



A guide to the:  
*Shamwari Conservation Experience*







# *Shamwari Conservation Experience*

**Focus:** Africa's 'Big 5'

**Location:** South Africa

**Start Date:** Every Monday

**Arrival & Starting Point:** Port Elizabeth

A once small and neglected 1,200-hectare farm sat derelict in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, over-farmed and overgrazed, the land lay lifeless until it was purchased in 1990. This marked the humble beginnings of the now renowned 25,000-hectare Shamwari Game Reserve, proud home to the 'Big 5'.

A passionate team of conservationists, with help from volunteers, worked tirelessly over the course of 25 years to restore this desolate landscape to its former glory. The successful reintroduction of an array of endemic flora and fauna species means the reserve is once again bursting with life, and the land itself has been declared a protected environment. Shamwari has continued to blossom and early on became a pioneer for environmental education. Today, the reserve is home to 6 lodges, an explorer camp and 2 education and rehabilitation facilities, including the highly acclaimed Born Free Foundation.



This project aims to provide an action-packed experience of conservation management and education, with the intended outcome of creating sustainability for generations to come. Whilst the achievements of Shamwari have had a profound impact, there is more to be done to combat the continuous threats of environmental degradation and wildlife crime.

As a volunteer, you'll participate in a range of exciting and varied activities that will aid in the protection of this biodiverse ecosystem and the vulnerable wildlife that reside here. From tracking high-profile predators and monitoring endangered species, to taking part in community initiatives and habitat restorations, you'll witness some of the world's most iconic animals up close, whilst contributing to their future survival. With no two days the same, this conservation experience will give you the opportunity to create lifelong memories, as well as leaving a legacy for Africa's most loved wildlife.



## Game Monitoring

Throughout your time on the project, you will embark on a number of game drives in search of the 'Big 5' and many of the other animal species that call Shamwari home. Heading out into the field, you'll pay extra attention to the resident predators, as well as the elephant and rhino herds, as you help to collect vital observational data. By monitoring the family structures, feeding habits and spatial ecology, the data you provide will enable the project team to gain a better understanding on the health and well-being of the animals and whether they are simply surviving, or thriving on the reserve. Game drives are an exciting part of any African adventure so be sure to take your camera along for the ride!

## Camera Traps & Telemetry Tracking

Camera traps are a vital tool in the realm of conservation, as they capture moments which may otherwise be missed! The cameras provide an insight into all of Shamwari's wildlife, especially the nocturnal species that reside here. The data recorded by these cameras help the reserve collect a more accurate record of predator vs prey populations, as well as helping to monitor the behaviour of elusive animals such as leopards and hyenas. You'll help the team by setting up camera traps, changing the batteries and uploading the recorded information onto a database.

Telemetry (or tracking using remote sources such as wire or radio) is used to track high-profile species like cheetahs and leopards. The data recorded from this activity can show the roaming range of these animals, which is useful information that can aid the reduction of human-animal conflict with neighbouring farms and the livestock that these carnivores could pose a threat to.



## Alien Plant Control & Land Restoration

The land at Shamwari has been damaged over the years from being overgrazed and over-farmed, and due to the arrival of alien plant species. The reserve's natural flora has struggled to compete with alien plants, which pose a significant threat to the ecosystem as a result of herbivorous species being left without an appropriate food source. Armed with machetes and heavy-duty gloves, you'll help to restore the balance of the ecosystem and reinstate the area's natural biodiversity - one 'chop' at a time! Additionally, you will help to ensure that the reserve is free of any old structures, such as fencing with barbed wire that could cause harm to the wildlife.







## Research Projects

In conjunction with both academic and foreign research institutions, the Shamwari team carry out a number of fascinating research initiatives which you may be invited to be a part of! From testing the fertility of Shamwari's elephants to capturing data on species such as the brown hyena, you could be part of unlocking essential information that further aids the conservation of species not just found on the reserve, but throughout the whole continent!

## Born Free Foundation

The Born Free Foundation is well-known for its tireless efforts to protect a range of wildlife species, with a mission statement to 'keep wildlife in the wild'. Tragically, this isn't always possible, as many animals across the globe are still subject to being captured and used for entertainment. The foundation has aimed to combat the use of animals in circuses and other unnecessary captive situations, beginning with an education facility and sanctuary built on the grounds of the Shamwari reserve. Rescued leopards and lions live out the rest of their days in safe enclosures, with plenty of space to enjoy a sense of relative freedom, unlike the confines they had once known. Tourists and members of the local community can come to learn about wildlife and the suffering they endure in captivity. Volunteers take a private tour of the sanctuary, learning the ins & outs of big cat care from experts in the field and an international charity making waves in the conservation world.



