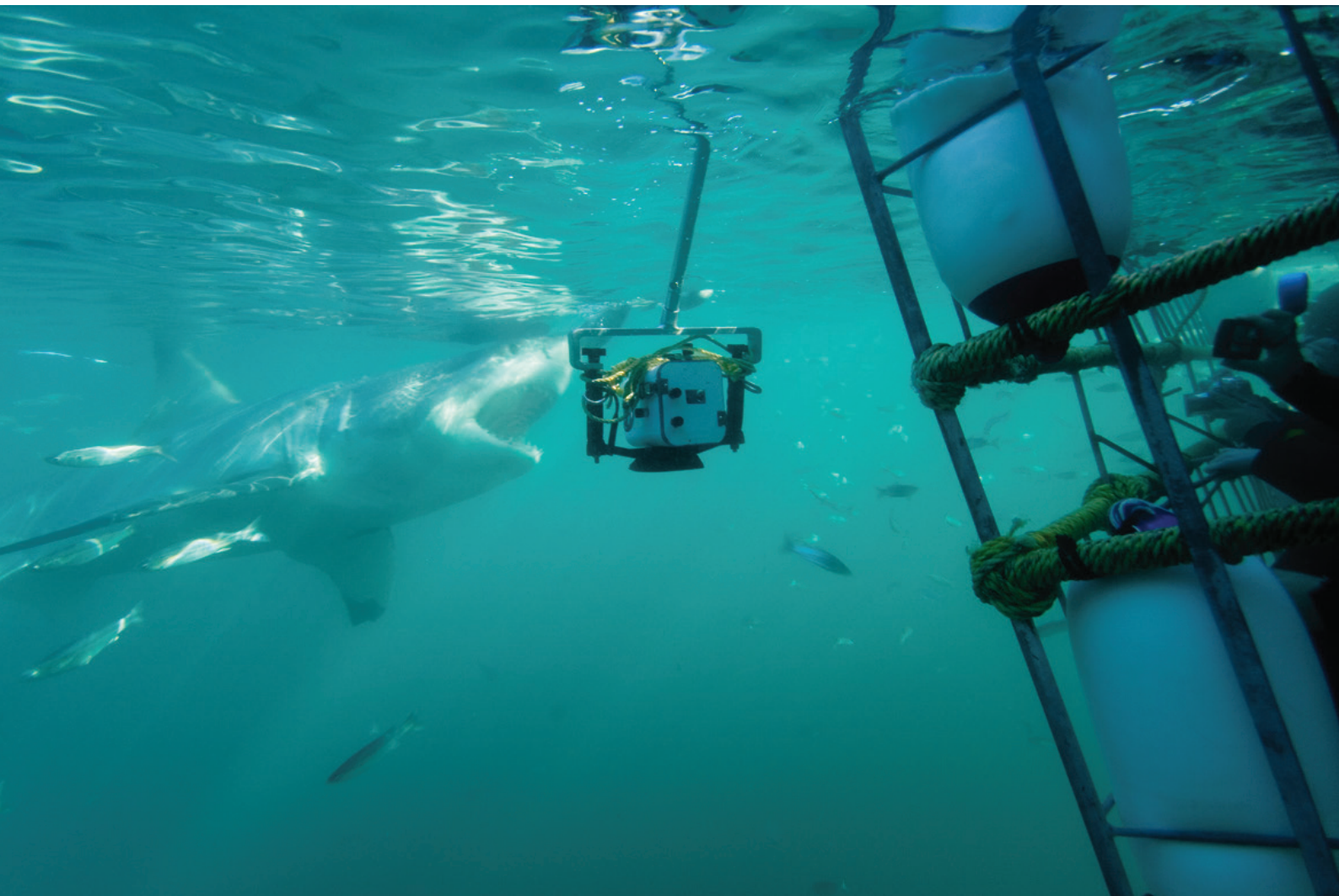




A guide to:

# *The Great White Shark Project*





# The Great White Shark Project

**Focus:** Sharks

**Location:** South Africa

**Start Dates:** 14th & 30th/31st of Every Month

**Arrival & Starting Point:** Cape Town

Lions, rhinos and elephants are the wildlife typically associated with Africa, but down in Gansbaai, a thrill-seekers playground awaits, brimming with extremely misunderstood predators, sharks - including the most famous of all, the great white shark. Despite their great size (up to 23 feet in length and 4 tonnes in weight), great white sharks are not as villainous as many would believe. On average, sharks kill 12 people a year, yet an estimated 100 million sharks are killed by people each year. For this reason, great white sharks have been a protected species in South Africa since 1991.

