

volunteer
southern africa

Living with Orphaned Rhinos Pre Departure Guide



Welcome to the VSA Volunteering Team! We are thrilled to have you join us and are excited to get you started on your journey. This guide is your 'go to' for all the information you need prior to your arrival.

Included is information on the **Living with Orphaned Rhinos** program, next steps, the daily schedule, accommodation and menu, excursions, amenities, weather, what to bring, safety guidelines and most importantly what will happen when you arrive in South Africa!

Living with Orphaned Rhinos is one of our most popular programs and allows volunteers to work closely with one of Africa's most threatened species; the rhino. Volunteers play a vital role at this program and are responsible for hand rearing and rehabilitating baby orphaned rhinos. As a volunteer you will get a chance to help with rehabilitation work which includes feeding, treatment and daily care for the rhinos. Volunteers are also in charge of feeding rosters and taking care of the other animals at the center. These include mongoose, owls, springboks, kudu and additional primates.

Please thoroughly read through this guide and if you still have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us!





Living with Orphaned Rhinos Program Overview

Our Living with Orphaned Rhinos program is located outside of Nelspruit and situated amongst the mountains. As a volunteer you will learn the processes involved in caring for sick and orphaned animals and what is involved with the continued development of the animals. Volunteers will learn how to do the precise preparation of the feeding formula for the smaller rhinos, which are being hand-reared, they are also responsible for their daily feedings. Activities include but are not limited to:

- Preparing food and bottle feeding the rhinos
- Record keeping of the feeding progress of baby rhinos
- Cleaning bomas (enclosures) and feeding stations
- Weighing the rhinos
- Organizing grass and hay for all animals
- Removal of intruder and alien species of plants
- Cutting grass and overall maintenance in the animal enclosures

Most of the baby rhinos that arrive at the facility are in critical condition and are severely traumatized. Having suffered the loss of their mother, been attacked by poachers and predators plus the stress of being darted and transported is tough for these young animals. Many baby rhinos require veterinary treatment for wounds and infections, as well as a period of intensive care upon arrival.

Once rehabilitated, the older rhinos are moved into large bomas where they are socialized with other rhinos. Volunteers will monitor the rhino groups to determine compatibility of the individuals, and to observe their feeding behaviour in order to anticipate any complications.



Next Steps

STEP ONE - Book Your Flights

Arrival Airport: O. R. Tambo Johannesburg Airport

Arrival Time: Anytime before 9AM on Tuesday morning

Once your flight arrives in Johannesburg, you will take a shuttle bus up to Nelspruit where a driver will collect you and take you to the program.

Departure Airport: O. R. Tambo Johannesburg Airport

Departure Time: Anytime after 5PM on Wednesday evening.

Volunteers are shuttled from Nelspruit to the Johannesburg Airport on the day of their departure.



STEP TWO - Vaccinations

Our team recommends that volunteers receive an up to date Tetanus shot prior to their arrival. The Living with Orphaned Rhinos program is situated in a malaria free area so no additional vaccinations or prescriptions are required. During our summer/rainy months you may need medication for tick bites.

STEP THREE – Visa’s

Over 18?

Be sure to check with the South African Home Affairs by [clicking here](#) to find out if you need to arrange for a Visa prior to arrival. If you need to arrange for a Visa, please let us know as soon as possible so we can arrange to send you the proper forms.



Under 18?

If you are travelling as a minor and coming with a parent please review the immigration requirements [here](#). There are several documents that need to be filled out prior to your arrival. Be sure to organize ahead of time to ensure there are no issues when arriving in South Africa.

STEP FOUR – Currency and Spending Money

Our local currency is South African Rand (ZAR) and can be exchanged prior to or upon arrival at the airport.



At our Living with Orphaned Rhinos program, you may want to bring some extra spending money for excursions, snacks and any souvenirs. Excursions can cost approx. \$100US+ therefore we recommend that volunteers bring approx. \$100US per week they plan on staying at the program.

Volunteers will have an opportunity to get snacks from the shops and go into town. We recommend having some cash available however most shops accept Visa or MasterCard.

Schedule

| | 6:30AM – 8:30AM | 8:30AM – 10AM | 10AM – 12:30PM | 12:30PM – 5PM | 5PM – Late |
|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Tuesday | Volunteers arrive at the facility and upon arrival they will be welcomed and shown to their accommodation. Once settled in, volunteers are given a full orientation and will learn about the weeks activities. | | | | |
| Monday, Wednesday - Friday | Early Morning Activities | Team Meeting & Breakfast | Morning Activity | Lunch & Afternoon Activity | Dinner & Evening Activity |
| Saturday & Sunday | Volunteers have the option of helping with the rhinos or can use their weekends to plan and participate in excursions. | | | | |

**Please note that the schedule is subject to change*

Morning Activities include:

- Preparing food
- Feeding animals
- Cleaning bomas

Morning & Afternoon Activities include:

- Farm maintenance
- Multiple rhino feedings
- Game drives
- Swimming
- And many more!

Evening Activities include:

- Volunteer braai
- Bonfire
- And many more!



