

DESERT ELEPHANT

The Desert Elephant Project is about making a substantial difference to the conservation of the desert elephants....conserving the desert elephants and ensuring the safety and security for the communities who live with the local herds. It's a hands on conservation project, a not for gain organisation and the volunteers are the most crucial element in the conservation work.



It's back to basic living, cooking over the camp fire, sleeping under the stars – all with one of the world's most beautiful deserts as its background. You are situated in true wilderness and it's highly unlikely you will see any tourists during your time at the project. You get to spend time learning about the desert elephants of the region and witness them in their own habitat with highly knowledgeable project managers.



Volunteers stay at the project's co-base camp on the banks of the Gab River and this is also a favourite hangout of the desert elephant.

This project has been in operation for the last 16 years and during this time hundreds of volunteers have made a huge difference to the conservation of the desert elephants and the quality of thousands of Namibians lives. The volunteer conservation project is the pinnacle of the organisations existence, and volunteers provide the manpower and funding for the conflict prevention programme. All types of people from all over the world volunteer this project and the groups, up to 14 participants, are always a mix of ages, and everyone works together as a team doing as much as they are able.



The desert elephants are one of the most special groups of elephants you will ever see. This project gives volunteers the opportunity to be exposed to the work they do in the field and a unique chance to make a personal difference and a real contribution to conservation and biosphere development in Namibia.



This is about real, spearhead conservation work in a harsh desert environment where small bands of secretive, desert adapted elephants roam vast wilderness areas. Where subsistence farmers eke out an existence and need all the help they can get in their confrontation with the elephants competing for precious water resources.

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HOW IT WORKS

The volunteer project is structured in 2 week rotations and you can sign up for a maximum of 12 weeks. Volunteer group size is maximum 14 and people of all ages and from all walks of life participate, as part of travel plans during a gap year, working holiday or career break through Namibia and Africa.

MEETING POINT

The meeting (departure) point for this project is Hotel Pension A La Mer in Swakopmund, which is conveniently located over the road from the Desert Elephant offices. A La Mer is a 3 minute walk to the beach and a 8 minute walk to the nearest shopping mall. Prices range from R750-00 per person / night for a standard sharing room, to R1055-00 per person / night for a standard single room.

Volunteers may also choose to spend their pre / post project accommodation at Salty Jackal Backpackers. Salty Jackal is a 20 minute walk to the beach and a 15 minute to the nearest shopping mall. Prices range from R160-00 per person / night for a dorm bed, R400-00 per person / night for a twin room shared, to R520-00 for a twin room single.

Volunteers have 2 options of getting to Swakopmund.

The first option is to fly from South Africa directly to Walvis Bay, and for us to arrange a shuttle to get you from Walvis Bay to Swakopmund. The transfer from Walvis Bay to Swakopmund takes about 20 minutes, and the latest you can arrive in Walvis Bay is a Sunday.

The second option is to arrive in Windhoek, where you will then be required to spend the night in Windhoek, and only take the shuttle to Swakopmund the next day. Volunteers should arrive in Windhoek no later than a Saturday, so that they can overnight in Windhoek and take the shuttle to Swakopmund on the Sunday. The taxi from Windhoek Airport to the backpackers lodge is R330-00, and overnight accommodation ranges in price from R250-00 to R750-00 per person per night (depending on room availability and number of guests sharing the room).

When booking your flights out of Namibia, please note that you will only get back to Swakopmund from the project from 14H00 onwards, so it is better to spend a night (or 2) in Swakopmund, before leaving. The group enjoy dinner together when they get back to Swakopmund, and it is always a great way to end off your volunteer experience. The shuttle also only leaves Swakopmund at 07H00 in the morning, so it is highly recommended that you do not fly out of Namibia before a Saturday (late) afternoon or evening.

Should you decide to volunteer for more than 2 weeks, then remember to budget for the Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights in between the 2 week slots, back in Swakopmund. Rates per night will depend on whether you choose to stay at Hotel Pension A La Mer, or Salty Jackal Backpackers Lodge.