The Great White Shark Project was founded in 1989 and designed to aid vital research and conservation of this enigmatic species and the numerous shark species that live in local waters. The shark team works hard to change perceptions, teaching the local community and tourists that the fear does not match the facts. Sadly, many sharks fall victim to illegal poaching and hunting, unsustainable fishing practices and environmental degradation that have caused their populations to plummet. This project aims to inspire as many people as possible to become shark ambassadors and ocean defenders!



As a volunteer, you'll learn new skills to collect data on free-swimming great white sharks, bronze whaler sharks, and seven-gill cow sharks. You may possibly assist the shark team with tagging smaller species, such as pyjama and leopard sharks. Become a shark champion and help to teach visitors and local school children the importance of shark and marine conservation. Volunteers also have the 'bucket list' experience many of us dream of – cage diving! You may just witness a great white shark up close, helping you to truly appreciate these apex predators.

This project also offers the opportunity to see an abundance of other fascinating wildlife. Alongside various shark species, you may be lucky enough to spot southern right whales, African penguins, Cape fur seals and common dolphins. So, when you're out at sea, it's not only a cage diving expedition but an ocean safari! The boat trips usually take place from two islands - Dyer Island and Geyser Rock. The stretch of water connecting the two is referred to as Shark Alley as it happens to be the breeding ground for over 60,000 Cape fur seals, attracting a huge number of sharks.

Join us on an adrenaline-filled, educational adventure and help shine a light on the vulnerability of great white sharks.





## Cage Diving

This is your opportunity to get up close and personal with the most misunderstood predator of the sea! During your time on the project you'll have multiple opportunities to go cage diving using a specially-designed steel cage. With up to four other people you will be submerged into the water alongside these creatures of the deep, and while in the cage, you will take observational notes on the sharks' sex, size, markings and behaviour in a dive lasting approximately 20 minutes. This is the perfect experience for those daring volunteers looking for the adrenaline rush of a lifetime!

## Data Collection

Through a series of science lectures and discussions with the resident marine biologist, you'll learn the art of collecting data on free-swimming sharks. At sea, volunteers will put their teaching to the test, helping to record data on shark behaviour, recognition and interactions around the boat. This vital data will be stored on a global database that will help shed light on the migration patterns and populations of this complex species. In an informal environment, you'll learn about common great white shark behaviours, their biology and why further research is urgently needed.



## Small Shark Tagging

In January 2019, The Great White Shark Project began assisting the Oceanographic Research Institute's Cooperative Fish Tagging Project (ORI-CFTP). This long-term environmental project was set up to help conserve South Africa's fish resources and collect data on the population trends of endemic small shark species. Volunteers will be part of the process helping to identify species including pyjama sharks, leopard catsharks and puffadder shysharks when snorkelling just off shore in the kelp forests. This is an excellent opportunity for you to learn specific skills such as species identification, shark handling and tagging techniques.

## Basic Seamanship

You'll become part of the crew on this project so while you are finding your sea legs, you will also be taught a series of basic seamanship skills! Working alongside the shark team, volunteers will help to ready the boat for tourist trips. From boat maintenance to cage and anchor deployment, as well as general packing and cleaning for each trip, you'll learn the ropes and receive a certificate of accomplishment before you leave!





## Monitoring Other Species



Gansbaai is home to a unique marine ecosystem and while the project focuses on great white sharks, there are a number of other marine species that the team take observational data on. Currently, the team are recording data on two elasmobranch species: bronze whaler sharks and short-tail stingrays. This data will help to monitor the populations of whaler sharks and stingrays in the area and determine if environmental or seasonal factors affect sightings and activity. You will help to identify the marine life and record data such as sex, size, markings and behaviour. The project will also collect observational data on other species of this kind that you may encounter.

## Swop Shop

On Tuesdays, volunteers assist at the 'Swop Shop', which is an educational initiative designed to teach the local children the importance of recycling. As a volunteer, you'll help to encourage the children to collect recyclable items and exchange them for 'points' which they can spend on school stationery, basic necessities and clothing. Not only does this teach the children to be environmentally conscious, but also provides them with a sense of responsibility and pride in their achievements.



## Butterfly Centre

Once a month, volunteers take a field trip to the Butterfly Centre, home to an early learning outreach program for children with conditions such as autism. Volunteers take this opportunity to give an educational talk on the importance of the ocean and marine conservation, helping the children to understand more about the world that they live in. After, you'll spend some time getting to know the children and playing educational games on the playground.





