



A guide to the:
Namibia Wildlife Sanctuary





The Namibia Wildlife Sanctuary

Focus: African Wildlife
Location: Namibia

Start Date: Any Day
Arrival & Starting Point: Windhoek

Situated on the southwest of Africa, Namibia is a nation in possession of magnificent sights, and a fascinating history. It is here that golden deserts meet distant, rugged mountains; where stretches of parched savannah somehow sustain wildlife; and where ancient communities call the wilderness home, despite the changing of times and the beckoning call of cities and towns. Namibia is Africa at its most iconic, and at its finest, and located within the country's diverse surrounds lies the Namibia Wildlife Sanctuary.



From humble beginnings as a patch of farmland in 2005, the sanctuary has earned its reputation as Namibia's leading conservation organisation, taking in countless in-need animals and housing them in a safe environment spanning thousands of hectares. The sanctuary's mantra is to 'return the wild to the wild', and rehabilitation and release remains paramount – but in some instances, animals which are too injured or habituated to return back to their natural environments are instead given a second chance at life, spending the rest of their days being cared for by the sanctuary's dedicated staff. As human-animal conflict persists throughout Namibia, the sanctuary must continue its efforts to care for the country's wildlife and, as a volunteer, you can help to support their cause.

During your time at the sanctuary, you will play a crucial role in providing care for the sanctuary's permanent residents: from aiding the enrichment of cheetahs and baboons through practical activities, to helping feed carnivores, rock dassies and more, your time on the project promises to be both meaningful and worthwhile. In addition to improving the quality of life for the animals, you may also engage in community activities, too: if you choose to help out at the Clever Cubs School, for example, you will help to educate the children of the bushmen, providing the next generation of young minds with the tools to better their lives. From education to enrichment, research to reserve work, a volunteer experience at the Namibia Wildlife Sanctuary is an opportunity that should not be missed - so why not get involved today?

Baboon Walk



Sadly, baboons are thought of as pests in Africa: due to their opportunistic nature, these small primates are often found eating crops, which in turn causes conflict with the local farmers. The farmers may attempt to frighten or even kill the baboons by shooting at them, and this frequently results in members of the troop becoming orphaned. Baby baboons often arrive at the sanctuary having missed out on learning the skills necessary for survival in the wild, so you will step in as a surrogate. Baboon walks are a much-loved element of the project, as this is an opportunity to spend time with the animals whilst doing your part to encourage their natural behaviours. You will take the baboons out into the bush, introducing the adorable young primates to a wilder environment. Expect to be treated as a member of the troop - the baboons will groom, jump on and climb on you during this experience, and some may lay down on you to take a nap!

Food Preparation & Animal Feeding

The sanctuary's animals are a hungry bunch, so you will help to prepare a range of nutritious snacks and meals to be distributed throughout the day. Whether it's arranging a vegetable platter for the herbivores, sourcing milk formula for the sanctuary's youngest residents, or even making the most of leftovers from volunteer mealtimes, your role in keeping the animals fed is just another way of helping the sanctuary to run as smoothly as can be. In addition to playing chef, you will have the opportunity to wait on the animals by feeding them, some being fed by bottle and others just taking the food right out of your hands!



Carnivore Feed

Prepare to face off with the sanctuary's resident carnivores as you help to prepare and throw food to the lions, leopards, cheetahs and wild dogs at the sanctuary, taking the opportunity to learn more about each species through the shared knowledge of your project facilitators as you go. This activity will see your group drive from location to location in order to reach each enclosure, so be sure to take in the beauty of the landscape as you go!

Project Work

The sanctuary is home to a huge number of animals and to ensure the sanctuary runs smoothly, there are a number of cleaning, building and maintenance tasks that need your attention! Whether it's enclosure cleaning, fixing or remodelling enclosures, building watering holes, breaking down old structures or fixing roads and fences, you'll be ensuring all the animals at the sanctuary (including those out on the reserve) have clean, comfortable and safe spaces to live in and are able to enjoy a positive quality of life.



Enrichment



As well as enhancing the quality of life for all animals at the sanctuary, enrichment activities are a crucial step in providing those animals suitable for release with the necessary skills to survive in the wild. You will help the sanctuary team to create a range of fun enrichment items for the animals to use, coming up with ideas designed to stimulate natural behaviours such as foraging and hunting for prey. One of the more unusual creative ideas put together by volunteers was the construction of papier-mâché animals for the carnivores: these certainly caught the eye of the sanctuary's big cats, and the scent of food inside encouraged them to tear them open! Creativity is encouraged, so whether you've got an idea for a puzzle-type enrichment or something entirely different, don't be afraid to put your suggestions forward!

