



A guide to the:
SanWild Sanctuary & Reserve



The SanWild Sanctuary & Reserve

Focus: Big '5'

Location: South Africa

Start Date: Every Monday

Arrival & Starting Point: Hoedspruit

Draped in orange-hued, dreamy skies and adorned with the world's most iconic wildlife, a 3,000-hectare reserve lies deep within the bushvelds of South Africa, beckoning home the country's most vulnerable, forgotten, and misplaced fauna. The SanWild Sanctuary & Reserve offers more than just a unique experience as it seamlessly blends together luxury safari, meaningful conservation and adventures born from the wilderness.

Founded in 1998, a small plot of land blossomed into the sprawling reserve and rehabilitative refuge it is today, all under the caring guidance of a late and prominent conservation activist. After witnessing the commercialisation of wildlife leading to callous exploitation, wildlife ambassador Louise Joubert established the SanWild Wildlife Trust and Rehabilitation Centre to ensure that any animal that can go home, will go home and that any too injured or habituated to survive on its own will live in a safe, wild replica.



Today under Louise's legacy, the sanctuary has numerous ongoing initiatives holding significant conservational value, including the Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre, Large Predator Sanctuaries, Elephant Management Project, and the Wildlife Gene Exchange Program, to name but a few.

During your time on this project, you'll directly engage in a wide range of hands-on activities, daily operations and research initiatives. With no two days the same, you'll care for orphaned and injured animals by preparing food, feeding and cleaning enclosures, undertaking rescues, translocations and assisting with veterinarian care when necessary. You'll also help with the tracking and monitoring of cheetahs, rhinos and elephants, participating in counter-poaching patrols, and so much more. All this, alongside experiencing authentic African rites of passage such as game drives, sundowners and braais, and finishing the day heading back to stunning accommodation rivalling any 5* luxury hotel.

Make today the day you book a truly unforgettable experience in a story-book location where you can make your conservational mark, and in turn, you can be certain that the SanWild Sanctuary & Reserve will make its mark on you.

Rescue & Rehabilitation Centre



Sadly, it is no secret that many iconic African species often fall victim to human-wildlife conflict. That's why the rehabilitation and rescue centre is the cornerstone of the sanctuary. Providing a refuge for injured, orphaned and traumatised wildlife, the centre aims to provide true rehabilitation, resulting in release back into the wild - where these animals belong. Unfortunately, some animals arrive at the centre too injured or habituated to be released. If an animal can no longer survive in the wild on its own, the sanctuary provides a forever home mimicking natural surroundings, diets and one that encourages natural behaviours. As a volunteer, you'll help with food preparation, feeding the animals, and enclosure cleaning, alongside attending rescues/ releases and veterinary procedures should they arise. The care you'll provide will give vulnerable wildlife, such as an orphaned baboon, injured giraffe or rescued cheetah, a second chance at life.

Large Predator Care

The sanctuary has a number of large predators, such as lions and spotted hyenas, who have been rescued from lion-hunting farms, run-down zoos, and circuses from around the globe. Many no longer possess important survival behaviours and lack fear towards humans, so they cannot be released. Instead, they live in huge natural enclosures on site. Volunteers will be involved in the care of these animals, ensuring they receive all the necessities, such as proper nutrition, clean enclosures, and veterinarian aid when needed. This is a chance to face these incredible creatures, and learn first-hand what it takes to rescue, care for and protect animals previously subjected to exploitative entertainment.



Cheetah Monitoring

The SanWild Cheetah Project is an integral part of a national breeding program dedicated to the conservation of wild and free-range cheetahs. To aid in research endeavours, the cheetahs are tracked and monitored with radio collars while they meander around the grounds. While only classified as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, their rapidly declining numbers are causing alarm. This reputable project collaborates with other sanctuaries and reserves to ensure their survival for future generations, even playing a significant role in reintroducing wild cheetahs back into Malawi! You, alongside your fellow volunteers, will take part in weekly tracking and monitoring of the cheetahs within the greater wildlife sanctuary and will note their preferred prey, hunting areas, hunting frequency, mating, and new births - perhaps even having the privilege of observing cubs learning life lessons from their mothers!