# Excursions

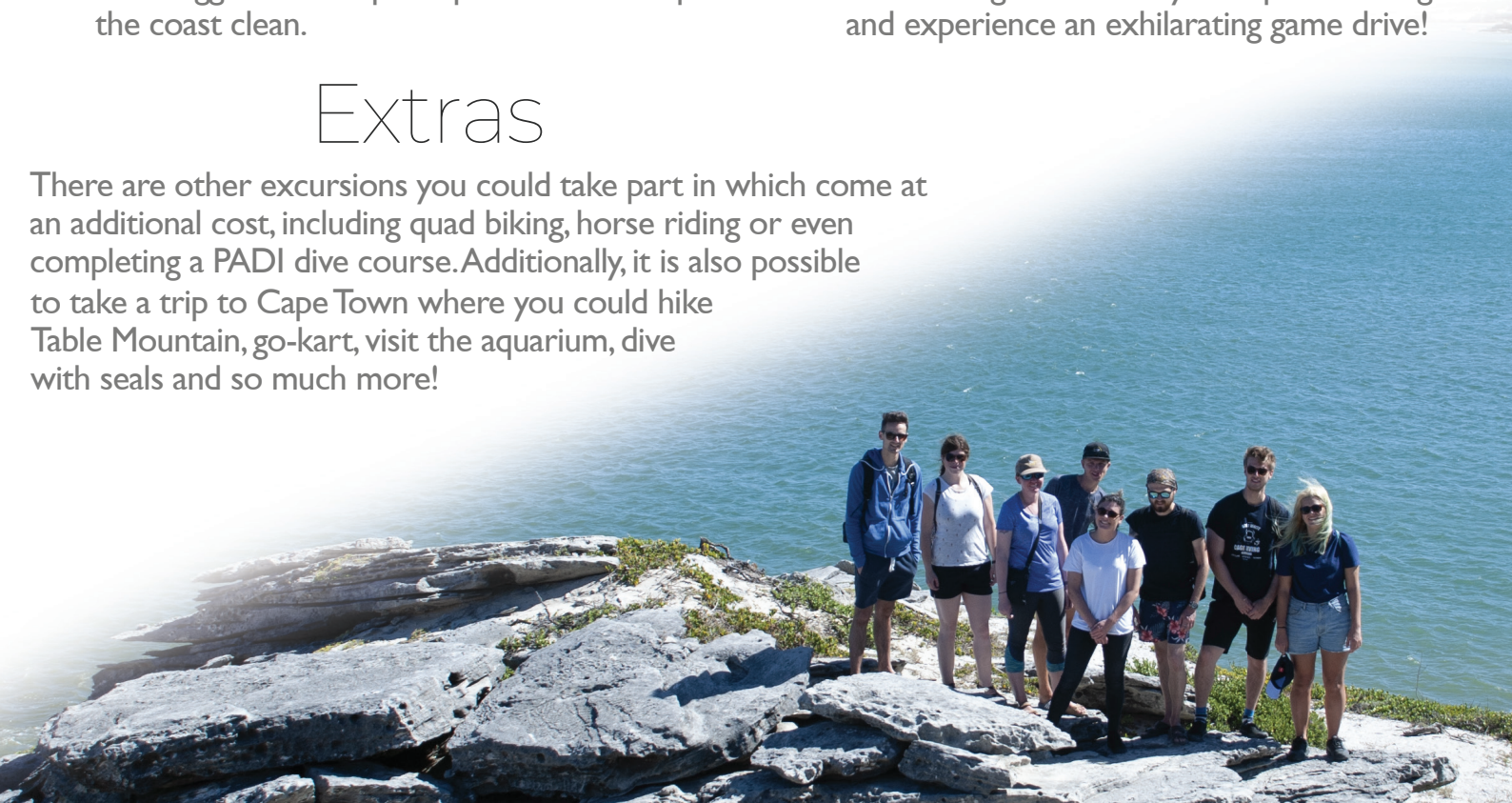
As weather and sea conditions can largely affect the project's itinerary, a number of alternative activities and excursions may be arranged on days you are unable to go out to sea. These can include receiving lectures, watching documentaries and entering data collected on shark expeditions. As well as these, you could venture out on some of the many different excursions listed below, which are included in the price of the project!

