

T: 1-800-985-4852
E: info@realgap.com
P: Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960

Namibia Desert Elephant Conservation

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



Trip Name: Namibia Desert Elephant Conservation **Trip Code:** NAEH **Duration:** From 14 days

Trip Highlights

- Get up close with fascinating desert elephants
- Learn about elephant behaviour and how to identify and track local herds with highly experienced trackers
- Volunteer with one of our most established volunteer projects
- Get a real sense of achievement as you help building walls to protect water sources for local people
- Sleep out under the amazing African sky
- Take part in pioneering conservation work, REAL conservation work with a grassroots organisation
- Go back to basics at the project's stunning base camp
- Learn to cook five star meals over the camp fire



Overview

Take part in one of our most established programmes to help with vital conservation work and protect the future of Namibia's elusive Desert Elephant. Learn how to track and identify Desert Elephants and help local rural communities live side by side with these majestic animals. Go on Elephant tracking patrol and live in an exclusive remote base camp, sleeping wild under the amazing Africa sky - a truly unique and once in a lifetime experience!

As a volunteer on this unique programme, you'll play an active role with conservation in Namibia as you help local people and farmers understand the importance of living side by side with Desert Elephants. You'll be rolling up your sleeves and getting your hands dirty as you help them to protect their vital water sources by building walls and barriers.

You'll also have the unique opportunity to track Desert Elephants through inspiring landscapes in Namibia's Damaraland, in areas where you will see no other humans (other than fellow volunteers of course) the whole week; research the elephants movements, distribution and compile identikits on herds and individuals; helping to protect and conserve these fascinating creatures for many years to come.

During this week you should have the opportunity to have close experiences with elephants and to gain knowledge on elephant behavior and their fascinating societies from some of the best elephant experts in

Namibia Desert Elephant Conservation

Namibia. The project is full of adventure and volunteers can expect to see other wildlife during elephant patrol, including zebra, giraffe, black rhino, kudu, oryx, springbok.

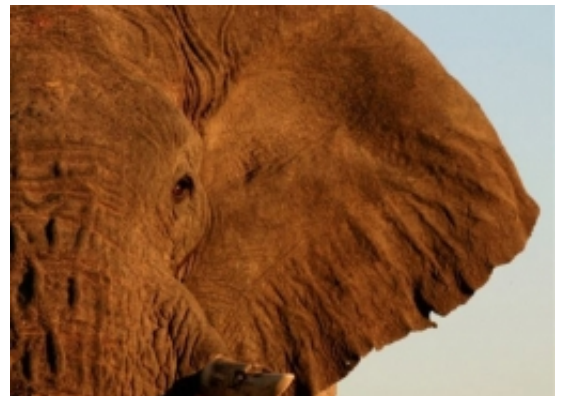
Destination Info

Your meeting point is the small Germanic town of Swakopmund on the Skeleton Coast which is a quaint, safe and interesting place with many cafes, restaurants, gift shops, internet cafes.

The Desert Elephant Project is based three hours in the north west of the Namib Desert in what is locally known as Damaraland, one of the most scenic areas of the country. With rugged untamed semi-desert landscapes, it is just inland from the isolated beaches of the Skeleton Coast.

Namibia is known for its contrasting landscapes. The desolate Namib Desert is said to be the oldest in the world, with its high dunes and awe-inspiring sense of space. The central plateau, with its thorn bush savannah and rugged mountains, rising abruptly from the plains, gives way to the majestic Fishriver Canyon in the south.

Itinerary



This project works directly with the local community in protecting vulnerable structures from damage done by the elephants in search of water. The project is real, grassroots conservation and is popular with volunteers as you will be able to see the difference YOU make to help the communities and therefore conserve the elephants.

During the first week you will be part of a team building large protection walls by hand. You will be based out at the local farm or homestead for the week. The walls prevent elephants from damaging water points which is the main cause of conflict, as elephants tend to damage wells and water pumps in their search for water.

The second week is the elephant patrol, which is an unforgettable week tracking elephants out in the wilds of the desert. During this week elephant movements are recorded, ID photos taken and farms visited, all information which assists the Namibian Government in solving the problems the elephants often create.

The Desert Elephant project is made up of two parts based upon 2-week rotations.

Namibia Desert Elephant Conservation



You will first join a team in building walls around vitally important water sources for Damaraland homesteads. The walls are built to protect water pumping facilities, a borehole, solar panel and pump or windmill. The elephants are given access to the water at certain points, thus preventing them from damaging the pumping mechanics and allowing the farmers access to the clean, fresh water.