Elephant Management

In 2006, the sanctuary rescued an elephant herd from a disbanded game reserve in the Eastern Cape and devised an Environmental Impact Study and Elephant Management Plan to ensure the best care of the elephants. The report concluded that a 3-000 hectare reserve has a carrying capacity for 16 elephants - currently, 13 elephants call the sanctuary home. Volunteers help monitor the herd and with proactive measures to control overcrowding, which may include assisting in the administration of contraceptive injections given to the herd's females every few months to prevent pregnancies. You'll also contribute to the habitat protection plan, which includes erecting and maintaining electric fences that are in place to deter elephants from certain tree species, and wire mesh used to protect specific tree bark. The project's also exploring new innovative and protective solutions, such as placing beehives on targeted trees or surrounding them with miniature granite pyramids to deter elephants from stepping too closely. You'll also help to source and replant endangered tree species. As a volunteer, you'll be actively involved in all areas of research, habitat protection, and veterinarian interventions, allowing you unique insight and hands-on experience in environmental conservation and reserve management - all while in the presence of these emotive and beautiful animals.



Rhino Protection

Working diligently to protect the SanWild rhinos, the sanctuary operates a high-risk/low-reward strategy to deter poachers. To increase the risk of getting caught, the sanctuary invested in a high-tech fencing system around the reserve, which is monitored around the clock and patrolled daily, and in order to reduce the financial reward, the project team made the tough decision to dehorn all the rhinos - this alone reduced poaching attacks by more than 95% since mid-2020. Volunteers will assist the Game Rangers in fence patrols, tracking the rhinos on foot to monitor their condition, and helping in the operations room if poachers are pursued. For safety reasons, volunteers are not allowed to accompany Game Rangers or security personnel during actual pursuits but will be able to assist by monitoring cameras and dispatching rangers from the control room!



Wildlife Gene Exchange

Gene exchange programs are necessary for the health of wildlife populations throughout much of South Africa as free-range wilderness areas have become scarce, except for in the greater Kruger National Park. During your time on the project, you may have a chance to assist in the capture, translocation, and release of animals between game reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, game farms, or other nearby properties. These relocations are essential to ensure genetic diversity, preventing in-breeding and sustaining the future of wildlife in South Africa.





Habitat Restoration

Up until 30 years ago, the grounds of the sanctuary existed as a cattle ranch, and farming caused much of the land to become overgrazed, resulting in an invasion of sickle bush thorns and soil erosion. The Habitat Rehabilitation Project aims to restore a piece of history and reverse the land to its once-wild state. Volunteers help to do this by cutting back sickle bush, applying herbicide to the stumps, stacking branches on bare patches of soil to create seed traps, and planting grass and tree seedlings for when the rain arrives. With the re-introduction of endangered trees and plants, you'll have a hand in creating an essential and biodiverse habitat for indigenous wildlife in the region.

Counter Poaching Patrols

As a volunteer, you'll participate in counter-poaching patrols, not only on sanctuary grounds but also in neighbouring reserves. If any signs of human activity are discovered, it often indicates acts of poaching. Volunteers may then have the opportunity to trace the movements of the intruders and remove animal traps and snares. As a fun extra, volunteers can attend the Down to the Wire workshop in Hoedspruit, to turn those removed snares into jewellery! These counter-poaching patrols are incredibly important in aiding wildlife conservation, and by partaking, you may leave with a small souvenir reminding you of the legacy you left in Africa.



Free time

Nestled in the heart of a scenic wonderland, the sanctuary's location provides the perfect starting point for exploring a plethora of exciting attractions in your free time. From hot air ballooning and helicopter tours to hiking, biking and riding trails, and a trip to the Leydsdorp Giant Baobab Tree, there are so many excursions you can take part in. While these activities are not included in volunteer program fees, the on-site team are more than happy to help you arrange them, leaving you free to sit back and enjoy the adventure. You can even explore the Elephant Graveyard and hand-excavated gold mines dating over 130 years without leaving the SanWild property!