## Activities & Excursions

- 1 Head out in search of rock pools to identify the enchanting creatures found within and photograph them for monitoring purposes.
- 2 Visit BARC, a local dog shelter to spend quality time with the lovable dogs. Take them for walks and shower them with affection!
- 3 Venture to De Kelders Drip Cave for some good old-fashion cave exploration. Here you'll find fascinating rock formations and the only fresh water cave pool in the area.
- 4 Snorkel in the kelp forests of De Kelders. Enjoy the beautiful scenery and perhaps even bump into a harmless shy shark along the way! (Please note; this activity is also dependent on weather conditions)
- 5 Walk the scenic route to Danger Point Lighthouse or Franskraal Beach to collect shark egg cases and pick up rubbish to keep the coast clean.
- 6 Beer tasting at the local breweries may be on the agenda! There are a number of craft beer breweries to contend for your taste buds.
- 7 Witness a mighty colony of African penguins and discover the beauty of the Harold Porter Botanical Gardens at Bettys Bay.
- 8 Head over to Hermanus for wine tasting. This seaside town has a route of boutique wineries in the valley named, Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, which translates to "Heaven-and-Earth"!
- 9 Take a trip to Cape Agulhas, the most southern point of Africa. Here the Indian Ocean meets the Atlantic Ocean, and the marker makes for that picture-perfect moment.
- 10 If there are multiple, consecutive no-sea days, volunteers may be taken to the Garden Route Game Lodge where they will spend the night and experience an exhilarating game drive!

## Extras

There are other excursions you could take part in which come at an additional cost, including quad biking, horse riding or even completing a PADI dive course. Additionally, it is also possible to take a trip to Cape Town where you could hike Table Mountain, go-kart, visit the aquarium, dive with seals and so much more!





# Itinerary

Day to day activities are very much dependent on weather conditions, if the seas are too rough trips on the boat will be cancelled for safety reasons. If volunteers are unable to go out to sea, other exciting activities will be arranged. We therefore recommend joining the project for a minimum of 3 weeks to ensure you have ample opportunity to get out to sea! Below is an example of a 3-week itinerary:

## Day 1

After arriving into Cape Town International Airport, you will be transferred to a local hostel, where you will spend your first night alongside the other members of your volunteer group. Make sure to rest up for tomorrow's adventure, as pick-up is at 4am!

## Day 2

A member of the team will meet you bright and early to transfer you to the project site at Kleinbaai. Then it's straight to the boat to have your first shark-spotting experience! After your trip, you'll return to your accommodation where you'll have the chance to settle in and get to know your fellow volunteers.

## Days 3-21

Your time on the project will be spent undertaking the activities mentioned in this guide. These will be a mix between trips out to sea which last for approximately 3-4 hours and multiple other activities on days when you are unable to go out due to weather conditions. As the activities are determined by weather and sea conditions the itinerary is subject to change.

## Day 22

Sadly, today is your final day, so bid farewell to your new friends and transfer back to Cape Town for your return flight home, or to commence your independent travel plans.

While you do not require any specific skills for this volunteer experience, we do request that you come with a moderate level of fitness as you will be involved in all aspects of work here, from cage diving and deployment to taking care of visitors during the course of the day. We also recommend that volunteers with any respiratory conditions, such as asthma, speak to their GP/doctor before partaking in the project. Finally, volunteers must be comfortable around open water.





# Accommodation

During the project, you'll stay at the volunteer house a short walk from the harbour, meaning you're never far from the action! The house has incredible sea views, a beautiful outside dining area, and a lounge equipped with a television and board games - perfect for an evening of unwinding with your fellow volunteers.

Rooms are shared on a same-sex, 2-per room or 4-per-room basis. If you are travelling as a couple, a private double room with an ensuite bathroom is available (subject to availability), or if you would prefer a space that's entirely your own, an apartment next door can be rented for an additional fee.



# Food & Drink

With regards to mealtimes, breakfast is included in the price of the project with cereals, bread, yoghurt, milk, tea, coffee and juices provided at the volunteer house. Light snacks are also provided when out on the boat. Vegans, vegetarians and other dietary requirements can be accommodated but please let us know in advance.

As other meals will be at your own cost, the project team will take you to a supermarket twice a week to buy provisions and there is a small, local shop should you need anything else. Volunteers usually prepare meals together, so this could be your chance to show off your cooking skills or if you would like to dine out, you may want venture into the town by taxi where there are plenty of restaurants and bars for you to discover. If you don't want to stray too far, there is always a local bar that also serves food which has become very popular with the team!



## What's Included

- Accommodation (including the first night in Cape Town)
- Airport transfers
- Project uniform
- Supplies for breakfast (e.g. cereals) and snacks when out on the boat
- English-speaking project coordinator
- A donation to the project

## Not Included

- Flights
- Vaccinations
- Visas
- Travel insurance
- Lunch and dinner
- Certain activities as indicated

## Volunteer Reviews

### Ryan

"There are truly too many incredible moments to list - the people, the work, and the setting combined made this one of the most rewarding and life-changing experiences of my life."



