to the game reserve which will take approximately 2 hours.

Day 1: Arrive in to Johannesburg

Please ensure that you arrive by 4pm on the arrival day where you will be met at the airport and taken to Pretoria Backpackers where you will have your orientation meeting at 5pm. You will then enjoy a traditional South African meal.

Day 2: Orientation and transfer to your project

You will be picked up at Pretoria Backpackers by the team from the game reserve from after breakfast and transfer to the reserve. Transfer will take about 2 hours and will be by minibus. On arrival you will then be able to settle into your accommodation and your surroundings and meet the rest of the reserve team.

Day 3: Start of your project

Be prepared for an early morning start as you will be starting your work at 7am! You will have a 30 minute lunch break and an additional 15 minutes during the day, finishing around 5pm - phew!

Days 4 to 15: Work at the project

You will carry on with your work at the project and get to know more about the amazing animals, hopefully having the experience of a lifetime! You will have two consecutive days off through the week when you may be able to get involved in the various activities that the reserve can offer. Most of the activities will be offered free of charge to you by the reserve as long as you are able to join a group from their paying guests. The spa is available at a 40% discount and you can also use the 5 star facilities in the evenings such as the bar - but please remember to take some appropriate (ie smart / casual) clothing for this!

Day 16: End of your stay

You will be transferred back to Pretoria Backpackers arriving in the late morning. From here the choice is yours, you can arrange to stay at the Backpackers for the night, catch a bus to Cape town, experience a Soweto tour or transfer to the airport for your onward flight.

Please note that depending on the number of weeks you book this trip is a total of 15 nights and 16 days / 22 nights and 23 days / 29 nights and 30 days.

Fast Facts

Project Information

- Project Duration: Min 2 weeks - Max 4 weeks
- Project Costs: £1199.00 for 2 weeks, £350.00 for every week thereafter
- Location of project: 40kms from Bela Bela (around 1.5 hours from Pretoria), South Africa
- Arrival Airport: Johannesburg (JNB)
- Activities: Working with a variety of animals ensuring that they are fed and watered and enclosures are clean and well maintained.
- Working Hours: Daily from 7am to 5pm with two consecutive days off midweek
- Getting to the project: Onsite accommodation - 800m from the main lodge
- Requirements: Minimum age 18

What's Included

- Accommodation: Shared room in a 2 bedroom house
- Food: Lunch and dinner
- Airport Pickup: Included on arrival date. Ask us for details if you're arriving early!
- Training: In-country orientation
- Support: Pre-departure helpdesk, Local in-country team and 24hr emergency support

What's not included

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

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 Intercap. 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.