The schedule at our Living with Orphaned Rhinos program changes regularly based on the number of rhinos at the facility and their requirements. Each rhino has specific needs and the volunteers will work as a team to ensure that all feedings times are met and maintenance is done.

Accommodation

Volunteers will stay at one of our log cabins that accommodate 2-4 volunteers with ensuite bathrooms. Volunteers also have a common area with a fully equipped kitchen, lounge area and firepit to relax during off times.



Menu

Included in this program are 3 meals daily; breakfast, lunch and dinner. If you have any dietary requirements please make us aware prior to your arrival.

Breakfast may include:

- Cereals
- Oatmeal
- Yogurt and Granola
- Toast with Butter & Jam
- Coffee, Tea, Water and Milk

Lunch and Dinner may include:

- Toasted Sandwiches
- Burgers
- Salad
- Vegetables
- Chicken, Pork or Steak dishes
- Pizza
- Pasta



Please note that if you are vegan or gluten free you will need to pay an additional \$35US (R400) per day and you will need to give us at least a weeks warning so we can prepare properly.

Excursions

Volunteers will have the opportunity to organize and participate in excursions on the weekend. The volunteer leaders can assist in organizing the excursion however this will be at an additional cost to the volunteer. Excursions include:

- Chimpanzee Sanctuary
- Kruger National Park
- Panoramic Route
- Blyde River Canyon Day Trip

Excursions range from \$40US (Chimpanzee Sanctuary) to \$150+US (Kruger National Park). Volunteers can use cash or credit card to pay for excursions.



Amenities

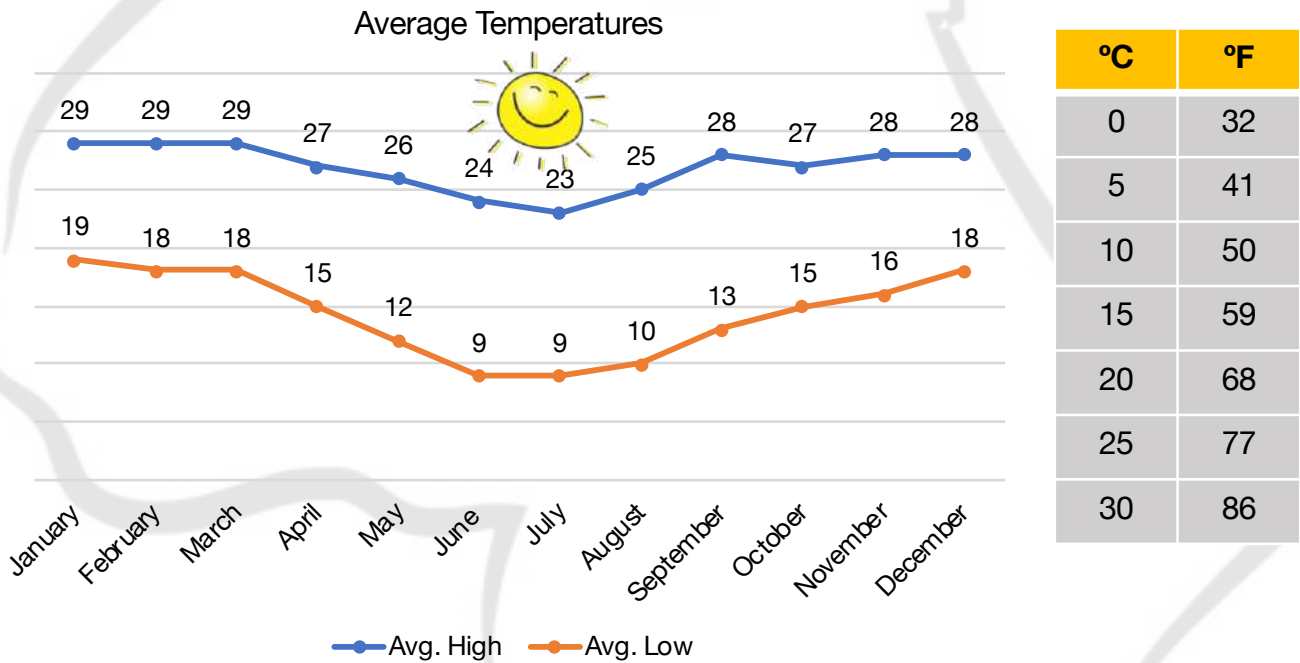
At our Living with Orphaned Rhinos program we are happy to offer several amenities including:

- 2 Shuttle transfers from O.R Tambo to the program
- VSA Crew T-shirt
- In Country 24 Hour Emergency Support Line
- SIM card with 1GB data bundle
- Laundry (1 Load/Week)
- Swimming pool



Weather

Make sure you properly prepare for the weather! We like to think it is always sunny in South Africa but the summer months (November – February) can bring some rain and the winter months (May – August) can be very chilly in the mornings and at night.