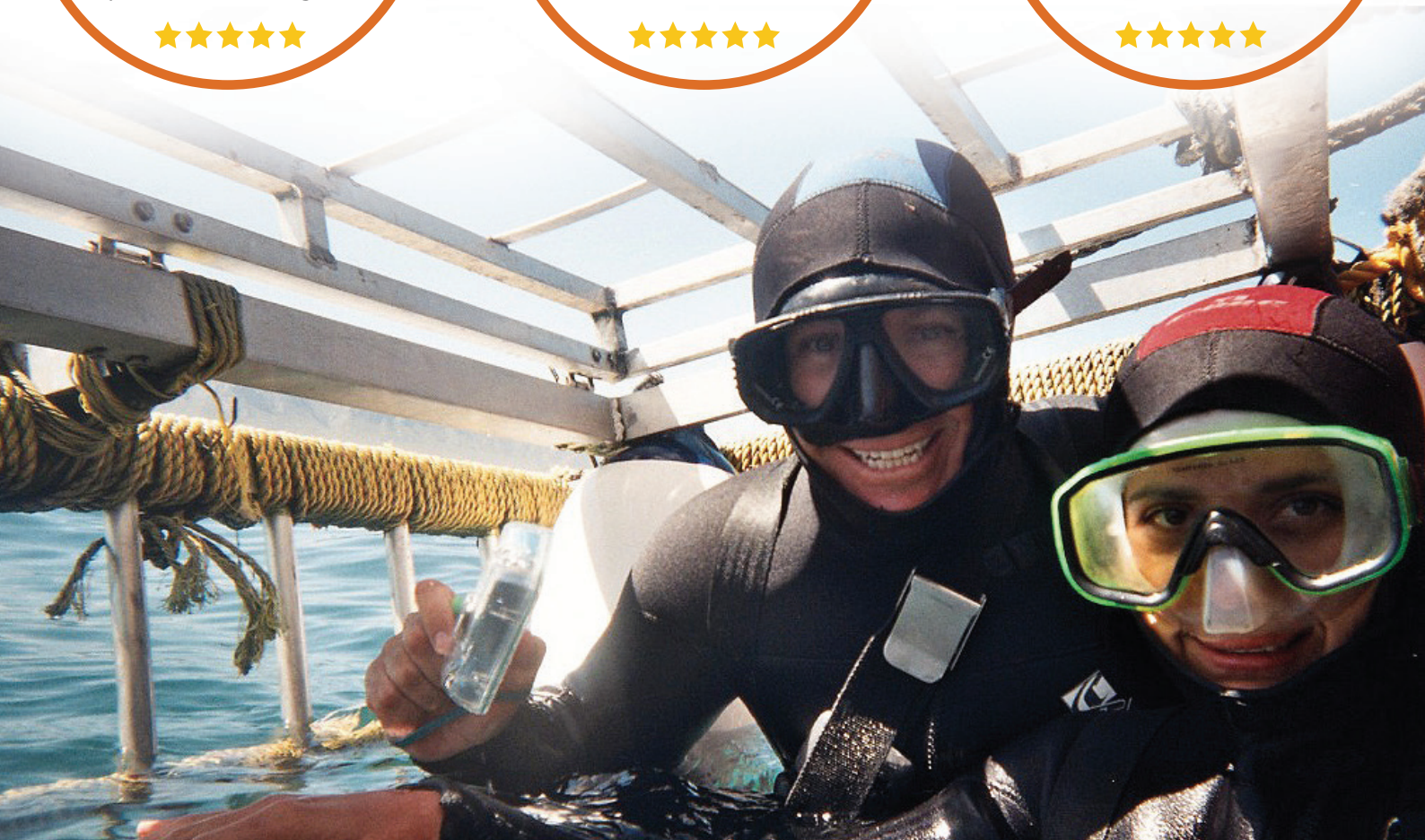
### Katherine

"This is something I will never forget. The locals and workers were just amazing. I was only there for a month, but I wish I could have stayed for a lifetime."



### Jordan

"The first time seeing a great white up close was absolutely amazing! They were so graceful, magnificent... A dream come true."







## What Next?

Becoming a volunteer on The Great White Shark Project is simple, and you can help make a difference to shark 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](http://www.thegreatprojects.com)

+44 (0)208 885 4987