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Zimbabwe Lion Breeding & Conservation - Midlands

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



Trip Name: Zimbabwe Lion Breeding & Conservation - Midlands **Trip Code:** ZILB **Duration:**

Trip Highlights

- Take part in a serious lion conservation project
- Feed any lion cubs who may be at the project when you are there
- Get involved in Lion Conservation
- Get up close and personal with elephants and find out what makes them tick.
- Be a conservation volunteer and help the land flourish.
- Away from the political trouble spots, a great introduction to Zimbabwe



Overview

Midlands is a serious lion conservation project, designed solely to do something about the dramatic decline in African lion numbers. The programme is built around the breeding and release of lions back into the wild and it's a world first.

Your trip is not only concerned with lion conservation though. You'll also have the chance to spend time with time with the project's orphaned African Elephants saved from certain death during a severe drought that ravaged Zimbabwe's South Eastern Lowveld in the early nineties.

Part of your project work will be to assist with the management of the Midlands programme – finding and removing snares in the game park, checking for and repairing deliberate poacher damage to boundary fences and other essential maintenance work.

Destination Info

Zimbabwe is an extremely beautiful country, filled with warm and generous people who will welcome you with open

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arms and it's a brilliant gap year destination, and not solely because of its lion conservation projects.

It's amazingly diverse too. In just one visit you could walk with lions, visit a pristine wildlife reserve home to hundreds of species of tropical birds and animals, learn to scuba dive or enjoy the thrill of white water rafting and other adrenalin sports.

It's home to the biggest waterfall on the planet – Victoria Falls – and to the wild Zambezi River and to some of the most beautiful and well-protected game reserves in the world. There are large national parks and numerous private game reserves and, of course, lion conservation projects.

Itinerary



There's no lying in bed all morning on a lion conservation project. You'll be up and doing fairly early in the morning – quite normal in hot climates where it often gets too hot to work later in the day. You'll have something like a morning (or an afternoon) off fourth day. You do need to be flexible though and you might find yourself working at other times.

You're working with wild animals and they're not very good at sticking to timetables. The role is flexible and you need to be too.

These are the kinds of things you can expect to be doing as part of your lion conservation role.

Lion walks especially taking cubs (5 to 18 months) out into the bush.

Training the elephants and riding them

Lunch for a lion is pounds and pounds of meat and dinner is much the same – and they're always leaving their vegetables on the side of the plate

Maintenance jobs are not as dull as it might sound and certainly essential to the project. The enclosures have to be cleaned and checked, snare sweeps need to be carried out for illicit poaching activity and are promptly removed if found, the boundary fences also have to be checked and repaired where necessary.

If there are any cubs, you might get to bottle feed them – all depending on the time of year, their age and how their mum feels about it. And then there's the huge feeling of satisfaction you'll get if you're lucky enough to be there when a lion is released back into the wild! Priceless!

Accommodation

During your placement, you will be staying in a comfortable room sharing with one to three other volunteers in thatched accommodation, nestled beneath trees and beside a lake. Your lodge has modern facilities including satellite TV and a swimming pool. You will have separate shower and toilet facilities to the rest of the camp, which are located adjacent to the sleeping area. The main lodge houses guests visiting the area and programme on vacation. Your rooms will be cleaned daily by the housekeeping staff and free use of the laundry service is available to all volunteers.

Programme Services and Facilities

Internet

You will be able to write emails using our satellite broadband internet café at US\$2.00 per 30 mins or US\$4 per hour. We experience various power cuts, satellite malfunctions and server outages, so please be patient, and be aware that broadband in Africa is not nearly as quick as the equivalent first world standard.

Telephone

The international dialling code for Zimbabwe is +263.

To place an outgoing, direct dialled international call, dial +44 for the UK, +49 for Germany, followed by the telephone number. For example to call Real Gap dial +44 1892 516164 / +49 69 222226 475.

You will be able to use the phones at certain times to call home, but calling out of Zimbabwe is not cheap at US\$1 per minute, payable in cash locally. You can however have someone call you back.

You will be able to use your mobile phone in Zimbabwe if you enable international roaming before you leave home, but coverage is very limited, especially out of the major towns & cities. Please note that reception is not good in

camp so do not rely on this method of communication.