Itinerary

Day 1

You'll arrive at Hoedspruit Airport and will be greeted by a project representative. After everyone is collected, you'll head to the project site, which will take approximately 40 minutes. Upon arrival, you'll be able to meet the team and get settled in before starting your volunteering adventure the following day.

Day 2 -14

The excitement begins! These are your project days which will see you adventuring around the reserve. Below is a daily itinerary example - though please note activities and itineraries may drastically change as animal rescues and rehabilitation are event-based and can not be planned for.

Day 15

Today, you'll head back to the airport for your return flight home or to commence your onward travel plans. While your time at the sanctuary has come to an end, you'll leave with a wealth of memories, new friends and the knowledge that you had a significant impact aiding the wildlife of South Africa.

Example Daily Breakdown

6:00am

It's a bright and early start with plenty of time to grab a tea or coffee before heading out on a morning game drive!

8:00am

You'll get back to the lodge and sit down to a hearty breakfast before getting yourself ready for the first project of the day.

9:00am

Your morning project may see you preparing food for the rehabilitation centre residents, tracking cheetahs through the bush or even prepping an animal for a translocation!

1:00pm

Enjoy your lunch break with a great meal and perhaps even a nap before heading out for more conservation efforts.

2:00pm

For the second activity, you could be sweeping the reserve for snares with the Game Rangers, finding innovative solutions to protect trees from destructive elephants, or maybe feeding lions and hyenas!

4:00pm

After completing your second project of the day, volunteers may head out on an afternoon game drive spotting different wildlife and taking in the stunning landscapes.

6:00pm

No trip to South Africa would be complete without experiencing a sundowner! Before dinner, you may head out to a comfortable spot to watch the sunset - a perfect way to relax after a busy day.

7:00pm

Time for dinner and socialising. After a meal with your fellow volunteers, the evening is at your leisure, and you can enjoy the luxuries of the lodge, including the lounge, bar, fire pit, pool, and wooden deck overlooking a watering hole!

Accommodation

Experience glamping like never before! The luxury lodge offers volunteers a two-bedded safari tent (allocated on a same-sex basis unless joining as a couple) with an en-suite bathroom and daily cleaning services. Volunteers also have access to a stunning lounge, bar, dining room, lapa (fire-pit), pool, and wood deck with perfect views of a watering hole often frequented by roaming wildlife! Laundry service, Wi-Fi, and complimentary coffee and tea are all included in the project price. Finally, for an extra touch of luxury and more privacy, there's always the option of upgrading to a Deluxe safari tent with an open-plan bathroom, bar fridge, coffee station, and plush furnishings. This is the perfect project to make a difference while indulging in some extra comforts not commonly found at home!



Standard



Upgraded

Food & Drink

Immerse yourself in the warm South African hospitality with three meals provided a day by the lodge staff. During your stay, you'll have the chance to delight in Bush braais (barbecues) set out in the wilderness, and fireside social time, savouring local delicacies like potjiekos! You can always join in and lend a hand in the kitchen - learning how to make traditional meals and sharing your own cooking tips. When dining at the lodge, you'll be served up a feast in the dining hall or out on the deck overlooking the watering hole while you listen to the hypnotic sound of roaring lions in the distance. Volunteers can also venture out to the nearby Leydsdorp Hotel, Kalima Game Reserve and Meranti Restaurant, but please bear in mind that these meals and activities are not part of the volunteer program fees. Soft drinks and alcoholic beverages are not included but can be purchased from the bar in the main building.



What's Included

- Accommodation
- Three meals per day
- Transfers to and from the airport
- A laundry and cleaning service
- Tea and coffee
- A donation to the project

Not Included

- Flights
- Visas
- Travel insurance
- Alcoholic/ soft beverages and snacks

What Next?

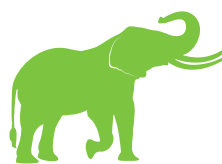
Becoming a volunteer at the SanWild Sanctuary & Reserve is simple, and you can help make a difference to wildlife conservation efforts in just a few simple steps...



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 South Africa!



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

#thegreatprojects



www.thegreatprojects.com

+44 (0)208 885 4987