



A guide to the:  
*Vervet Monkey Sanctuary*





# The Vervet Monkey Sanctuary

**Focus:** Vervet Monkeys

**Location:** South Africa

**Start Date:** Any Day

**Arrival & Starting Point:** Tzaneen

In the northernmost province of South Africa, nestled within a tropical garden town, the Vervet Monkey Sanctuary stands as a conservation powerhouse, rescuing, rehabilitating and changing perceptions of a misrepresented and misunderstood native species.

The story of this ever-growing sanctuary began in 1989 with a single orphan vervet monkey. This tiny infant was found only a few hours old, and sadly, local authorities advised that the monkey should be killed, as such animals were considered pests at the time. However, this advice was not followed, and a few years later, the sanctuary was established to ensure that these monkeys would no longer be unfairly persecuted. 500 Monkeys later, and the transformation of the sanctuary has been nothing short of extraordinary. Now home to orphaned, injured, abused, ex-laboratory and unwanted pets, these monkeys are undergoing a much-needed and revolutionary rehabilitation programme that either sees them return to their troops in the wild or provides a forever home, where, in the future, they will be released into the 'Vervet Forest', 300-500 hectares of native and protected bushland in South Africa, which the sanctuary is working towards acquiring.



During the last 30 years of conservation, the sanctuary has managed to fill in the gaps of the lack of knowledge and research surrounding vervet monkeys. The data shows that despite their perceived commonality, the vervet population is plummeting in South Africa, and there is no definitive knowledge of how many vervets remain in the wild. What is known is that the population decline directly correlates with habitat loss and human-wildlife conflict. Through the sanctuary's educational outreach programme, the team are addressing common perceptions and myths fuelling conflict against the species.

As a volunteer on this project, you'll help directly care for injured and orphaned vervet monkeys, providing them with a safe home and building a positive future for them to return to. From food preparation, orphan care, and enclosure cleaning to observation and assisting with outreach programmes, you'll not only help the monkeys you care for but also contribute to the conservation of the species as a whole. For monkey lovers, there is no better project to make a tangible difference, all while in a stunning country packed full of adventure!



## Food Prep & Feeding

Every day, volunteers and staff of the rehabilitation program prepare food for more than 500 vervets! You'll play both chef and waiter as you help cut, wash, and divide the fruits and vegetables, creating nutritious platters before dishing out the food bowls to the monkeys around the sanctuary. Alongside prepping fruits, vegetables and leaves, you'll also help collect seed pods and fruits from indigenous trees, ensuring the monkeys receive appropriate diets, keeping them fit and healthy!

## Orphan Care

During the baby season, which runs from November to February, the sanctuary tends to receive a high number of orphaned monkeys. Many arrive traumatised and sometimes injured, needing around-the-clock care. If you volunteer in this period, you may be involved in hand-rearing orphans, helping to emotionally stabilise them before they are introduced to their vervet foster mothers. In the juvenile season (Mar-Oct), you may help with the integration of juveniles into a troop, weaning them off bottle-feeding and guiding them through their next stage of rehabilitation. The rehabilitation of baby monkeys will involve you engaging with or observing them in their outdoor playpen, preparing milk bottles and administering food and medicine as necessary and under careful instruction. You'll be responsible for feeding and monitoring the infants throughout the day, continuously assessing their progress and reactions to their soft introduction to foster mothers and troops.



## Sanctuary Upkeep

Caring for rescued vervets, especially infants, can be messy work. While a dedicated in-house team handles enclosure cleaning, a small part of your day will see you helping maintain the cleanliness of the baby and sick bay areas.







## Construction

Construction and maintenance of monkey enclosures at the sanctuary is a hugely important activity that volunteers help with. Thanks to the dedication of previous volunteers helping with the construction of multiple troop enclosures, the quarantine facility and the sickbay, the sanctuary has been able to care for more misplaced and mistreated monkeys. During your time at the sanctuary, you may be involved in a construction or maintenance task that helps expand the sanctuary and provides a safe place for the monkeys to live and thrive!

## Observation & Monitoring

Observation and monitoring are essential when working with rescued and traumatised animals. It's important to identify any injuries, stress, or signs of sickness and promptly report this information to the staff and veterinary team. On alternating days, volunteers help distribute seeds or sprouts to the troops, which acts as a treat for them but allows you and the team to get closer in proximity to the monkeys, where you'll be able to check for any indicators of ill health. You'll also monitor and observe the interactions between foster mothers with babies and troops with new members, ensuring they are a good fit and bonding effectively.



