



A guide to:
Carnivore Conservation & Research



Carnivore Conservation & Research

Focus: Carnivores

Location: Namibia

Start Date: Every Friday

Arrival & Starting Point: Windhoek

At the foot of the Naukluft Mountains lies a 14,400 hectare expanse of land known as Neuras. Meaning 'place of abandoned water', this desert paradise finds itself peppered with natural freshwater springs and savannah grasslands, and in turn a wide array of animal species have made this their home. Leopards, jackals and more can be found throughout the region, but due to their presence local farmers have become fearful of the effect that these animals can have on their livelihoods, turning to lethal methods in order to protect their livestock. A conflict between humans and animals exists throughout Namibia, which is why the team behind the Carnivore Conservation and Research Project are so keen to tackle this issue head-on.

The research site at Neuras is managed by the team behind the Namibia Wildlife Sanctuary, one of the country's leading conservation organisations. The team's expertise in wildlife conservation efforts has put them in an ideal position to help improve human-animal relations in other areas, and after buying a new plot of land in 2012, they have been focused on doing just that. Interestingly, the land at Neuras is also home to an active vineyard, and the production of wines here helps to financially support conservation efforts, though it is with the help of volunteers that the project has truly been able to make a difference.



By taking part in activities ranging from wildlife tracking and camera trapping to game counts, your help on the Carnivore Conservation and Research project will provide the team at Neuras with valuable information which can be used to protect Namibia's wildlife: by understanding and learning about the animals in the area, locational and behavioural data can be used to create an idea of these animals' habits and whether they're a threat to the livelihoods of local farmers. Where farmers would, historically, shoot presumed 'problem animals' on sight, the project team has worked hard to change their perspectives, ultimately offering a lifeline to Neuras' most misunderstood animals. Past efforts have seen big cat populations improve in the region, and as the project's focus has moved towards the protection of additional species (such as black-backed jackals and Hartmann's mountain zebras), it is hoped that all species will continue to thrive and exist in harmony with the farmers who utilise the region.



Hiking

As well as allowing you to take in some of Namibia's most stunning landscapes, a hike throughout the Neuras region is an integral part of the research conducted by the project. You will head out in search of new areas of interest as you trek across mountains, cliffs, deep canyons and riverbeds, keeping your eyes peeled for signs of wildlife and ideal locations in which to set up camera traps. A minimum of two hikes will take part each week, and you must be prepared to walk between 5-10km each time – it might be hard work, but it's worth it for the view!

Tracking & Identification

Whilst taking part in hikes, you will be taught how to identify the presence of various animals. The project coordinator will teach you how to differentiate between various animal footprints (or 'spoor'), as well as how to recognise which animals may have passed through the area by detecting their 'scat', or dung. The more time you spend on this project, the more your skills will develop in this area, but in any instance, the information you gather will contribute to the project's overall understanding of the animals in the region and may therefore aid their efforts in combatting the human-animal conflict.



Camera Trapping

After identifying locations of interest during your hikes, you may be asked to help set up camera traps in those areas. Camera traps serve as 'additional eyes' on the project, running 24/7 and capturing images of more elusive animals: the cameras are motion-sensored and triggered by activity, and are non-selective on which animals they capture, so you may end up catching a glimpse of birds, big cats or something else entirely! Typically, camera traps are set up in areas such as water points, game trails and marking trees, and in addition to helping set them up, you may be asked to gather the images captured by the cameras, categorising them and helping to provide valuable data (such as location and behavioural information) to the project team.

Farm Outreach

A key focus of the project is to reduce the risk of human-animal conflict in the Neuras region, and a valuable way to work towards this goal is to engage in outreach with local farmers. Historically, these farmers have viewed certain species (such as leopards, hyenas and jackals) as opportunists or a threat to their livestock, and have therefore been known to take lethal action to prevent the encroachment of wild animals onto their land. Those animals which are deemed as predatory have been killed on-sight, leading to a decline in the populations of certain species over the years, and due to an impact on biodiversity in the Neuras region it was vital that the project team would step in. You will join the team on their routine visits to neighbouring farms, helping to maintain vital relationships with the farmers whilst working towards a shared understanding of animal welfare and conservation issues.



Cheetah Feeding

Cheetahs are an iconic species, serving as ambassadors for wildlife protection in Namibia. A number of cheetahs reside at Neuras in a purpose-made enclosure, relocating here after being rescued by the Namibia Wildlife Sanctuary. You will help to maintain the cheetahs' quality of life by cleaning their enclosure, helping to prepare food, and even taking part in cheetah feeds if you're lucky! Often a favourite activity for our volunteers, this is sure to be a memorable experience.

Game Counts

The health of any ecosystem depends on a balance of the species within it, which is why it is important that the animals native to the Neuras region are monitored for any changes. You will participate in regular game counts in order to check in on species such as oryxes, springboks, warthogs and ostriches, keeping track of their numbers or instances which may be deemed noteworthy.

A species of particular interest during game counts is the Hartmann's mountain zebra: while their numbers appear to be rather high, they are considered competitor species for grazing, and are also seen as a common source of meat. These qualities mean that local farmers may be inclined to shoot at the zebras, which in turn may have a detrimental effect on their populations. It is therefore important that the project team keep a close eye on the local zebra populations to learn more about their status, any effect that this may have on the environment, and whether a new approach by the farmers is necessary.