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ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DAYS

Volunteers must be in Swakopmund latest the Sunday before the group departs for camp on a Monday morning at 11H00 from Hotel Pension A La Mer. The dates for 2021 are as follows:

START	FINISH
04 January	15 January
18 January	29 January
01 February	12 February
15 February	26 February
01 March	12 March
15 March	26 March
29 March	09 April
12 April	23 April
26 April	07 May
10 May	21 May
24 May	04 June
07 June	18 June
21 June	02 July
05 July	16 July
19 July	30 July
02 August	13 August
16 August	27 August
30 August	10 September
13 September	24 September
27 September	08 October
11 October	22 October
25 October	05 November
08 November	19 November
22 November	03 December
06 December	17 December

When booking your return trip from Swakopmund, please be aware that the group will only get back to Swakopmund at around 14H00 on a Friday afternoon. It is advisable to rather book your return trip for a Saturday onwards, as the shuttle departs from Swakopmund at 07H00, and the group do eat out at one of the local restaurants on the Friday night that they return to Swakopmund (and it would be a pity to miss this).

HOTEL PENSION A LA MER

Hotel Pension A La Mer is located on Libertina Amathila Avenue in Swakopmund. Volunteers spend a Sunday night at Hotel Pension A La Mer, prior to heading out to the project on a Monday. Accommodation at Hotel Pension A



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La Mer is on a twin room basis.

Facilities include information and activity bookings, free WIFI, a sumptuous breakfast daily, security services and secure parking. Rooms have a private bathroom fitted with a shower.

Hotel Pension A La Mer is situated in the heart of Swakopmund only 20 seconds away from the beach and historical jetty.

SALTY JACKAL BACKPACKERS

Salty Jackal Backpackers is located at 37 Anton Lubowski Avenue in Swakopmund.

Facilities include free Wifi, surf gear rental, surf lessons, surf guiding, surf camps & surfaris, super central location (short walking distance to dunes, beach, supermarkets, restaurants, pubs), self-catering fully equipped kitchen & braai area (or sign up for home-cooked dinners), table tennis, slackline & mini gym, loads of activities & things to do for all tastes and budgets), safe, off-street parking, lockers for your valuables, and safe storage for boards & wetsuits

ADDITIONAL INFO

Please refer to the Orientation and Kit List, for a list of things to take with you. For volunteers who will be spending 4 weeks or longer at the project, there will of course be one (or more) weekends in-between your 2 week slots at the project. If you are staying at the project for more than 2 weeks, then remember to budget for the Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights in between the project.

A DAY WITH THE PROJECT

During the first week, we cheat the heat and wake up early, for our first cup of coffee around the camp-fire. After the team member on duty has served breakfast, we head out to our project site for the day. It is likely you will be busy building a wall around a local farmers windmill / water points, constructing new water points for elephants away from homesteads / farms, although we also work on other projects, such as doing work on the base camp, helping community members build a tourist camp or fix a rural school. We head to our camp for lunch and a siesta. You could be tasked to update data forms, be on kitchen and camp duty for the day. The evenings are spent around the



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camp-fire, eating and talking about the day's events. Volunteers live close in the desert camp.

The second week is spent out on elephant patrol. We pack some basic camping equipment in the 4x4, and set off looking for the illusive elephants. On patrol we camp wild, and sleep under the stars. We follow elephants on foot, sometimes for hours under the desert sun, and sit patiently observing from some rocky outcrop whilst they laze away in the shade!

This project takes volunteers to the north-western regions of the Namib Desert.

This harsh tribal wilderness area runs parallel to the skeleton coast national park, and is home to a small populations of desert-adapted elephants.



BASE CAMP

Saturday morning you pack up the camp and travel back to Base Camp for a much deserved shower and relaxation. The next two days are yours to explore, read, relax, take a swim in the elephant drinking dam and enjoy yourselves!

INCLUDED / EXCLUDED

Included in the program fees:

Shuttle transfers between Windhoek / Walvis Bay and Swakopmund.

One night's twin room accommodation on arrival in Swakopmund.

Transfer to the project on a Monday.

Meals and accommodation once at the project.

Transfer back to Swakopmund at the end of your project experience.

One night's twin room accommodation on departure in Swakopmund.

Donation to project.

Excluded from the program fees:

Flights to / from Windhoek International Airport / Walvis Bay Airport.

Visa fees.

Travel insurance.

Optional activities.

Additional accommodation and meals if arriving early than a Sunday / departing later than a Saturday.

Meals not included at backpackers lodge / project.

Airport transfers, accommodation and transfers if travelling via Windhoek.

Items of a personal nature.

Internet and email access.