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South Africa Big 5 Wildlife and Community

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



Trip Name: South Africa Big 5 Wildlife and Community **Trip Code:** SABF **Duration:** From 2 weeks

Trip Highlights

- Get a behind the scenes look at life on a South African Game Reserve
- Volunteer with some amazing African Wildlife
- Get up close to majestic Elephants
- Be a conservation volunteer and help the land flourish
- Free time at weekends to explore the local area
- Close to South Africa's famous Garden route



Overview

Get involved with this exciting wildlife conservation programme on a real Big 5 reserve in a stunning part of South Africa; near Port Elizabeth on the world famous Garden Route.

As a South Africa wildlife volunteer, you'll be assisting in lots of different activities including game monitoring, game capture, as well as the possibility of caring for lions, elephants and even tigers in the sanctuary.*

In addition to this you'll also be playing your part in valuable conservation work to help remove and eliminate alien plant species from the area and replace them with indigenous species. The work is varied and you'll be able to get involved in many different areas.

This programme provides a fantastic introduction to volunteering and life in South Africa!

[Check out customer Nicky's experience on the Big 5 reserve over on the Real Gap blog!](#)

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* Please note that work with Lions and Tigers is not always guaranteed and will be at the discretion of our in-country team depending on the age and behaviour of the animals.

Destination Info

Diverse, exhilarating, spectacular, varied – South Africa is a wildlife volunteer destination to write home about. Never far from the news, it's a vast, modern multicultural country, full of contradictions and full of interest. It offers so many opportunities for student travel that it's difficult to summarise.

There's the country itself – offering everything from lush subtropics to deserts, savannah to scrubland, bushveld to stunning coastlines. If your taste is for Africa's big five, this is the one of the very best places on the continent to see them.

Then there are the people and what they've achieved. If your interest lies in modern politics, South Africa should definitely be on your travel shortlist. You'll have the chance to live and volunteer in a country that has accomplished so much in the years since apartheid was dismantled – it's unique in the world.

Itinerary



First thing to say is that we're dealing with wild animals on a big game reserve and they're complete rubbish with deadlines and timetables. So it's a bit difficult to be definite about when things are going to happen. But this is a rundown of what you can expect to see and to be doing. To get the best out of this brilliant hands-on experience, you have to be flexible and just go with the flow.

There are a large number of activities that you will be able to get involved in, the longer your stay at the programme the more you will be able to be involved in. Some of the main activities that you may be involved in during your time at the programme include:

Helping the land flourish

Of course, it's important to look after the land if the animals are to thrive, so the project rehabilitates and develops the local environment. As a volunteer in South Africa, your involvement in this work will be welcomed. You'll be helping with a whole range of maintenance activities including clearing bush, checking and repairing fences, rooting out alien species to preserve the natural balance, planting indigenous plant species, landscaping and all sorts of other essential jobs. You'll learn a lot, in a practical way, about how animals and vegetation depend on

each other in a natural eco-system.

Animal care

As a volunteer you'll see between 15 and 20 lions in the sanctuary at any one time. If there are any cubs, you may have the opportunity to bottle feed and play with them – all depending on the time of year, their age and how their mum feels about it! The project rescues lions and releases them into game reserves when they're ready. You can just imagine the huge feeling of satisfaction you'll get if you're lucky enough to be involved in that! In addition to the Lions, the sanctuary is also home to Tigers, if there are Tiger cubs there at the time of your visit then you may also be lucky enough to bottle feed and play with them too; this is also dependent on the age of the cubs along with other factors and is entirely at the discretion of the in-country team.

Elephants too

You'll get up close and personal with these awesome animals. Feeding them, cleaning out their sleeping quarters, monitoring their behaviour, looking after their needs - all incredible experiences. Listen to what the guides have to say – they live day-in day-out with the elephants and know them as individuals very well. You'll learn a lot about their behaviour which will help you understand what you're seeing when you're out on a game drive.