Laundry

Your laundry will be washed, ironed and folded for you free of charge and you will be given a laundry bag to use for the duration of your stay. We recommend that you do not bring clothing that you are too concerned about being damaged as our facilities are basic by first world standards and we do not want to ruin your favourite clothes if the colours run.

Post

If people wish to send you mail, they can use the postal address listed in the Arrival section. However, please don't send any valuables, as the postal service in Africa is not completely reliable and is generally slow. Also, please do not have packages sent to you while you are on the project. All packages have to be cleared by the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority and you will find that you will need to pay a very high customs charge on collection in Zimbabwe that is often much higher than the value of the goods enclosed. It also takes a minimum of 2 weeks for packages to be cleared. We strongly advise against having packages mailed to you from outside of Zimbabwe.

Money

Credit cards are unreliable in Zimbabwe and although some outlets (not at the project) accept the major credit cards it is the exchange rate that differs and you don't get the best value for your money using your card, so we advise you to bring your spending money in US dollars cash (in small denominations, US\$20 or lower if possible) which must be post 1993 issue.

This is Zimbabwe. You should bring enough dollars for your whole stay when you first arrive because once in the country there is practically no way of getting any more. ATM machines are unreliable and known to give you a very bad rate of exchange.

Many things at the project will be priced in US\$. The beer system works on US\$2 a bottle, international calls are US\$1 a minute and the internet is US\$4 an hour. As a rough average, volunteers spend about US\$30 a week on these things, although it can run up to US\$50 a week. We also offer the you the opportunity to get a DVD at the park of your lion walks, elephant swims etc. This DVD costs US\$35 minimum (for one lion walk).

For a volunteer spending one month at the programme where he/she also does an excursion trip, a sensible amount of money to bring (most in cash, some in Travellers Cheques) is US\$2000.

Meals

You will receive three meals a day, although this may be a packed meal depending on what activity you are taking part in on any given day. You will be eating the same food as the guests at the lodge and we kindly request that you allow the guests to be served first and have their first choice of seating. Breakfast is at 08:30 and includes

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cereals, fresh fruit and a full cooked breakfast. Lunch is usually around 13:00 and dinner is at 19:00, both of which are served in a buffet style.

What's Included

- All airport transfers
- Arrival orientation
- 24 hour in country support
- All accommodation and meals



What's Not Included

- All Flights
- Travel Insurance
- Visas for Zimbabwe



Is This Trip For You?

An interest in and passion for wildlife and conservation is important. Due to health and safety requirements, all volunteers must be 155cm, or 5ft minimum to work with the lion cubs. All volunteers must have a reasonable level of health and fitness.

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.

Also, please be aware that the weather can change considerably from winter to summer. In winter the evenings can get very cold, the temperature sometimes falling below freezing. Therefore please look at the climate chart for the period that you are travelling and ensure that you pack accordingly, for example in the colder period you will need jumpers and a warm coat for the nights.

Losing baggage is always a concern, and especially so if you are travelling to Africa. As a result we recommend that you take all your essentials and most importantly valuables in your hand luggage, as well as some spare clothing for a couple of days, just in case your baggage does go missing, don't worry though, in this event you will most likely get your bags back in the next couple of days.

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 US\$)
- US Dollars for tourist visa
- Proof of inoculations (please speak to your Doctor about necessary immunisations)
- Secure, waterproof bag for documents and money: sealable plastic bags will do
- A spare pair of clothes in your hand luggage

General

- Camera / Film or memory card/ Batteries or charger (you will be able to re-charge items)
- Batteries for any electrical items you bring with you
- Water bottle – at least one litre
- Binoculars for game viewing
- Inexpensive wrist watch
- Alarm clock
- Sunglasses (high UV protection)
- Sun cream (high factor needed)
- Sun hat
- Small torch (head torch is preferable) plus spare batteries and bulbs, especially useful for power cuts
- Gardening/work gloves for maintenance
- Plastic gloves and bandana (to cover your mouth) for meat preparation
- Diary and writing pens
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- Sewing kit and pocket knife for general use
- Travel Guide, such as Lonely Planet or Rough Guide

Clothing

- A pair of thick socks for walking
- Sandals
- Very warm fleece/pullover as it can get very cold at night
- Khaki or neutral coloured clothing if you chose to visit a game reserve (N.B. no camouflage design)
- Long trousers
- Warm clothing for winter – maybe hat and gloves etc, can get very cold June to August
- Swimwear
- Sets of outdoor loose fitting cotton clothes with full arm and leg cover for cooler mornings and evenings
- 3 pairs of shorts for Project work
- T-shirts for project work
- Boots or sturdy trainers for project work
- Swimwear
- Underwear – enough for at least 7 days, possibly more
- Pyjamas/nightwear
- Waterproof clothing during the rainy season (Nov – Feb)
- Warm clothes for winter and early mornings
- Please do not bring any red or brightly coloured clothing as this colour has been known to agitate the lions.

