

volunteer

s o u t h e r n a f r i c a

Join us for an unforgettable few weeks under the African sun and amongst the endangered cheetah, a species close to extinction, and close to our hearts. If you have always wanted to see South Africa and be involved with conserving one of Africa's most graceful cats, this is the place for you.

More about us and our goals:

Our volunteer program will give you the opportunity to work with these magnificent animals while contributing to real conservation efforts to save the cheetah from going extinct in the wild. Your involvement and help will assist us to ensure the survival of the species for generations to come.

This project is unique in that you will actively help to save the endangered cheetah by getting involved in one of the most exciting Cheetah projects in South Africa. The only project ever breeding with cheetah for the sole purpose of releasing. We are not trading with any of our animals, they are meant for more, to be free and wild again, as they are supposed to be! Many of the cheetahs bred, raised and trained to survive in wild by us, are already now living a free life in protected reserves.

Our Pledge:

- To ensure the survival of the cheetah for future generations.
- To ensure a viable genetic diversity by genetic introduction and studies.
- To provide crucial education to the public.
- To provide platforms for further carnivore studies.
- To repopulate the now cheetah deprived areas of South Africa.
- To provide a sanctuary for old, or non-releasable, and mistreated cheetah.
- To not trade under any circumstances with any of our animals.
- We will however and only when needed, exchange certain animals for genetic purposes and only with reputable and like minded breeders.
- To responsibly breed, raise, rewild and release smaller cats (Serval, African Wild Cat & Black Footed Cat) onto private and national reserves.

Goals behind the project:

As mentioned above the main goal is breeding and releasing cheetah (including other smaller endangered cat species) back into the wild to supplement the current dwindling

population. Other goals will include a sanctuary and retirement centre for injured, old and orphaned animals that cannot be released. We also work towards the rescue and repatriation of older or mistreated cheetahs from zoos all over the globe and offer these animals a deserved semi freedom in their final years.

As the decline in wild cheetah numbers throughout South African has now more than ever come to a critical point, it is our responsibility to ensure the species has a future for the next generations.

With the current number less than 1200 wild cheetah in South Africa, it is imperative that something is done to replenish these dwindling numbers. Over the past decade, no real focus has been put on the cheetah and thus causing a crisis in our healthy genetic population.

We have one main goal and that is to breed cheetah and return them to their natural environment. With many years of experience and knowledge of these animals we have developed a unique strategy and program to successfully breed and reintroduce cheetahs back into the wild. The time is now or we might lose these magnificent cats forever.

The need to reintroduce these animals is the only way to eliminate the extinction of the Southern African Cheetah. We strongly believe that we have developed methods to successfully breed and reintroduce cheetahs back into the Free State Province and other regions of South Africa, these methods include predator avoidance, a successful hunting training regime and a well-managed post release monitoring system, de-humanising process, vaccination and health protocol.

With our efforts to reintroduce cheetah and smaller felines back into the wild we are adding to the conservation of their natural environment and other inhabitants of this environment.

By volunteering with us, you will be part of our ground-breaking unique and vital conservation work to save this specie from going extinct!

A volunteer's day will consist of daily tasks including animal enrichment, enclosure cleaning, data collecting, behaviour monitoring, animal stimulation projects, tasks in and around the animal enclosures, feeding and meat preparation.

You, as a volunteer, will be involved in the following activities:

- Monitoring and data capture of the animals and their health and behaviour
- Cleaning and maintenance of the enclosure
- General camp upkeep
- Assist/help prepare food for animals and feed them
- Remove bones etc. left over from the animal feeding and overall cleaning of camps.
- Clean water dams and bowls and refresh with clean water
- Assist with fitness training as well as help improving cheetah's hunting skills by helping staff with the cheetah run on the lure machine

- Bush clearing and creating pathways
- Removal of invasive plant species
- Maintenance work: building, painting or repair work for animal night enclosures and other structures

Animals:

Other animals include injured, orphaned and rescued animals that are not able to be released. Animals at the project include the following: Cheetahs, Lions, Servals, Caracals, Meerkats, African Wild Cats and Albino Porcupines. Some animals are with us only temporary for a few months until they have been rehabilitated and ready for release back into a suitable habitat.