## Animal Rehabilitation

The Shamwari Animal Rehabilitation Centre (ARC) was created in order to aid any injured animals found either on the reserve or in the surrounding environment. Here, the animals will receive the level of short-term care required to allow them to return back into the wild, with a range of bird and mammal species each being supported by the dedicated team. You'll be given a personalised behind-the-scenes tour of the centre in order to learn more about what it takes to provide ongoing care to South Africa's injured wildlife, earning you a valuable insight into some of the wildlife and human-animal conflict challenges which are prevalent throughout the country. Depending on necessity, you may also be invited to assist the veterinary nursing team at the centre, but please note that this is not a guaranteed part of your itinerary.



## Community Projects

You will soon recognise that protecting local environments and wildlife isn't just a responsibility on the reserve, education plays an important role too! Volunteers spend time with members of the community, teaching them about their role in conserving their local biodiversity and resources, as well as the benefits of doing so. These projects can involve the maintenance of vegetable gardens and recycling, while other activities which will benefit the community include painting classrooms, building jungle gyms, and playing games or sports with the local children.



## Additional Activities

On this action-packed project, there will be plenty of memory-making moments that will last a lifetime! You may find yourself in awe when joining an immersive nature walk or sleeping under the stars on the 'Big 5' reserve. You may feel a jolt of adrenaline when assisting with night and anti-poaching patrols or should the need arise, game capture! You may even have the opportunity in aiding wildlife veterinary work. With so much to see and do, this project is a true conservation experience!

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# Itinerary

## Day 1

Upon arrival into Port Elizabeth Airport, you will be collected and transferred to the project site (approximately 1 hour away). Once you have arrived, you will receive a welcome orientation and a briefing of the project's aims. You will have the rest of the day to settle in and meet the other volunteers.

## Days 2-14

These are your project days, during which you will take part in a number of exciting activities ranging from game drives and monitoring through to alien plant control and helping the community! Make sure you're well-rested and raring to go, as each day starts with breakfast from 7am. The working day runs from 8am-5pm and your weekends are free to spend as you wish. If you'd like to see more of what South Africa has to offer on your days off, just speak to a member of the project team, who'll be happy to suggest things to do!

## Day 15

Unfortunately, today is your final day. Once you have said goodbye to your fellow volunteers and the project team, you will transfer back to airport for your flight home, or to commence your independent travel plans.

## A breakdown of a typical day at the project

**7:00am**

Enjoy a breakfast of your choosing, whether it be cereal, toast, muesli or muffins to get you ready for the day ahead!

**8:00am**

It's time to start the day! You'll meet with the project coordinator to find out your morning activity. You could find yourself out in the field with telemetry equipment in search of elusive animals or analysing the family structure of an elephant herd!

**12:00pm**

Now for a well-deserved rest, at lunch you'll be able to fuel up for the afternoon activity. Take some time to relax and remember to drink plenty of water after a morning under the sun.

**1:00pm**

After lunch, you'll get stuck into an exciting afternoon activity which will see you through until the end of the working day which is usually around 5pm.

**5:00pm**

After a hard day's work, you'll have some time to freshen up before enjoying a readily prepared dinner at your accommodation. Then enjoy the rest of your evening relaxing in the communal areas, before getting a good night's sleep ahead of the next day's adventure!



# Accommodation

You'll be staying in the cosy volunteer accommodation with plenty of amenities to enjoy! There are ten twin-share bedrooms available, each with an en suite bathroom. Rooms are allocated on a same-sex basis, unless you are volunteering as a couple. After an exciting days work, you'll be able to unwind using the great communal facilities including a swimming pool, lounge and entertainment area with cable and DVD access or the boma and fire pit area. A laundry service is provided once a week, and free Wi-Fi is available.



# Food & Drink

Three meals per day are provided for you on this project, with most meals being served in a buffet style. On occasion, your meals may be packed up and taken out into the field in order to allow you to make the most of the day's activities, otherwise you will join your group in the dining room. Vegetarians and vegans can be catered for but please let us know of any dietary requirements in advance so the appropriate food can be purchased for you.

A cooked breakfast is prepared for you once per week, otherwise foods such as cereal and toast are provided. Lunch may consist of sandwiches, wraps and pasta salad, whilst at dinner you may wish to try potjie (stew) or a braai (traditional African barbeque)! Water is available at the volunteer house, while soft drinks and additional snacks can be purchased at the on-site shop.





## What's Included

- Accommodation
- Three meals per day
- Water, tea and coffee
- English speaking project coordinator
- All project activities
- Wi-Fi
- A donation to the project

## Not Included

- Flights
- Travel insurance
- Airport transfers  
(we can arrange these for an additional fee)
- Alcoholic beverages and snacks

## Volunteer Reviews

### Sue

"I'll never forget seeing a cheetah for the first time - not just one, but five! Mum with her cubs lazing in the sun. We were even privileged to see a chase!"



### Louise

"Wow, this has been the best experience of all the projects I've done, and it is so GREAT not to be limited by age or ability. Seeing elephants was both emotional and electrifying"



### Laura

"Everyone was so friendly and welcoming and I have made some great friends. This was my first trip travelling alone and was better than I ever would have expected!"







## *What Next?*

Becoming a volunteer on the Shamwari Conservation Experience 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**



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