

The Great Rhino Rescue Mission

Focus: Rhino Rescue & Relocation

Location: South Africa

Start Date: Select Start Dates

Arrival & Starting Point: Hoedspruit

The historic and ever-looming threats facing rhino populations are sadly widespread and made worse by numerous controversial rhino breeding farms that have popped up all over South Africa in recent years. Many of which are intensively breeding rhinos, and there is no real way to detect those secretly stockpiling rhino horns to gain illegal profit while hiding behind the guise of conservation. As of late, a nearby rhino farm has been savaged by poaching attacks due to its small size and inadequate security. For this reason, the SanWild Sanctuary & Reserve is spearheading critical rescue operations to save a number of these rhinos and relocate them to the safety and expanse of the SanWild reserve, complete with cutting-edge security systems and counter-poaching strategies providing a haven for all animals that reside here.

Due to the complexities and expense of translocation missions, one rhino will be rescued at a time, and a select few missions will take place, so don't miss the chance to become a key player in a strategic operation that not only enhances the rhino's chances of survival but also increases genetic diversity in the SanWild reserve. By introducing new rhinos onto the reserve, they will instinctively breed and increase the population naturally. Once SanWild reaches its rhino capacity, the offspring will be translocated to safe and ethical reserves across Africa as part of the Wildlife Gene Exchange Programme to avoid inbreeding, creating a lasting legacy for rhino conservation for generations to come!

Your journey doesn't end with the rescue mission – immerse yourself in the stunning surroundings of the SanWild reserve. Delve into a variety of daily activities, from tracking and monitoring cheetahs and elephants to caring for rescued lions and hyenas. Your impact extends beyond rhino conservation, allowing you to contribute to the overall well-being of SanWild's diverse and incredible wildlife, including the renowned 'Big 5'. Yet, the heart of this adventure lies in the unique opportunity to peer behind-the-curtain of a rhino rescue mission. From locating and rescuing the rhino to releasing it into the safety of the vast reserve, you'll be actively involved every step of the way. Finally, as a token of appreciation for your pivotal role in this recovery and helping make this mission possible, you and your group will have the honour of naming the rhino!



Itinerary



Day 1 - Arrival

Arriving at Hoedspruit Airport, a representative from the project will be there to welcome you. After your group has been collected, you will transfer to the project site, which is approximately a 40-minute drive. At the SanWild Sanctuary & Reserve, you'll meet the team and have time to settle in before starting your rhino conservation adventure the following day!



Day 2 - Induction & Training

Today, you'll have an induction into sanctuary life and may join in a sanctuary activity, such as feeding the lions or heading out to locate the elephants on the reserve. This afternoon, you will undergo the necessary training, in preparation for the big rescue mission the next day! You will learn the basics of capturing animals, placing a collar, the dehorning process, and how to safely guide a rhino into a translocation trailer.



Day 3 - Rhino Rescue & Relocation

Operation Rhino is a go! Although only located a short distance away, you'll travel to the farm early as darting the rhino in cooler temperatures helps minimise their stress. By lunchtime, the rhino should be on its way to the SanWild and will be released into a holding boma (small enclosure) in the afternoon. Here, the rhino will spend roughly a week acclimatising to its new surroundings. Tonight may be the night you and your fellow volunteers decide on a name for your rhino and can 'cheers' to a successful rescue and a rhino conservation win!

ACTIVITY

RHINO RESCUE & TRANSLOCATION

The rhino capture involves the use of a helicopter to locate the rhino and dart it from the air. The aerial team will then radio the rhino's location to you and the ground team. You'll head out in a land cruiser to find the rhino, assisting the veterinarian with health checks, collaring and, if necessary, dehorning. You'll help load the rhino into the translocation trailer and wave it off as it's safely transported back to the sanctuary and placed in a temporary boma.

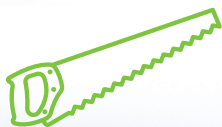




ACTIVITY

RHINO DEHORNING & COLLAR FITTING

As you assist the veterinarian with health checks, you will also help equip the rhino with a tracking collar. SanWild has implemented a 24/7 surveillance and high-tech fencing system to provide a secure life for all their rhinos and wildlife. However, to further protect the rhinos from poaching, the difficult decision was made to dehorn them. This decision has resulted in a decrease of over 95% in poaching attacks on the reserve since mid-2020. If the rhino you are rescuing has a horn, you will help the team in the removal, which is given to the Hoedspruit anti-poaching unit to lock in a secure location.