Medical Kit

- Personal hygiene kit, toiletries and towel (please be sure to bring enough toiletries for your entire stay)
- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes

- Personal First Aid Kit
- Personal medication e.g. anti malarial tablets/prescription drugs/inhalers
- Painkillers
- Contact lenses & solution if necessary
- Plasters
- Travel wash for underwear
- 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

Please Note: We advise that you pack all valuables in your hand luggage.

Minimum Age

Minimum age 17 years, maximum decided on potential participants' 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 into Zimbabwe should **arrive into Harare (see options below) on the day before your programme start date or Bulawayo on your programme start date**, and your return flight should be arranged for your programme end date. Please refer to the 'At a Glance' box for these dates.

Flight Option 1 – You will need to arrive into Bulawayo the Monday that your placement is set to begin on the South African Airways flight SA8110 arriving at 12h05. You will be transferred directly to the project. Your return flight should be the South African Airways Flight SA8111 departing Bulawayo at 12h50 on the Monday.

Flight Option 2 – Fly to Harare (Zimbabwe's capital) the Sunday before your placement is set to begin, this is very important! Please ensure your flight arrives between the hours of 10.30am and 2pm as our airport transfer for those arriving into Harare Airport takes place within these hours. You will be transferred directly to the Antelope Park on this day. At the end of your programme, you will need to book your return flight for the last Sunday of your placement. Your return transfer will get you to the airport by 11am, so we would suggest you book a return flight from 1300 onwards. You will be transferred directly to the airport from Antelope Park on this day.

To book your flights, please contact us on 01892 277037 so that we can look for the best deals for you.

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.

Please Note: If you are spending more than a few hours in transit at O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, there is a lounge that you can use for ZAR154 (about \$20). This includes showers, internet, snack food and drinks as well as a comfortable place to sit and somewhere to leave your bags if you fancy a wander around the shops. It is well worth using this lounge if you are at the airport for more than a few hours, as generally, food within the airport is expensive. Once you have checked in, and passed through passport control, take a left and keep going until you find a Tax rebate shop, Accessorize and escalators. Head up the escalators and go through the first door on your right, just before the smoking lounge.

FAQs

1. What is the accomodation like?

You will be based in purpose built volunteer accomodation in beautiful surroundings, you will share with 2 others and have the luxury of flush toilets.

2. Where is accomodation based?

Within the grounds of a private lodge.

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

We generally recommend that you take around £70-£80 per week.

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

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. Will I be able to touch the lions?

This is a very hands on project so the majority of volunteers have the pleasure of experiencing this!

6. Do I need to take a sleeping bag?

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

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

Yes, there will be one available for you to use. It is also recommended that you bring a lock to lock your bags/cupboard.

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 programmes have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimised.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our UK 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 and Real Travel are part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

Beware: Don't book with an organisation that has no financial protection for their clients. Not only are they breaking the law, you could lose all your money or be stranded overseas.

Our ATOL licence (6527), offers complete financial protection for any flight inclusive trips. To acquire an ATOL licence we have to undergo a very rigorous inspection from the Civil Aviation Authority, so you know that we tick all of the boxes. The ATOL license means that no matter what happens to us, your money will either be returned or if you've already left, your trip will be guaranteed.

We are also a Member of ABTA which means you have the benefit of ABTA's assistance and Code of Conduct. Many of the travel arrangements that we sell are protected in case of the financial failure of the travel company. If you have any questions about the financial protection that applies to your booking then please ask our team and they'll be happy to help.

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

In Zimbabwe the official currency is the Zimbabwean dollar (Z\$), however, this has not been widely used for several years due to hyperinflation. The recommended currencies are the South African Rand, the US Dollar and the British Pound, all are widely accepted and US Dollars can be withdrawn from ATMs in most major cities.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant \$10.00
Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) \$0.80
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) \$1.00
Water (0.33 litre bottle) \$0.50

(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 up to 90 days, citizens of the European Union, the USA, Australia and New Zealand must obtain a holiday visa; these can be issued upon arrival and purchased with USD. Citizens of Ghana and South Africa can obtain visas without charge.