Help With Wine Making

The Neuras site is also home to a large vineyard, and the production of an array of delectable wines helps to financially support conservation efforts in the area. Depending on the season, you may be invited to help out with all stages of wine production, from picking the grapes to bottling up a range of delicious beverages. This activity is not a guaranteed part of your time on the project, but if you volunteer between January and March you may be lucky enough to sample some of the wines for yourself!

Visit to Sossusvlei

During your downtime on this project, you may wish to pay a visit to the world-famous desert site of Sossusvlei. Known for its red sands and staggering sand dunes, Sossusvlei is an incredibly popular location for tourists and is certainly worth a visit! This activity is available at an additional cost and will only go ahead if there are three or more volunteers interested in going, but should you choose to visit you will be blown away by the incredible panoramic views visible from atop of one of the region's most impressive vantage points: 'Big Daddy', best known as one of the highest dunes on earth.



Itinerary

Day 1

Upon arrival into Windhoek Airport, you will be met by a project representative and transferred to your overnight accommodation at the Namibia Wildlife Sanctuary. The transfer takes around 45 minutes. Once at the sanctuary, you will spend some time getting to know your fellow volunteers and the project staff before settling in for the night.

Day 2

Your second day on the project will see you transferring from the wildlife sanctuary to the research site at Neuras. The drive will take around 4.5 hours and leads you through the stunning Namibian landscape. Once at the research site, you will settle in for dinner with your group before getting some rest in preparation of the days ahead.

Days 3-15

For the next two weeks, you will engage in a range of volunteer activities designed to aid conservation efforts in the Neuras region, and you will also help to support a range of activities in the hopes of combatting the human-animal conflict, from setting camera traps to engaging in outreach with local farmers.

Day 16

After enjoying one final breakfast at the Neuras research site, you will be transferred back to the wildlife sanctuary, where you will spend the evening with your fellow volunteers. Share stories, exchange photos or just unwind with a drink in hand, as your time on the project has almost come to an end!

Day 17

On your final day, you will be transferred back to Windhoek Airport in order to catch your flight home, or to continue with your own independent travel plans. If, however, you are staying in the country, you may be able to be dropped off at an alternate address in Windhoek. Wherever you're headed next, you will be sure to leave the project with some great memories!



Accommodation

During the project, you will stay in a fixed, twin-share tent, which is raised on a platform and located across from natural springs. Your tent will be shared on a same-sex basis, unless you are volunteering as a couple. There are three outdoor bathrooms which are shared by volunteers, and you will have access to hot showers (please note that these are heated by solar geysers, so hot water can at times be intermittent). Should you need to charge your phone, camera or other devices, electricity is available in the main volunteer building, though do please note that there is no mobile reception in the region.

Also located on-site are a number of stone chalets; each chalet comes equipped with an en-suite bathroom and will be shared on either a twin or double basis. Depending on availability, you may be able to upgrade at an additional fee, so please speak with a member of our travel team for more information.



Food & Drink

All volunteers on the project receive three balanced meals per day. Examples of breakfast include cereals, bread, spreads and fruit; while lunch can vary between wraps, burgers, pastas and a variety of salads. Finally, dinner will consist of meat or fish with a side of vegetables, pasta, rice or potatoes. A vegetarian option is always available. Tea and coffee are available throughout the day, and other drinks (such as beers and sodas) can be purchased at the onsite bar.

Once per week, you may have the opportunity to enjoy a traditional braai (African barbeque) with your fellow volunteers. Additionally, the project site has its own pizza oven, meaning you may have the chance to cook a delicious pizza of your own creation. Dig in!





What's Included / Not Included

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accommodation• Three meals per day• Airport and overland transfers• Tea, coffee and fruit throughout the day• English-speaking project coordinator• A donation to the project | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flights• Vaccinations• Visas• Travel insurance• Soft or alcoholic drinks and extra snacks |
|--|---|



Volunteer Reviews

Paul

"My two most outstanding memories were releasing a cheetah and taking in the stunning scenery!"



Jennifer

"The thing I will take away with me forever is spending time tracking the leopards..."



Louise

"I cannot choose just one favourite moment, but getting to the top of Sossusvlei has to be one of them!"



Alarna

"I will remember these moments for the rest of my life!"

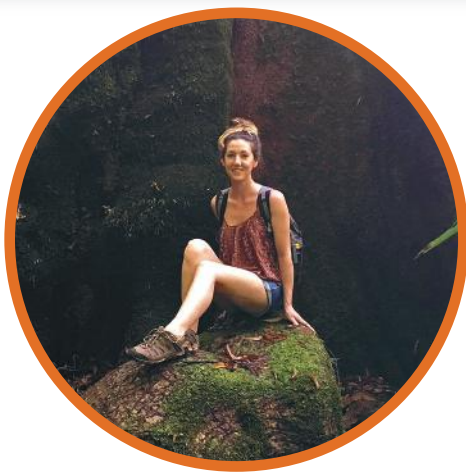


Samuel

"There are too many memories to choose from, and every day was amazing!"



How Can I Volunteer?



**Call Nikita and the team on
+44 (0) 208 885 4987
or visit
www.thegreatprojects.com**

Becoming a volunteer in Namibia is simple, and you can help make a difference to carnivore conservation efforts in just three simple steps:

1. Read through the project information on our website (www.thegreatprojects.com) to find out a little more about Namibia and how long you would like to visit for.
2. Secure your place on the project online by paying the deposit of £195; after this point, you have up to 60 days before the project start date to pay off your remaining balance.
3. You will need to ensure you have the correct visa in place before you travel, and we will be happy to talk you through that process!

It really is that simple, so what are you waiting for? Holiday differently and volunteer with carnivores now!