You'll be volunteering in small groups with your own team leader throughout your placement and have the opportunity to be involved in a wide variety of different activities on the reserve. Due to the diversity of the activities available it may not be possible to be involved in every single activity available, particularly if you are staying for just a couple of weeks, The longer your stay the more you will be involved in and more you will be able to experience.

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It's not all work! You're in South Africa, so there's sightseeing to be done and lots of fun to be had! You are just over one hour from Port Elizabeth and your weekends are your own. So you can arrange tours and weekend visits but if you prefer you can stay at the reserve and relax. Please note: if you choose to leave the reserve to visit other places at the weekend, you will not be accompanied by a coordinator and activities and meals will not be included.



Have you thought about extending your time in South Africa and seeing more of what this fascinating country has to offer? Why not tag on our fantastic South Africa Experience onto the end of your placement on the Big 5 Wildlife and Community Programme, it's a fantastic 2 week adventure combining a week of volunteering on the reserve followed by a week travelling down the awesome Garden route, visiting some great sites along the way – all in all making your trip the ultimate adventure in South Africa.

Follow the link below for more details.....

[South Africa Experience](#)

Accommodation

During the volunteer project at the reserve you will be housed in a volunteer lodge with shared, single sex dorm rooms and shared bathroom facilities. The lodge is fully furnished and has a tea/coffee station, lounge area, entertainment area with a television, satellite, table tennis, table football, pool table and sporting facilities such as tennis courts and a cricket field.

Programme Services and Facilities

Telephone

The international dialling code for South Africa it is +27.

You will be able to buy a SIM card for your cell phone when you arrive at the airport. (Your phone will need to be Tri-Band and unlocked from your home network – speak to your cellular provider before you leave to make sure). Alternatively you can enable international roaming by speaking to your cellular provider before you leave home.

There is cell phone reception and payphones available at the town store, which you will be able to use at your own expense.

Internet

There is an internet facility available at the project site for volunteers to use during designated times at a nominal fee. However please note that the internet connection can be unreliable at times and can vary from day to day; unfortunately this is down to the network providers and out of the control of our team in South Africa, so your patience with the intermittent internet connection will be very much appreciated.

Laundry

You will be able to use the laundry facilities at the placement for a small fee payable locally (60 ZAR per load).

Electricity

South Africa uses 220/230V and a frequency of 50Hz. The plug sockets in South Africa take plugs with two circular pins and a larger circular grounding pin. There is electricity available at your accommodation allowing you to charge all normal electrical appliances.

Meals

Breakfast, Lunch and dinner will be prepared for you. The food served varies from day to day but usually consists of meals such as pap, beans, curry, rice, vegetables and pasta dishes. Vegetarians can be catered for on request. Please note that the game reserve is an alcohol free environment.

What's Included

- Scheduled airport transfer on arrival
- Accommodation on a shared basis
- Orientation on arrival
- All food (except during excursions)
- Full support from the in-country team
- 24 hour support number and contact
- Project t-shirt and cap



What's Not Included

- All flights
- Personal travel insurance
- All items of a personal nature
- Visas
- Transportation that is not related to the project
- Optional excursions



Additional Information

Departure information

You need to arrange your flight to depart from Port Elizabeth airport on your programme end date.

You will be transferred to a lodge in Port Elizabeth for your final night. From here you will need to make your own way back to the airport.

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.

Also, 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.

Personal Admin

- Passport, insurance certificates and personal documentation
- Photocopies of all the above to be left at home with your next of kin
- Spending money in South African Rand
- Proof of inoculations (please speak to your doctor about necessary immunisations)

- Secure, waterproof bag for documents and money: sealable plastic bags will do
- International drivers licence