You will spend one week at the building site working on the wall, which is made from local stone and cement brought in by the project. There are lots of different tasks from collecting stones and rocks, to mixing cement and laying the rocks on the wall. Although hard work the teams always have fun! You will start work fairly early in the morning and stop for a long break during the heat of the day. You will be camping and all cooking is done over the fire, with everybody sharing camp duties. Evenings are spent around the camp fire, relaxing, playing games and sharing stories. The weekend is then spent relaxing at the base camp in the Ugab River. On the Sunday you are able to join project staff on the resupply run to a small town called Uis where you are able to use the internet, go to a small supermarket and use the facilities at a local lodge (including swimming pool!)



On Monday morning volunteers head off on patrol for the next week. Patrols are lead by two experienced elephant trackers on specialised 4x4 vehicles, again with the minimum of equipment, setting up camp at a different site every evening. You will be experiencing areas of Damaraland and surrounding desert that no safari or overland tour will ever venture into, tracking and observing our local desert-adapted elephant herds. During the week you will be spending a lot of time with the elephants in close quarters, learning from your guides about the elephants and their behaviour.

This project is a perfect opportunity for people to really return to basic levels of living, learn simple camp-craft and survival skills and get back in touch with nature whilst becoming directly involved in trailblazing conservation work.

Namibia Desert Elephant Conservation

It is a chance to experience hard but rewarding work, witness amazing natural phenomena and escape the highly-strung world and its day-to-day routine.

Accommodation

This project is a great back-to-basics programme, experiencing the natural setting of the African bush. We set up our mobile base camp at each project site, which we make as comfortable as possible! You will be sleeping out under the amazing African sky. Washing facilities are limited and toilet facilities will be in the form of enclosed and private African long drops. Whilst on patrol, we camp wild and sleep under the stars on our bedrolls.

There are no showers or toilets, so you will need to prepare yourself to rough it a bit! We advise that volunteers take wet wipes or baby wipes to keep fresh! During the weekend at base camp there are hot showers and toilets. There is also a laundry service. Accommodation at base camp is in the fabulous tree shelter!

Programme Services and Facilities

Internet

As you will be set up in mobile base camps out in the wilderness, you will not have access to the Internet whilst on the project. However, if you go to Uis on the middle weekend, you will be able to access the Internet from there.

Telephone

Due to your location, you also will not have mobile phone signal, however, if you go to Uis, on the weekend, you will have signal there.

The international dialling code for Namibia is +264.

We suggest that you take your mobile phone with you, if you chose to do so please ensure that you have activated roaming on your phone. It is also a good idea to unlock your phone in case you get the opportunity to buy a local Namibian SIM card for about £10/14€, which will allow you to call and text home cheaply and easily.

Laundry

A local lady runs her own laundry business from the base camp, she charges N\$25 per bag. You can also hand wash your laundry if you wish.

Electricity

Namibia uses 220V single phase voltage and frequency of 50Hz. The plugs in Namibia are three large round pins

Namibia Desert Elephant Conservation

in a triangular pattern, which is rated at five amps. You will only have limited access to electricity whilst at the project, so please ensure you bring enough batteries for your electrical items, and a torch is essential.

Meals

You will receive three meals each day on this project, prepared by you on a rotational basis, over the open fire and eating around the campfire as a group. Everyone will learn how to cooking amazing food such as roast chicken, thai curry, Bolognese, carbonara over the fire! We also have good vegetarian options.

What's Included

- All accommodation except in Swakopmund
- All meals except in Swakopmund
- Briefing upon arrival
- The volunteer project
- Full support and assistance



What's Not Included

- Travel insurance
- All flights
- Accommodation in Swakopmund
- Transfers from Walvis Bay
- Weekends in Swakopmund
- E-mail/Internet and telephone calls
- Soft drinks, wines and spirits



Is This Trip For You?

You may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. However, you will still have the full support of your in-country team and those at the project. If you are looking for a group volunteering experience we have plenty of options for you to consider.

What to Pack

Please note that this kit list is intended to help you plan what you may need to take with you and therefore, you may not need all of the listed items on your travels nor is it exhaustive.

Please be aware that the weather can change considerably from winter to summer and you should pack according to when you are travelling to ensure that you have the appropriate clothing. Even if it is really hot in the day, the winter nights can get VERY cold (down to -10) so if travelling at winter pack extra warm clothing. Please see our Climate Chart for further details.