Carnivore Walk

Many cheetahs and caracals at the sanctuary were rescued from a young age and sadly have become too habituated to be released. In order to provide a life mimicking one in the wild for these cats, the sanctuary team, alongside volunteers, accompany some of the cheetahs and caracals on enrichment walks through the bush. The cats have the freedom to safely explore and roam in their native habitat outside their enclosures.



Cheetah Run

Due to the human-animal conflict in Namibia, the sanctuary has taken in a number of cheetahs which have become too habituated to be released: while the cheetahs do maintain certain wild behaviours, they are not fearful of humans, and this is something which could seriously impede their survival in the wild. It is important that the cheetahs are given a positive quality of life at the sanctuary, so as a volunteer, you'll help to observe the cheetahs on an exercise enrichment activity, that sees them chasing a pulley-system lure, which mimics a high-speed hunt in the wild. You'll observe the health (and speed!) of the cheetahs as they fly past you at up to 130 km/h!



Clever Cubs School

As well as providing a home to countless animals, the Namibia Wildlife Sanctuary also shares its grounds with the Clever Cubs School. Here, the children of the local bushmen attend classes to learn English and other skills they'll need in order to attend public school. Choose an optional afternoon to join the children in an hour-long fun educational activity followed by a few sports games! This is a rewarding experience for the volunteers and the children alike as, in Africa, a child's education is not taken for granted. Your time here could help to broaden the minds of Namibia's youngest community members, instilling the importance of wildlife conservation that they can take with them into their adult lives.





Anti-Poaching Experience

Join the Anti-Poaching Unit for a night in the bush monitoring and guarding the resident rhinos! With a highly skilled team by your side, you'll head out into the field to learn the art of map reading, tracking and how best to monitor endangered rhinos, helping to protect them from poaching or snare trap incidents. By camping, cooking together over an open campfire and bonding over rotational night patrols in the wild African bush, you'll see just what it takes to become a member of the APU, as well as learn about the complexities of rhino conservation from dedicated, expert rangers.

Anti-Poaching K9 Dog Unit

Visit the K9 training compound with the anti-poaching unit, where you will learn what it takes to train the specialist dogs that help prevent rhino poaching incidents. Engage in 4 activities starting with simple recall commands. Then, set up a scent test where you will hide contraband such as firearms and drugs for the dogs to locate before carrying out an agility test. Finally, you will participate in poaching interception which replicates real-life situations whereby poachers need to be tracked down in the act!



Reserve Research & Animal Tracking

During your time on the project, you will engage in research efforts whilst exploring the neighbouring reserve. You will join the team in retrieving camera traps, sorting and analysing data, and helping to locate the free-roaming animals including high-profile species such as elephants, rhinos and lions. Considered priority species because of their vulnerable and endangered classifications, it is essential to monitor their numbers, habitat utilisation, health status, feeding patterns and more to aid conservation management decisions, as well as aiding the species' survival worldwide. This is usually done by the use of GPS tracking, though you will also have the incredible opportunity to learn how to locate wildlife using natural methods and instincts such as spoor tracking from a highly skilled San tracker!



Free Time

Your evenings will be spent at leisure, with the workday typically ending around 5:30pm (though some days may be longer). Your weekends are free to be spent as you please, so spend some time getting to know your fellow volunteers or simply take the time to relax! While you may need to spend one of the weekend mornings feeding the animals, the rest of the day can be spent unwinding by the onsite pool, visiting the local town, or heading to the luxury lodge for lunch (please note that visits into town or to the lodge will incur a fee). A traditional braai takes place on Saturday evenings, so why not enjoy a delicious Namibian barbeque with your team?



Reserve Research Sites

As well as caring for the animals at the sanctuary, the project also has a number of research sites further afield where they are able to release wildlife and contribute to vital conservation efforts that benefit Namibia's wildlife as a whole. The research sites allow the teams to monitor and gather data on how animals utilise their habitat in the wild. They can then implement this into the rehabilitation process of rescued wildlife, ensuring they have the skills that may facilitate their release, which helps the sanctuary keep the ethos of "returning the wild to the wild". If you are volunteering at the sanctuary for longer than two weeks, for an additional cost why not swap a week at one of the incredible research sites?