General

- Personal hygiene kit, toiletries and towel
- Binoculars
- Sunglasses (high UV protection)
- Sun cream (high factor needed)
- Sun hat / bandana
- Small torch (head torch is preferable)
- Diary and writing pens
- Camera/batteries/film or memory card
- Water bottle - at least 75cl
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- Mobile phone - set for roaming
- Personal stereo
- Sewing kit and pocket knife for general use
- Pegs and travel wash for clothes
- Travel guide, such as Lonely Planet or Rough Guide
- Sleeping bag *
- Mosquito net *
- Silk or cotton liner *: Ideal for hot nights or as an extra layer to your sleeping bag
- Clothing
- Sets of outdoor, loose fitting cotton clothes with full arm and leg cover for cooler mornings and evenings
- Shorts/trousers/skirts (well over knee length)
- A pair of hiking boots or sturdy trainers
- Casual clothes for weekends
- Flip flops/sandals
- Working gloves
- Shoes suitable for churches etc.
- Swimwear and beach towel
- Bath towel
- Underwear - enough for at least seven days, possibly more
- Pyjamas/nightwear
- Lightweight fleece or jumper
- Waterproof jacket (a must as it can rain all year round)
- Warm clothes for winter and early mornings

Medical Kit

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

Please Note:

We recommend you take some shirts/blouses, trousers/long skirts and a good pair of shoes or sandals for your work placement and other social gatherings. This is to show respect for African culture and also gain respect from the children you will be working with. You can wear casual clothing in your spare time, though these must be appropriate.

* = These items are not required at the project and are only a suggestion if you are travelling to other places before or after your time at the project.

Minimum Age

Minimum 17 years with parental consent, maximum decided on potential participants health and fitness.

Flights

Your flight to South Africa should arrive at Port Elizabeth airport before 5pm on your programme start date, and your return flight should be arranged to depart from the same airport on your programme end date.

Please note that airport transfers are operated on a scheduled transfer basis, for further details please refer to the Arrival Info section.

Important: Please ensure that you arrive and depart on the times and dates stated. If you arrive or depart outside of the set dates and still require a transfer, you will be required to pay for an out of hours transfers which is bookable and payable prior to departure - please note that out of hours transfers are on a request basis subject to availability and not automatically added to your booking. Any additional night of accommodation required at the project will cost approximately GBP 40 per person per night and payable locally.

To book your flights, please contact your sales advisor who will do their best to get you the best deal on the day. Please provide them with your full name as it is stated in your passport. Before you make the call please make sure you have your required departure dates, return dates and other details you may require.

FAQs

1. What are the typical group sizes?

Groups sizes vary depending on the time of year, but generally you can expect to be with between 10 and 30 fellow travellers.

2. How much spending money would you recommend I take?

If you are on a tight budget you can get away with £80 per week. If you want to do some travelling in your free time then you will need a bit more.

3. What are the average ages of travelers on this trip?

The majority of participants on this program are aged between 18-30, however it is popular with travelers of all ages.

4. I am a first time traveler, and a bit apprehensive about travelling on my own. Do many people do this by themselves?

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The majority of our participants are solo travelers, so you will be one of many in the same position. We e-mail out a buddy list 2-3 weeks before you start, so you can begin to get to know one another beforehand.

5. Is South Africa safe?

Absolutely, and you have co-ordinators with you at all times to ensure your safety.

6. Do I need to take a sleeping bag?

No, all bedding is provided however if you wish to take one for extra warmth then you can.

7. Do I need to take a mosquito net?

No, you will be in a malaria free area.

8. Will there be a safe/safety deposit box available?

You will have lockable chests as well as boxes in your room where you can lock your valuable items in.

Police Check

This trip requires a Police Check to be carried out - please contact us for further information on how to do this.

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

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The currency in South Africa is the Rand (R), which is divided into 100 cents. Coins come in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10 and 50 cents, and 1, 2 and 5 Rand. Notes come in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 Rand.

US Dollars, Pound Sterling or Euros are the best currencies to bring to change locally. Major credit cards such as Visa or MasterCard are accepted in most towns, cities and petrol stations and ATMs can be found across the country. ATMs in cities are the most likely to give cash advances to cards on the on the Cirrus network.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant \$7.70
Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) \$1.85
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) \$1.04
Water (0.33 litre bottle) \$1.13

(Prices quoted in US Dollar)

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 stays of 90 days or less nationals of the European Union, the USA, Australia and New Zealand can obtain a free entry permit on arrival. All other nationalities should consult their nearest South African Embassy or High Commission for details on entry requirements.