## Free Time

You'll enjoy 1.5 days off each week, during which you have the option to take a complimentary ride to the nearby town of Tzaneen. Here, you can indulge in activities such as shopping, swimming in the nearby lodge pool, visiting the spa, or simply enjoying a leisurely coffee at the mall. Volunteers staying for 4 weeks or more also have touring days to use in addition to their days off, so if you're interested in exploring the local attractions, you can head off to places like Kruger National Park, Blyde River Canyon, God's Window, and more, for a few days which the sanctuary can help you organise. There's plenty to do to make the most of your time in South Africa, and the project team is more than happy to help you arrange some amazing adventures!



# Itinerary

## Day 1 & 2

After arriving at the airport, you will be greeted by a project representative and transferred to the project site. Upon arrival at the sanctuary, you'll be able to meet the team and get settled in before starting your volunteering adventure. The following day, you'll receive a tour of the sanctuary & full orientation of how to care for vervets!

## Day 2 - 28

The excitement begins! These are your project days which will see you caring for the 500+ monkeys around the sanctuary. You'll also have 1.5 days per week of free time, perfect for exploring! Below is a daily itinerary example - though please note activities and itineraries may change depending on the needs of the sanctuary.

## Day 29

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 vervet monkeys in South Africa.

## Example Daily Breakdown

6:30am	If you want to fuel up before starting your day, you might want to get up early and grab a bite to eat! Help yourself to cereal, toast, fruit and coffee.
7:00am	Time to start the day's activities. This morning might see you preparing food and milk bottles, enclosure cleaning in the sickbay, or you may have your hands full with orphan care (Nov-Feb).
10:00am	Time for a break. For those who preferred a lay-in this morning, this would be the ideal time to grab some breakfast or just take a breather before continuing the day!
10:30am	You'll jump back into your morning activity feeling refreshed and ready to work up an appetite for lunch.
12:00pm	Lunchtime! Head over to the communal kitchen and enjoy a prepared lunch. Depending on the time of year you may have a 1 or 2 hour lunch break.
1/2:00pm	Afternoon activities may include foster mum or integration observations, preparing milk, construction or maintenance tasks or food foraging. This will depend on the time of year.
5:00pm	You'll finish for the day at this time unless you are helping with a late baby or integration shift, where you'll finish around 6:30pm. If you are assigned a night shift with an infant monkey, you will have a few hours off the following morning to recuperate.
6:00pm	After some unwind time to relax and shower, head over to the communal cottage for dinner with your fellow volunteers and the rest of the evening at your leisure!



## Accommodation

Volunteers will be staying in basic wood cabins allocated on a twin-share, same-sex basis. Each cabin has two beds with linens provided and power outlets for South African plugs, which can be used to charge phones and laptops; however, high-wattage items such as hairdryers are not recommended. Within the 'volunteer village', there are four gas-lit warm showers, two eco-toilets, and a campfire, which is perfect for an evening under the stars or an African braai.

The rest of what you'll need can be found in the communal cottage, where volunteers start the day, eat and relax together. The cottage has a small library of books, hammocks, sofas, a ping-pong table, and lockers. There is an option to upgrade to private cabins (subject to availability) for an additional fee,.



*Standard Accommodation*



*Accommodation Upgrade*

## Food & Drink

The sanctuary is committed to animal-friendly choices, and this is reflected in the meals they serve, which are all vegan! You'll be provided with three meals a day, starting with a self-serve breakfast bar, which includes a variety of cereals, toast, spreads and fruit. The onsite chef prepares lunch and dinner, but volunteers may help cook simple recipes when the chef is away. Tea and coffee are always available to keep the collaborative spirit alive, and you can purchase soft drinks, beer, cider, and snacks from the on-site bar!





## What's Included

- Accommodation
- Airport transfers
- Three vegan meals per day
- Tea and coffee
- A donation to the project

## Not Included

- Flights
- Visas
- Travel insurance

## What Next?

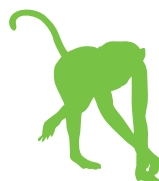
Becoming a volunteer at the Vervet Monkey Sanctuary is simple, and you can help make a difference to wildlife conservation efforts in just a few simple steps...



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 South Africa!



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

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+44 (0)208 885 4987