We also might have a bigger variety at the time of your visit, depending on animals taken in by us as rescues to rehab and rewild.

Entertainment:

Volunteers will get the chance to enjoy the local night life on occasion and transport for this will be arranged. Other outings at an additional cost and dependant on the length of your stay can include a trips (or sleepovers) to the world renown Lost City, Sun City and Pilanesberg Big 5 Game Reserve, (only 60 miles from us) to view your favourite elephants, lions, leopards etc in the wild!

Hot Air Ballooning is undoubtedly the finest way to view the Pilanesberg Big 5 Game Reserve and its wildlife. Abseiling, hiking in the reserve, safaris, river rafting, horse riding, visits to world famous elephant and monkey sanctuaries. Spend the day at the famous Lesedi multi-cultural village to buy arts crafts for your loved ones at home! Leisure sunset cruises on the famous Hartbeespoort Lake.

Our rewilding facility is only 70 miles from OR Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg, nestled in the foothills of the Magaliesburg Mountain Range, close to the famous Cradle of Humankind World Heritage site.

This project is unique in that you will actively help to save the endangered cheetah by getting involved in one of the most exciting cheetah projects in South Africa, where our aim is solely to release cheetahs back into the wild, where they belong!

Our aim is also to enlighten you in the true conservation efforts done in terms of rehabilitation and release of captive animals. Also that you leave us with added skills in animal husbandry as well as the skills and basic knowledge needed to run and manage a project of this kind.

At Volunteer with Cheetahs, it is all about the animals. We believe in the rights and protection of animals. The conservancy is home to a variety of wild animals such as lions, cheetahs, servals, caracals even the mischievous meerkats and more. The conservancy acts also as a home to wild cats that are not able to be released back into the wild, as well as a "day care" for animals that were abandoned, injured, traumatised, in need of care, support, medical attention and a home.

The conservancy offers you an opportunity to work with the animals and gain experience in activities like cleaning, building enclosures, feeding, and spending time with the animals, as well as the opportunity to unwind in the beautiful mountainous surroundings. We strive to make life as normal as possible for animals by ensuring their happiness and wellbeing.

Project Highlights

- Work hands on with the big cats such as cheetahs and lions
- Work hands on with small cats such as caracals and servals
- Learn more about our passion and dedication to rewild and release cheetah
- Live in close proximity to the lion and cheetah enclosures
- Experience first-hand all aspects of the animal's life
- Be part of a very passionate team
- Learn about conservation and Africa's wild animals

Project details

Starting dates : We are flexible to suit your dates.
Location : Rustenburg region, North West Province, South Africa
Minimum duration : 1 week
Maximum duration : 8 weeks

Volunteer requirements

- Basic level of competency in English, especially speaking
- Interest in wildlife and rehabilitation of injured and releasable animals

Example Itinerary

Volunteers will work 6 days per week. Sundays are generally your day off and will give you a chance to settle into the conservancy or go on nearby excursions. Thursday mornings are also your off time to spend as you wish. Please note that this routine is kept as best as possible, however, working with animals sometimes requires a flexible schedule. The above outline is subject to change.

INCLUDED IN YOUR RATE :

Volunteer Accommodation

Six new and cosy log cabins nestled amongst the trees close to the lion and cheetah camps. Each cabin consists of 2 bedrooms and a bathroom, which will be shared by 4 same gender volunteers. Each room will accommodate 2 volunteers. It also has a small kitchen as well as a bathroom. Males and females are separate in sharing rooms.

Meals

Volunteers will receive 3 meals a day:

Breakfast : Cereals, fruit, eggs, toast and spreads.

Lunch : Noodles, omelettes, toasted Sandwiches etc.
Dinner : A hot meal will be served every night such as a traditional BBQ, pastas casseroles, fresh vegetables and meats etc.

Tea and coffee will be available. All other drinks will be at own expense, although tap water is safe to drink. A generous amount of portions will always be given during your meals. If snacks are desired for in between eating, please purchase some groceries prior to arrival or when we go to town, volunteers will have the choice of going with.

There will also be a refrigerator available for your personal food and soft drinks.

Important Reminder:

Participants must advise us of their dietary needs (e.g. if they are vegetarian or have any allergies) prior to their arrival. Participants with any other specific dietary needs may be required to supplement their normal meals at their own expense, but we always ensure you eat tasty meals.