Personal Admin

- Passport, insurance certificates and personal documentation, including some certified copies stored separately.
- Photocopies of all the above to be left at home with your next of kin
- Spending money in N\$ or SA Rand (except 200 SA rand notes as these are not accepted in Namibia)
- Proof of inoculations (please speak to your doctor about necessary immunisations)
- Secure, waterproof bag for documents and money: sealable plastic bags will do

General

- Luggage should be taken in a soft kit bag such as a large rucksack or holdall
- Personal hygiene kit, toiletries and towel
- 3 season sleeping bag - very important! (especially if you want to partake in a 'sleep out' under the stars). It can get VERY cold at night, - so you must ensure you have a warm sleeping bag
- Mosquito net
- Silk or Cotton Liner: Ideal for hot nights or as an extra layer to your sleeping bag for those cold nights!
- Sunglasses (high UV protection)
- Baby wipes
- Sun cream (high factor needed)
- Small torch (head torch is preferable)
- Diary and writing pens
- Camera/batteries/film or memory card
- Water bottles - 3x 1 litre bottles (you can use plastic water bottles)
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use (big enough to hold a fleece, personal medical kit, binoculars, camera, suncream, lunch, water bottles, clothing and personal items for the building week)
- Mobile phone - set for roaming
- Plug adaptor
- Personal stereo
- Binoculars for game viewing
- Alarm clock/watch
- Sewing kit and pocket knife for general use
- Pegs, washing line and travel wash for clothes (biodegradable recommended)
- Travel guide, such as Lonely Planet or Rough Guide
- The evenings can be quiet so bring books, cards, board games etc to play
- Pillow
- Lighter - useful out in the bush, can be bought locally in Swakopmund at the beginning of your trip

Clothing

- Clothing should be Khaki or a similar neutral coloured lightweight bush wear. Camouflage design should not be worn.
- Sets of outdoor loose fitting cotton clothes with full arm and leg cover for cooler mornings and evenings
- Shorts and / or trousers for project work
- T-shirts for project work
- A pair of comfortable lightweight trekking boots or similar
- Gardening gloves
- Casual clothes for the weekends
- Flip flops / sandals for camp
- Sun hat / Bandana
- Swimwear

Namibia Desert Elephant Conservation

- Underwear - enough for at least seven days, possibly more
- Pyjamas / nightwear
- Lightweight fleece or jumper - it can get cold at night
- Light waterproof jacket - a good wind barrier too!
- Warm clothes for winter and early mornings - a warm fleece is highly recommended for those cold nights for sleeping in

Medical Kit

- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes
- Personal First Aid Kit
- Personal medication e.g. prescription drugs/inhalers
- Painkillers
- Re-hydration sachets
- Contact lenses and solution if necessary
- Plasters
- Lip Balm with SPF
- Tweezers and scissors (not in hand luggage!)
- Sanitary products for women if necessary
- Mosquito repellent (ensure it contains DEET or equivalent)
- A few water purification tablets
- Ear Plugs - in case you sleep next to a snorer!

Minimum Age

Minimum age 17 years old (with parental consent), maximum dependant on participant's health.

Minimum Numbers

There are no minimum numbers on the trip.

Please note: you may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact us

Flights

Your flight to Namibia should arrive into Walvis Bay Airport (WVB) before 18:30 on your programme start date, and your return flight should be arranged for your programme end date.

Upon arrival at Walvis Bay, we will schedule a transfer for you into Swakopmund to the Villa Weise Backpackers lodge; this is payable locally.

To book your flights, please contact us on 01273 647219 and we will help to find you a great quote price.

It is important that once you have booked your flights you add these details to your online account or alternatively you can contact us with your departure date, the flight number and arrival time at your destination.



Namibia Desert Elephant Conservation

Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa, insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

Money Matters

The Namibian currency is the Namibian Dollar (N\$) and comes in subunits or 100 called cents. Coin denominations come in 5, 10, 20 and 5 cents and N\$1, N\$5. The notes come in denominations of N\$10, N\$20, N\$50, N\$100 and N\$200. The Namibian dollar is pegged to the South African rand which is also legal currency in Namibia. The exchange rate is 1:1.

There are ATMs in most major towns and cities but it is advised to withdraw enough cash to last a few days or week.

Traveller's cheques in US dollars and South Africa rand are the most commonly used and exchanged and you will receive better exchange rates changing cheques than you will cash.

American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted but not in petrol stations.

Example typical costs are as follows:

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant \$8.00

Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) \$2.00

Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) \$1.00

Water (0.33 litre bottle) \$0.50

(Prices quoted in US Dollars)

Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information offered below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

For some programmes in Namibia, a volunteer visa is required in order to participate. Please refer to the specific programme information to see whether a volunteer visa is required for your programme.

If your programme does not require a volunteer visa, you will need to obtain a tourist visa. Nationals from Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, UK, Ireland and USA are able to obtain a tourist visa for short stay visits of up to 90 days at the port of entry.

Cultural Considerations

Religion

The local population is predominantly Christian, around 80%-90%. Two Lutheran Churches cover over half of the total population, with the Roman Catholics covering one-fifth of the populace. Additional denominations e.g. Dutch Reformed, make up the final percentages.