ACTIVITY

HELICOPTER FLIP

Once you have safely loaded the rhino into the translocation trailer, you'll be offered the chance to embark on a 10-minute helicopter flip. This will provide you with a deeper perspective of the rescue operation from the air, as well as an opportunity to appreciate the stunning landscapes of South Africa!



Itinerary



Days 4-10 - Rhino Care & Sanctuary Work

The rhino will be kept in a holding pen for up to a week for monitoring. During this time, you'll help feed and observe the rhino, preparing it for release into the greater reserve. Alongside participating in the many 'Big 5' and wildlife conservation activities that take place at SanWild daily. You'll also have weekends free to explore the local area, which is known as an experiential playground!

ACTIVITY

RHINO CARE

When the rhino arrives at the SanWild Sanctuary & Reserve, it will be placed in a temporary holding pen called a boma for up to a week. During this time, the rhino will have the chance to adapt to its new environment before being released into the outer reserve. You'll help the sanctuary team closely monitor the rhino's health and well-being during this period and provide food to ensure it's eating well. Once the team are assured the rhino is comfortable and adapting well to its new surroundings, you'll start preparations for release day!

ACTIVITY

SANCTUARY & RESERVE ACTIVITIES

As the rhino you rescued recovers and acclimatises, you'll have the opportunity to participate in the extraordinary work that takes place daily at the sanctuary and reserve. You will play a crucial role in preserving the renowned 'Big 5' and other captivating African wildlife by feeding the lions and hyenas in the sanctuary, tracking cheetahs, rhinos, and elephants, caring for animals in the rescue & rehabilitation centre, joining counter-poaching patrols in neighbouring reserves, and potentially helping with other animal translocations as part of the Wildlife Gene Exchange Programme.



Itinerary



Day 11 - Rhino Release

Today marks a significant moment for the whole team as you release the rhino into the greater reserve, where it will roam freely and live a protected but wild life. This release is a testament to everyone's hard work and dedication towards the rhino's recovery. Later this evening, you can rest and relax knowing your efforts have contributed to protecting and preserving this endangered species for future generations. This will be an exciting and emotional experience that you will treasure forever!



Days 12-14 - Rhino Monitoring & Sanctuary Work

In the next few days, you will be participating in various activities at the SanWild Sanctuary & Reserve, but one of these activities will involve heading out with telemetry equipment to locate your recently released rhino, and to make sure that it is adapting well to its new surroundings!



ACTIVITY

RHINO RELEASE & MONITORING

The rescue operation will be exhilarating, but the most emotional part is the release of the rhino into the larger reserve. Following the release, you'll spend a number of days tracking and locating your rhino to monitor their behaviour and see how they are settling into their new home!



Day 15 - Departure

Sadly, today is your last day, and after saying your goodbyes to your team, you'll transfer back to the airport to catch your flight home or continue your onward travel plans.

Accommodation & Meals



During the rhino rescue extravaganza, you'll be accommodated at SanWild's luxury lodge in a two-bedded safari tent with an en-suite bathroom and daily cleaning service. The tents are allocated on a same-sex basis unless joining as a couple. Volunteers have access to a stunning lounge, bar, dining room, lapa (fire-pit), pool, and wood deck with perfect views of a watering hole with frequent wildlife visitors! Laundry service, Wi-Fi, and complimentary coffee and tea are all included in the project price. For an extra touch of luxury, there's always the option of upgrading to a Deluxe safari tent, which comes with an open-plan bathroom, bar fridge, coffee station, and plush furnishings!



Immerse yourself in warm South African hospitality with three meals provided daily by the lodge staff! You'll have the chance to enjoy Bush braais (barbecues) and savour local delicacies like potjiekos! When dining at the lodge, you'll be served up a feast in the dining hall or on the deck overlooking the reserve and watering hole. Enjoy soft drinks and alcoholic beverages available for purchase from the bar - and if you'd like to dine out, volunteers can explore nearby dining options at their own cost at the nearby Leydsdorp Hotel, Kalima Game Reserve and Meranti Restaurant.



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 on The Great Rhino Rescue Mission is simple, and you can help make a difference to rhino 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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