Vegans will have an additional charge per week.

Washing

There is a laundry room where you can do your own laundry once a week free of charge.

Supervision / Co-ordination

As the nature of the work varies we will place volunteers under the supervision of various staff members, as will be explained in the itinerary. We will have one member of our team assigned as "team leader" to facilitate the smooth operation of the volunteers stay and provide guidance where necessary.

Emergency and Safety

All guides on the property are qualified in First Aid and are within 150m of the volunteer accommodation. Each volunteer will have the emergency contact details of the nearest staff members. The nearest hospital is within a 30 minutes' drive from the conservancy.

Internet

Wifi is at your own cost: R250 per week

Packing list (recommended)

- Casual working clothes for hot and cold days, please try to avoid bright colours.
- Semi formal clothes for functions and for trips to town
- Jackets
- Sunscreen and hat
- Swimsuit
- Toiletries: Personal bathroom amenities and a large towel
- Flashlight and batteries
- Small personal first aid kit and your personal needed medication
- Doom/tabard (insect repellent)

- Laptop with own DVD's (no television in volunteer house yet) if you wish to view movies in your off time.
- Pocket money (drinks and souvenirs)

SAFETY GUIDELINES

The reserve offers you an opportunity to work / interact with all the animals and take part in activities such as cleaning, building enclosures, feeding, projects, & spending time with most animals, HOWEVER, certain rules and regulations must be taken seriously and followed as all the animals remain wild, regardless of the size of the animal or time in captivity.

BY FOLLOWING THESE GUIDELINES YOU ENSURE YOUR SAFETY AS WELL AS THE ANIMALS

Camps

- Never enter the lion enclosures under any circumstances
- Never enter the cheetah enclosures by yourself
- Certain cheetah enclosures will not be available for volunteers, these cheetahs are in their de-humanizing stage and zero volunteer contact is allowed.
- All gates to all camps must be locked and checked daily to make sure they are in a working condition
- Be aware of the electric fences at all times

Animals

- If you do not feel comfortable in certain places with the animals inform your team leader for assistance
- Even if the animals appear "tame" we MUST still respect them at all times

General Safety Tips when off the property

- Participants must conduct themselves in a safe and responsible manner at all times
- Hitchhiking is not permitted at any time
- Don't leave your belongings unattended
- Never give beggars money, speak to your team leader if you would like to make a donation
- Don't look like a tourist with your camera around your neck, wallet out, etc.
- Do not carry large amount of cash on you that people can see
- Lock your room to ensure all your valuables, passport and money stay safe

Health and safety

Your health is very important to us! Please let us know of any special requirements that you have, e.g. allergies, diabetes, etc. You will be accompanied with a trained team leader at all times. Should anything happen, first aid is immediately available, and a First Aid kit is always available. The nearest hospital is within a 15min drive from the conservancy. All

team leaders are equipped with their cell phones and radios, so communication is never a problem.

Extra information

- You will be working 6 days out of the 7, with the 7th being your day off to do what you would like or go on one of our excursions. One morning in the week will also be your off morning to sleep late or go on hikes or horse riding on our conservancy
- We require a completed application form to give us more knowledge about you
- A medium level competency in English is required

General Information

Water:

Water is safe to drink however scarce in many areas. Use water sparingly and have short showers or baths.

Insurance:

All volunteers must have medical, travel and trip cancellation insurance for the duration of their program.

Drugs:

We have a zero-tolerance policy for illegal drugs. Offenders will be removed from the program immediately without refund.

Smoking:

No smoking is allowed in any building or when you are in animal camps or around any animal.

Alcohol:

A responsible level of drinking (for volunteers of legal age) during free time is allowed. However in these limited situations:

- Alcohol is never to be consumed during the work day
 - Participants are never to be intoxicated
 - Participants are never to be under the influence of alcohol at work or during group discussions.
 - No hangovers will be tolerated on project so please keep drinking to off days
 - Failure to comply will be treated as a serious matter. We reserve the right to remove a participant from the project without refund if they disregard this policy.
- Participants who endanger their safety or the safety of others through irresponsible drinking of alcohol or negligence may be removed from the program without refund.