Cultural Considerations

Smoking and Drinking

Smoking and drinking is tolerated in South Africa, although smoking has been banned in public areas such as cinemas, bars and airports. You will find that you will be able to get imported beer cheaply in most establishments and there are many tasty local beers too. South Africa is also famous for wines, so you shouldn't miss out on the opportunity to try some local varieties.

However, please respect other volunteers. 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, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated on the project.

Drugs

It is absolutely forbidden to bring drugs into South Africa. 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, South Africa 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.

Greeting

Pleasantries are taken seriously and using 'hello' and 'goodbye' can go a long way to making friends and being accepted. Please take the time to learn a few local words and show that you are keen to fit in. There is also a big emphasis on shaking hands. The Western way of doing this will be fine, but you are likely to pick up a few local

variations!

On The whole, South Africans are easy-going people - any social errors are unlikely to cause offence, so please do not worry!

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

Tourists can be targeted by pickpockets and thieves. Please educate yourself about Africa and South Africa in particular, before you leave, so that you can be alert for all types of situations. General travel safety rules are below.

- Avoid travelling alone, especially at night
- Find out where the unsafe areas are and avoid them
- When travelling keep all-important documents and valuables in a safe place, like an inner hidden pocket or money belt
- Carry only as much cash as you think you will need for the day
- Don't wear expensive jewellery or watches
- Be wary of people who seem too friendly too fast
- Keep cameras out of sight. Always keep bags and purses in your sight.
- Before swimming, ask how safe the area is

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.

Swimming

If visiting a beach in South Africa it is important that you take note of any information boards that are located on the beach before entering the water. Most beaches also operate a flag system to indicate whether it is safe to swim or not, it is essential that you take note of any advice given and heed any warnings that are in place as there can be the risk of rip tides, strong currents and Shark attack. If you are unsure whether it is safe to swim in the ocean, speak to the lifeguards or your in-country coordinators.

Language Guide

There are 11 official languages in South Africa; Afrikaans, English, Zulu, Xhosa, IsiNdebele, Northern Sotho, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. There are many other tribal, indigenous languages. However, English is spoken prevalently across the country. In Cape Town, the predominant language is Afrikaans. 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?*

I'm fine - *Goed dankie*

Thank you (very much) - *Baie dankie*

Please - *Asseblief*

Yes / No - *Ja / Nee*

Goodbye - *Totsiens*

English - Isi Xhosa

Hello - *Molo*

How are you? - *Kunjani?*

I'm fine - *Ndiphilile*

Thank you (very much) - *Enkosi*

Please - *nceda*

Yes / No - *Ewe / hayi*

Goodbye - *Hamba kahle (go well)*

Food & Drink

Food in South Africa is delicious. You will be exposed to every different type of meat at every meal, ranging from impala and kudu to ostrich. All can be enjoyed in many different ways, but one of the best ways to taste these meats would be to sample it off a hot braai (barbecue). Be prepared to try something new! If you want to try some more traditional food then go for some Biltong (dried meat) and Boerewors (barbecue sausage).

If you are a vegetarian, do not worry. South Africa is abundant with delicious local vegetables, such as yams and sweet potatoes.

Drinking water from the tap is safe throughout the country, apart from in the more rural areas.

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 South African's who use long weekends to get away from the big cities.

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

<http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/south-africa/>

Weather

Seasons in South Africa are opposite to those in the northern hemisphere. The climate is varied across the country

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with warm showery summers and cold winters in the Gauteng Province (Highveld), scorching summers and a slightly less chilly outlook for winter in the Durban area (Lowveld) and the Western Cape hit hardest by winter rains. Karoo's desert-like climate means it's hot and ready to explore all year round but if you want to explore the rest of the country Spring (mid-September to November) and autumn (April and May) are ideal almost everywhere.

Time

South Africa is two hours 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 'expecting the unexpected'.

Electricity

In South Africa the electric system is 230 Volts and frequency 50 Hertz. If you bring a device that does not accept this Voltage you will need to use an adapter.

Outlets in South Africa generally accept 1 type of plug:



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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