Hyenas and Jackals

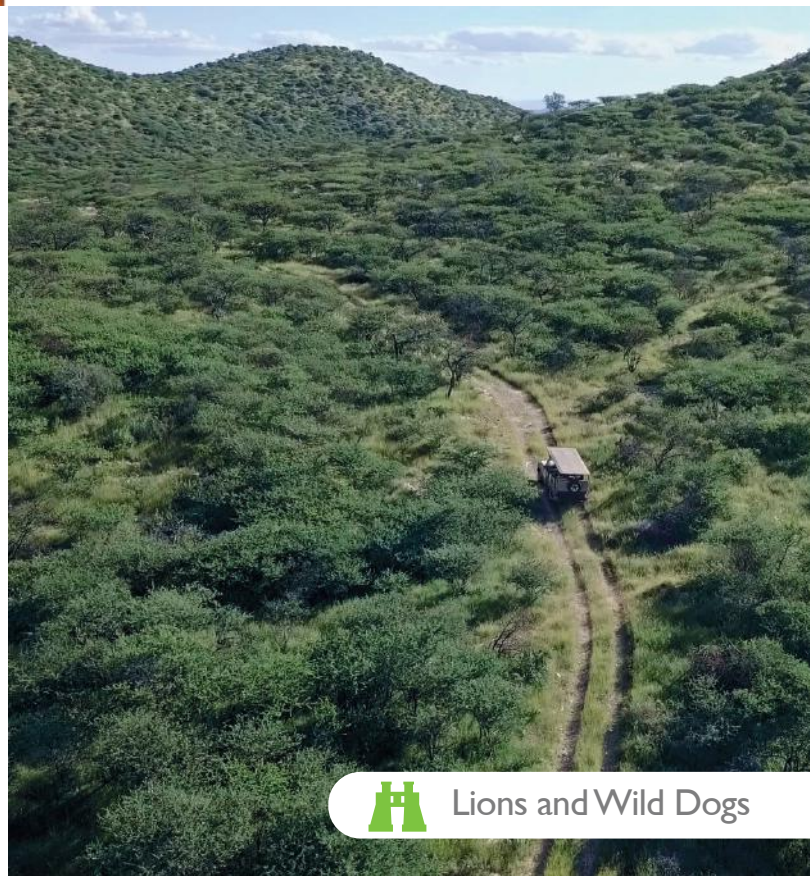


Kanaan Research Site

Previously used as a filming and photography location due to its stunning desert backdrops, this 33,000-hectare research site is home to more than just breath-taking views, as it also houses a wide variety of wildlife from spotted hyenas, black-backed jackals and more! As a volunteer here, your focus will be out in the field as you take part in a range of activities such as mapping, radio telemetry, camera trapping and game counts to record statistical data on free-roaming brown and spotted hyenas. Volunteers will help with replacing harmful fencing with wire braided alternatives which allows free movement for wildlife. At Kanaan, you'll have the opportunity to aid carnivore conservation research whilst enjoying what this stunning location has to offer; dramatic sundowners, star-filled skies and radical sandboarding down the dunes themselves, so why not enquire with the travel team today!

TimBila Nature Reserve

Known as "the land of second chances", the TimBila Nature Reserve has an exciting future ahead which you could be a part of creating! The story of this reserve starts with two lion cubs who lost their mother to human-wildlife conflict, rescued by the sanctuary team, the lions have been given a new lease on life through their release onto TimBila's 30,000-hectares of land. Alongside lions, wild dogs have also been released here and as a volunteer, it is your job to track and monitor them! Through a number of tracking and monitoring activities such as radio telemetry tracking, camera trapping and game counts, you'll help to collect vital data on how the wildlife is adapting, as well as contributing to research for the future introduction of elephants and rhinos into the area. If you are lucky, you may even participate in the release of wildlife onto this incredible reserve!



Lions and Wild Dogs

Itinerary

Day 1

Once you have arrived into Windhoek Airport, you will be collected by a project representative and transferred to the sanctuary. Upon arrival, you will spend some time settling into your accommodation and meeting your fellow volunteers.

Days 2-14

These are your project days, during which you will take part in a range of the activities listed in this guide. An example of a daily itinerary can be seen below, though please note that this is just an example and is subject to change.