Accommodation:

Participants are expected to keep their rooms and personal belongings tidy at all times and participate in any chores as required for the cleanliness and operation of the shared facilities, vehicles and projects. Participants may not bring non – volunteer persons back to the project accommodation under any situation. Visitors can be met at any of the public

areas nearby. If a participant does not follow this policy, they may be prohibited from joining the group/program.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO READ

What is the difference between volunteering and regular tourism?

In regular tourism the emphasis is on the tourist who expects to receive excellent service on their trip (great hotel, good food and all excursions working according to a timetable). The place and local community becomes less important with the tourist becoming the centre of attention.

In volunteer tourism (voluntourism) the emphasis shifts to work contribution, goals of the program and helping the local community. It is the success of the program and the atmosphere between the community and the volunteers that helps make the trip unforgettable – not the level of service or the quality of the accommodation.

Will there be any surprises?

Volunteer tourism can be unpredictable! While we do the utmost to stick to timetables and examples of type of work needed by the volunteer, there are many factors that can impact these plans. For example, the weather and seasons, local holidays, mood of the wildlife and immediate needs of the programs. The information you will receive from the program is important and valuable however things can change and we urge you to use it as a guideline and expect the unexpected – this is what makes volunteer tourism so diverse and exciting. It is important that you arrive with a flexible attitude and remember that just by being at the project you will be contributing to its running, growth and success. Many of these programs are in cultures very different than yours and as such the type and length of work given may or may not seem important to you but it will be for the program.

Sticking to a timetable

Each program asks its volunteers to stick to a timetable which it arranges to help the program run and grow. Please follow the instructions from the program managers. However, please note that volunteer programs are usually underfunded and understaffed which can lead to multiple changes in the program timetable. Volunteer work needs to be flexible for various reasons and should not be seen as a nine to five office job even if some changes do not make sense to the volunteer. Flexibility and an “expect the unexpected attitude” are needed – however never forget that by volunteering you are contributing immensely to the program.

The Volunteer Leader

Many programs will have a volunteer Leader. This person is usually a volunteer who is on a long term contract or has volunteered on the same project in the past – they are not professional guides. The Leader can be of great assistance when a problem arises though please approach them at a convenient time outside of busy working hours.

Volunteer work – some examples

It is important to realize that not all the work will be easy or 'romantic'. Many times you will need to roll-up your sleeves and get dirty like: working with raw meat, cage cleaning, etc. Keep a positive attitude and note that mundane tasks contribute and are also VERY important to the program. Also remember mundane tasks are not given to you on purpose but forms part of the overall volunteer experience as it takes care of the needs of the overall project.

Culture Shock

The volunteers you will be working with come from all over the world and may be from different religious and ethnic backgrounds. Volunteering is also a cultural experience where you can learn about different cultures but please be both tolerant and patient. Do not be shy in sharing your experiences, recipes, songs and traditions it will just add to the overall group cohesion. Children may be raised in ways that are very different to what you are used to. If you are ever unsure about a certain issues, please feel free to discuss it with your volunteer leader.

Extra expenses

Please take into account additional expenses like tours, trips, WiFi, cold drinks, restaurants and bars. It is a good idea to carry different types of payment : Cash, Credit Cards, and Debit are options.

Travel Insurance

It is very important and necessary to purchase and carry travel insurance for any unforeseen eventuality. We would be happy to recommend a reputable insurance company.

In short

Be prepared to learn a new culture, T.I.A. (This Is Africa) - things changes, that's the awesome part of the experience. Patience can go a long way to making your trip unforgettable! Please come with an open mind and positive attitude - you will have the most awesome time of your life! You will be expected to take initiative and add value to the project.

The more positive you are, the more positive your memories will be! Your time on project will be over sooner than you know, what would you like to think back on later in your life?

Some useful South African slang and words:

- Cheers - Good bye
- Robot - Traffic light
- Crèche - A preschool
- Braai - Barbeque
- Bakkie - Utility truck
- Babelaas - hangover
- Biltong - Dried meat (like jerky)
- Potjie - Traditional stew
- Boerewors - Lightly Spiced sausage
- Nee - No
- Lekker - Good or nice
- T.I.A. - This is Africa
- Ya or yebo - yes

Please contact us via email if you wish to volunteer with us and to secure your spot!