Smoking and Alcohol

Drinking is only permissible in moderation and must not impact on your volunteer work during the week. While we want you to have fun in your free time, anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated at the project.

The lager in Namibia is excellent due its German heritage. The German beer Becks has been brewed in Namibia since 2000. Unfortunately alcohol abuse and drink driving is a major problem in Namibia.

Drugs

It is absolutely forbidden to bring drugs into Namibia. Always keep an eye on your luggage while travelling. Never bring anyone else's luggage through customs. If you get caught there is little chance that you will walk away without punishment. As in most countries, Namibia has very strict rules when it comes to the possession of drugs. All drugs, including 'soft' drugs like marijuana, are illegal. Please do NOT use any illegal substances whilst travelling – it is not worth the risk and is not acceptable at the project.

Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

Safety

As in most countries there are people who try to take advantage of tourists. The following advice is intended to help you keep safe:

- Always keep your personal items such as passport, money and camera with you and in a safe place. You can buy mini padlocks to prevent people from going into your day sack without your permission.
- Always walk around in groups
- Never go out alone after dark
- Stick with the escorted trips. If you do go out in the evening unescorted, you do so at your own risk. Please tell the co-ordinators where you are going and what time you will be back.
- This information is not intended to scare you. Unfortunately, bad things can happen, as they can do in any country and we want you to be prepared. We want you to stay safe and have a good time.
- Namibians are generally very friendly, warm and hospitable people. Please be friendly, respectful and stay aware and you will have a great time.

ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if your card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

If your card is confiscated or you are concerned that your card has been tampered with, please report immediately to the bank or cancel your card.

Language Guide

The official national language of Namibia is English, however only 7% of the country speaks it. The most common dialect is Afrikaans with over 60% of the population and 32% speak German, whilst further indigenous languages make up the remaining percentages. We suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

English - Afrikaans

Hello - *Hallo*

How are you? - *Hoe gaan dit?*

Pardon - *Ekskuus*

Thank you very much - *Baie dankie*

Please - *Asseblief*

Yes / No - *Ja / Nee*

How much? - *Hoeveel?*

Food & Drink

Traditional German dishes and South African pricing have heavily influenced Namibian food. Game dishes are common and meat dishes are plentiful and exceptionally cheap compared to European standards. German meats and sausages are very popular. Kudu and Springbok are the most popular game dishes. Fish is also evident on Namibian menus, especially around the ports. Traditional South African braai (barbecue) is extremely popular outside of restaurants.

The traditional staple diet in Africa is meat and carbohydrates. If you are a vegetarian you will be catered for with lots of fresh root vegetables such as yams and potatoes and fruits. However, please be aware that your meals towards the end of your programme may become a little repetitive so perhaps it may be worth buying a few of your favourite snacks whilst you are in Africa.

There is a lot of fresh fruit in Africa, which is extremely cheap to buy for a quick snack or nutritional lunch so it may be worth picking some up from the market quite cheaply for your daily vitamin fix. However, please be aware that fresh items for salads etc. are hard to come by in Africa, although the project leaders will try to get this as often as possible for you.

Drinking water from the tap is not generally considered to be safe, so choices include plastic bottled water and boiled or filtered tap water. Bottled water is extremely accessible. In addition sodas are sold everywhere.

Public Holidays

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. However, although businesses and government offices are closed on public holidays, tourist attractions and shops are almost never closed. The main impact on the tourist of these holidays is the increased competition for travel and accommodation from Namibian's who use long weekends to get away from the big cities.

To view a list of the public holidays for Namibia, please see the link below:

<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/namibia/public-holidays>

Weather

Namibia has 300 days of sunshine on average per year. The climate is an archetypal semi desert climate, with extremely hot days and cool nights. Temperatures are lower in the central areas of the country where the land plateaus. Rain occurs in the summer months in the form of thunderstorms, consequently the riverbeds fill extremely fast with large quantities of muddy water. Temperatures can reach up to 40°C during the day, however it is significantly cooler during the evening. During the winter months, temperatures during the evening can often drop below freezing, so remember to pack your clothes accordingly!

Time

Namibia is one hour ahead of GMT.

In Africa, time is not a priority like it is in much of the western world – there is a saying that Africa works to ‘Africa Time’, which basically means you must exercise a lot of patience! If a boat is due to leave at 12pm, don’t be surprised if it still hasn’t a couple of hours later... keep an open mind, and arrive in Africa ‘Expecting the unexpected’.

Electricity

Electricity in Namibia runs on 220 volts, 50Hz. If your device does not run on these rates, you’ll need a voltage converter.

Outlets across Namibia generally accept the following plug type:



Three round pins arranged in a triangle

Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith. Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as make improvements that result from travellers’ comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of recommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we’ll be happy to answer them.

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