Citizens of the following countries will not need a visa for stays of up to 90 days: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Congo, Cyprus, Fiji, Grenada, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Namibia, Nauru, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Swaziland, Tanzania, Trinidad & Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu & Zambia.

Cultural Considerations

Clothing

Please dress appropriately at the programme. Some occasions may require a more conservative dress code, including upper legs and arms covered. You can ask the project leader if in doubt.

Religion

The majority of the population is Christian, influenced from early settling missionaries. Alongside Christian beliefs, a large proportion of Zimbabweans still follow traditional African religions. A small percentage of people follow Muslim and other beliefs.

Social Hierarchy

This is what you would expect of any country; the older people are treated with great respect. Men are considered to be of higher standing than women and children are expected to do as they are told!

Smoking and Alcohol

Smoking and drinking is tolerated in Zimbabwe and you will find that you will be able to get imported beer cheaply in most establishments. However, please respect other volunteers. Smoking is not permitted inside the house. 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 at the project.

Drugs

It is absolutely forbidden to bring drugs into Zimbabwe. 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, Zimbabwe 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.

Greetings

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, Zimbabweans are easy-going people - any social errors are unlikely to cause offence and 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 General Practitioner 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.

A useful website to visit in the first instance is <http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk>

Zika Virus

Zika virus is transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes and whilst the infection often occurs without symptoms it can cause an illness similar to dengue fever. There has recently been reported a possible link between exposure to Zika virus (ZIKV) in pregnancy and microcephaly and other congenital malformations and investigations are ongoing. We recommend you visit the [FCO website](#) and select your destination country for the latest travel advice prior to booking.

If you are already pregnant it is recommended you seek medical advice from your GP as [The National Travel Health Network and Centre \(NaTHNaC\)](#) advises you should consider avoiding travel to areas where ZIKV outbreaks are currently reported.

Safety

Unfortunately, tourists are always targets for pickpockets and thieves. Please educate yourself about Africa and Zimbabwe 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.

Language Guide

English is the official language of Zimbabwe, however, it is only spoken by about 2% of the country. The majority of Zimbabweans, about 76%, speak Shona.

Below are some useful Shona phrases to remember when you get to Zimbabwe. We also suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

English - Shona

Hello - *Kanjan/Kanjani*

How are you? - *Mhoro*

I'm fine - *Ndiri rayiti*

Thank you (very much) - *Tatenda*

Goodbye - *Fambai zvakanaka*

Food & Drink

Traditional food is fun to try and easy to enjoy. Sadza is the most widely served traditional dish, made from ground maize and eaten with meat or sauce. Another dish to sample is Nhedzi, which is a wild mushroom soup. Game meat including ostrich, warthog and crocodile tail are also enjoyed.

Buying food at the roadside/market stalls is a good way to experience some more traditional food, and can be very tasty. You can often find pieces of grilled meat, deep-fried potato or cassava chips, roasted corncoobs and many local sweets. Please ensure that the food is freshly prepared.

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, boiled or filtered tap water, and "pure water" sachets. These sachets are filtered and come in 500 ml plastic bag portions. Many foreigners prefer bottled water, though water in sealed plastic sachets is safe, easily accessible, and extremely cheap. Soft drinks and Whawha, the local maize beer, are widely available.

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 Zimbabweans who use long weekends to get away from the big towns.

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

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

Weather

Located in the southern hemisphere, Zimbabwe's seasons are opposite to those in the Northern hemisphere. Temperatures in the higher regions are warm but rarely uncomfortably hot around the year with May to September the best time to travel. The autumn and winter months are mainly dry and cool, with the rainy season or Green Season falling between November and April bringing a hotter climate and the heaviest rains in the eastern mountain areas.

Time

Zimbabwe 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

Electricity in Zimbabwe is 220 Volts and frequency 50 Hertz. If you travel to Zimbabwe with a device that does not accept 220 Volts at 50 Hertz, you will need a voltage converter.

Outlets in Zimbabwe generally accept 2 types of plug:

Three round pins arranged in a triangle



Two parallel flat pins with ground pin



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 Foreign and Commonwealth Travel Advice.

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

Volunteer numbers

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.

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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