**Please note that all temperatures are in degrees Celsius*

What to Bring

Volunteers will be participating in a variety of activities and will need to pack accordingly, below is a list of items we suggest but volunteers are not limited to;

- Shoes and clothes that can get dirty
- Toiletries (shampoo, soap, toothbrush etc.)
- Towel (this is not supplied by the facility)
- Sunblock and Insect Repellent
- Casual clothes that are appropriate for the time of year
- Sweaters
- Windbreaker or jacket for the winter months
- Swimsuit
- Comfy lounge clothes for the evening

Please note that volunteers are welcomed to bring laptops, cell phones and cameras but do so at their own risk.

Arriving in South Africa

Included in your package is a shuttle bus from O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg to Nelspruit where there will be a driver who will collect you and take you to the program.

Prior to your arrival our team will email you a confirmation letter for your City Bug shuttle bus from the Johannesburg airport up to Nelspruit. Below are the steps when you arrive at the Johannesburg airport:

- Pass through customs
- Collect your baggage
- Walk through the arrivals hall to the outside of the airport
- Across the outdoor arrivals pick up zone is the bus terminal
- Inside the bus terminal is an information kiosk that will be able to direct you to the proper bus. All the information you will need for your shuttle will be on your confirmation letter.

Once you arrive in Nelspruit there will be a driver at the bus station to collect you and take you to the program.

A few things to remember:

- Going through the customs line can sometimes take a long time. Please be sure to book a flight that arrives with enough time for you to travel through customs and make the shuttle bus.
- The shuttle from the Johannesburg Airport to Nelspruit is approx. 4 hours.
- When you arrive at the bus station in Nelspruit there will be a driver waiting to collect you and take you to the program (approx. 30 minute drive).
- We recommend exchanging money prior to your arrival to ensure a smooth transition from the airplane to the shuttle. There will not be an opportunity to exchange money once you leave the airport.

You will exit here.



Johannesburg Airport Arrivals Hall

You will need to walk through the arrivals hall to the bus terminal.



Johannesburg Airport Bus Terminal

General Guidelines & Safety

DRUGS – Zero Tolerance

We have a zero tolerance policy for any and all drugs. If this rule is broken, you will be removed from the program and the property. There will be no refund for those who are asked to leave due to ignoring or breaking this rule.

Smoking & Drinking

- If/when you do smoke, please dispose of cigarette butts in the garbage bins provided and do not under any circumstances litter cigarette butts – this is a danger to the animals and property.
- A responsible level of drinking during free time is allowed for volunteers over the age of 18 (in South Africa, the legal age for alcohol consumption is 18). Please note this is only allowed when authorized by the program.
- If you have been drinking alcohol, even if you have had only one drink, you will be prohibited from going near any animals until the alcohol is fully out of your system.

It is important to remember that these are wild animals and you must be aware of your surroundings.

Safety Tips

- Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a safe and responsible manner at all times.
- Hitch-hiking is not permitted at any time.
- Never give beggars any money – if you would like to give a donation then please speak with your volunteer leader and they can arrange something for you.
- Travelling alone in the dark is prohibited and dangerous.
- Do not leave your belongings unattended and when travelling around be sure to keep your money and valuables in a safe and secure place.
- South Africa has a very high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. We do not recommend promiscuity and suggest being careful when it comes to situations where exposure to HIV/AIDS may occur.

Important South African Laws

- The legal driving age in South Africa is 18 – you must have a valid driver's license in order to operate a vehicle while here.
- It is illegal to not wear seat belts – this concerns both the driver and all passengers.
- The legal age to purchase alcohol and cigarettes in South Africa is 18.
- It is illegal to drink alcohol in a public space.
- It is illegal to buy, sell, carry, or use drugs, including marijuana.

General Guidelines & Safety

Camps and Enclosures

- Never enter ANY camps or enclosures without a volunteer leader or a person of authority.
- The gates to all camps are locked at all times and these locks are checked daily by staff to ensure volunteer safety.
- Do not stick your hands or any personal items through the fence of any of the animal enclosures.
- When going into a camp, be sure to wear closed-toed shoes and remove any objects that may dangle e.g. camera cords, bracelets, necklaces, scarfs etc.
- Stay within the boundaries of the property.

Animals

- Be aware that you are working with wild animals.
- Not all of the animals are human tolerant, do not approach animals unless your volunteer leader gives you approval.
- If you feel uncomfortable in any situation, please let your leader know immediately so they can remove you from the situation.
- Remember that a 'tame' wild animal can be more dangerous than a wild animal as it has lost its fear of humans.
- Be sure to respect all animals on the farm, big and small.
- Do not walk around the the farm on your own, especially at night.

It is important to remember that these animals are wild and although they are human tolerant they still have wild tendencies. Listening closely and carefully to your volunteer leader will ensure your safety.

Cancellation Policy

- Should you wish to cancel your volunteer experience (this includes both programs and add on tours), the below table will apply:
 - Cancellations 60 days or more; full refund less the non-refundable deposit
 - Cancellations 30-59 days; you will forfeit 50% less the non-refundable deposit
 - Cancellations 8-29 days; you will forfeit 75% less the non-refundable deposit
 - Cancellations 1-7 days; no refund.

Indemnity Form

Upon arrival all volunteers will need to read, approve and sign an indemnity form.