Day 15

Today is your final day, so bid farewell to your fellow volunteers and the animals before taking a private transfer back to Windhoek Airport. If you are staying at the project for longer than two weeks, your itinerary will repeat.

A breakdown of a typical day at the sanctuary

7:00am

Enjoy a breakfast of your choosing, whether it be cereal, toast or a piece of fruit to wake you up.

8:00am

Take part in the morning meeting alongside your fellow volunteers. The project coordinators will split your group into smaller teams, allocating the day's activities accordingly as to ensure that everybody gets an equal opportunity to take part in each activity during their time on the project.

8:15am

It's now time for your first activity of the day! What you will get up to will vary throughout the week, but you could find yourself going on an enrichment walk with the resident baboons, helping to prepare food for the sanctuary's animals, or taking part in the maintenance of the enclosures, to name but a few examples.

1:00pm

When the sun is at its highest point, you will return to the project site for lunch. Enjoy some free time to relax, drink plenty of water, and prepare yourself for the afternoon's activities!

2:30pm

Attend a group meeting and find out which activities you'll be helping out with this afternoon. Will you be aiding enrichment, heading out to the reserve on horseback, or taking part in the construction of a new enclosure? Whatever you get up to, you'll continue working on your activity until around 5:30pm, when the working day draws to a close.

6:00pm

After a day's work, you'll most likely have worked up quite an appetite! Enjoy a delicious meal with your group before spending the rest of your evening at leisure. Head over to the lapa with your fellow volunteers, grab a beer at the activity centre, or simply head back to your accommodation for an early night ahead of your next day's activities.

Accommodation

During your time on the project, you will stay in fixed canvas cabins/tents, complete with power sockets and electric lights. Your accommodation will be shared on a same-sex basis, with two people per room. Your room will have private access to an en-suite, open-roofed bathroom facility, with western-style toilets and showers. The water is heated by solar energy, so please bear in mind that hot water may sometimes be restricted.

Alternatively, you may choose to upgrade your accommodation to stay in a chalet in the luxury lodge. There are six chalets available at the lodge, each boasting large twin or double beds, air conditioning and an en-suite bathroom. The chalets also have their own private veranda with views overlooking the beautiful bushveld. If you are interested in upgrading, we would recommend doing so as a treat, with either a night or a weekend spent here. Even if you are not staying at the luxury lodge, many volunteers choose to visit for a delicious buffet lunch on Sundays. Please contact a member of the travel team to learn more.



Food & Drink

Three meals a day are provided, with water, tea and coffee freely available throughout the day. Breakfast includes toast and cereal; lunch includes pasta, wraps, burgers or stir-fry; and evening dinners include meat, fish, vegetables, rice, potatoes and pasta. On weekends there is often a braai (barbeque). A vegetarian option is always available, and vegans can be catered for upon request. Other drinks and snacks can be purchased at the sanctuary (Monday to Saturday) for an additional fee including alcoholic beverages.



What's Included

- Airport transfers
- Accommodation
- Three meals per day
- Tea and coffee
- English-speaking project coordinator
- A donation to the project
- Laundry service
- Wi-Fi

Not Included

- Flights
- Vaccinations
- Visas
- Soft or alcoholic drinks and extra snacks

Volunteer Reviews

Mark

"The memories of the wonderful friends I made and the interaction with all the animals I cared for will stay with me forever. Every day became better than the last!"



Stacey

"If you love wildlife, conservation, Africa and have an open mind, then THIS is the project for you!"



Shirena

"I have so many favourite moments to pick just one: helping to move a sedated leopard, seeing a giraffe wandering past when having dinner, and having a warthog sunbathe with us at the pool!"





What Next?

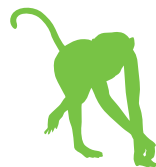
Becoming a volunteer at the Namibia Wildlife Sanctuary is simple, and you can help make a difference to wildlife conservation efforts in just a few simple steps...



Visit the website to select your start date and how long you would like to volunteer for.



Secure your place online by paying a deposit of £195. You'll have up to 60 days before your start date to pay your remaining balance.



Prepare for your trip and ask your dedicated travel expert any questions before packing your bags and heading off to Namibia!



Finally, have an incredible time and don't forget to send in or tag us in your photos!

#thegreatprojects



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