



A guide to the:
Victoria Falls Conservation Experience





Victoria Falls Conservation Experience

Focus: The 'Big 5'
Location: Zimbabwe

Start Date: Sundays
Arrival & Starting Point: Victoria Falls

On the doorstep of one of the seven 'natural wonders of the world', the Victoria Falls Conservation Experience is the only 'Big 5' game reserve in the region, with the critically endangered black rhino a proud symbol of the project's conservation efforts. The team here are dedicated to preserving this 2,500-hectare reserve which is home to an abundance of Africa's iconic wildlife.

With 5 main focal points; education, conservation management, research, community development and sustainability, volunteers will have the chance to personally contribute to bridging the gap between wildlife and the local communities, as well as helping to create and implement sustainable solutions to the problems facing Zimbabwe's wildlife. One such issue is the damaging effect widespread poaching has had on black rhino populations throughout Southern Africa, for this reason an intense monitoring programme is in place on the reserve, helping to increase their numbers and protect them in the fight against this harmful practice.



As a volunteer, you may find yourself in search of the 'Big 5' on game counts, creating sneak roads for the anti-poaching unit, or lending a hand to the local school, ensuring future generations will continue to keep conservation at the forefront of their minds. On this very active game reserve, no two days are the same and a night camped out under the stars will be sure to have you reflecting on your action-packed experience, whilst relaxing to the sounds of the wildlife you're helping to preserve.

With a trip to the awe-inspiring Victoria Falls, you'll also be able to tick off more than one extraordinary experience from your bucket list. So for a true Zimbabwean adventure, and the chance to make life-long memories whilst leaving a lasting impact on the country's beloved wildlife, secure your place today!

Wildlife Monitoring

With any wildlife reserve, it is important to assess each species to gain better understanding of how suitable and sustainable their environment is. By monitoring the wildlife through a series of game counts and perhaps even bush walks, you'll collect vital data on elephants, rhinos, predators and more, all which will help determine whether any species are under stress. The type of data that is collected includes animal condition, gender, age and behaviour, as well as population and location. The information volunteers gather will help the reserve management team make important decisions, such as whether any animals need to be relocated. Game drives are a classic part of any African adventure and will be your best chance at spotting all of the 'Big 5', so grab your camera and keep your eyes peeled!



Reserve Maintenance

There are a wide range of reserve maintenance activities that volunteers take part in here, including (but not limited to) anti-poaching snare sweeps, fence patrols, soil erosion control and digging waterholes. Each of these activities is critical in ensuring the wildlife's safety and well-being, and significantly contribute towards the successful operations of the reserve. Whilst these activities can be particularly physical, you'll be able to walk away from each task knowing your hard work has directly made a difference to the conservation of Zimbabwe's wildlife, especially the critically endangered black rhino!



Sustainability Initiatives

All the facilities on the reserve are committed to 'green' operations in order to achieve balance with, and minimise impact on the natural environment. As a volunteer, you may help in the onsite vegetable garden by planting and harvesting fruit and vegetables for both the reserve and local communities, as well as creating the compost used to grow the crops. There may also be times where your help is needed tending to the indigenous tree nursery or with the instillation of solar pumps.



School Visit

A rewarding part of the community experience, and a firm favourite with the volunteers, can be found when visiting local primary schools in order to assist with a number of important activities. You may help out in the school's vegetable gardens or with construction tasks, and possibly in a range of fundraising events. You'll spend some time with the children and teachers at break times and may even assist in spreading environmental awareness to Zimbabwe's young minds!





Alien Plant Removal

Dating back to the 1950's, *Lantana Camara* (a species of alien vegetation introduced from South America) has been recognised as a national threat to native plant species in Zimbabwe. It has also been linked to serious liver toxins present in animals that have eaten too much of it, and for this reason, the removal of the plant is vital. Ploughing isn't possible as there is a risk of destroying indigenous plants, so it needs to be removed manually, which is where you come in! Your help in the removal of this invasive plant species will help support a thriving ecosystem for all the wildlife on the reserve.

Victoria Falls Visit

With one of the seven 'natural wonders of the world' just 10 minutes away, you'll get the chance to visit the awe-inspiring Victoria Falls with your group! You'll spend a morning, exploring the world's largest sheet of falling water, and will certainly find out for yourself why the locals call it "Mosi-oa-Tunya", The Smoke that Thunders! Surrounded by history, culture and folklore, there is more than meets the eye than the sheer size of this waterfall, so whilst you're sure to leave with some incredible photos, you'll also leave with a little knowledge too.

Whilst photos of the area capture the undeniable beauty of the falls, there's also a thrill-seekers paradise waiting to be discovered. So, if you're looking for an adrenaline spike like no other, why not revisit the falls in your free time for a helicopter ride, white water rafting on the Zambezi River, or if you're brave enough, bungee jumping!



A Night Under The Stars

Get back to nature with a camp out under the stars. There is nothing more magical than being sat around a campfire, truly immersed in the sounds of Zimbabwe, including the whooping of hyenas and the roaring of lions at night-time! A camp out is the perfect break from your action-packed itinerary and will give you the chance to create some incredible memories of a night sleeping out in the African bush!



Itinerary

Below is an example of a 2-week itinerary on this project, but please note that itineraries are subject to change depending on the needs of the reserve.

Day 1

Upon arrival at Victoria Falls International Airport, you'll be met by a project representative and transferred to the project site. You'll have the day to get settled in and get to know your fellow volunteers. Make sure to get a good night's rest as tomorrow you'll be up early for your first taste of Zimbabwe as you go on a game drive!

Day 2

Today, you'll get to grips with the project aims and the work you'll be undertaking during your time here as you join a pre-week briefing and embark on an orientation game drive. You'll have the chance to see the impressive reserve in action whilst learning about its successes, and if you're lucky, you may even spot some of the famous 'Big 5'.

Day 3

This morning you'll take a trip to the most iconic waterfall in Africa - the incredible Victoria Falls. Only a 10-minute drive from the project site, you'll have plenty of time for exploring and photographing one of the seven natural wonders of the world! Later, you will head out into the field to tackle your first conservation activity.

Day 4

Today, you'll spend time with the children of Masuwe Primary School! Whilst here, you may take part in a number of tasks to improve the school. This could be through a construction project or helping in the school's vegetable garden. In the evening, you'll grab a drink and head out onto the reserve for a classic African sundowner!

Day 5

The day will begin with a conservation activity, and you may be digging a new waterhole or joining an anti-poaching snare sweep to protect the reserve's animals. In the evening, you will venture into the bush to camp out under the stars with your fellow volunteers, taking in the sights and sounds of a nocturnal Zimbabwe!

Day 6

This morning, you'll pack up last night's camp and from here embark on a bush walk or game drive, comparing the day and night, sights and sounds as you go. After lunch, it's back out in the field ready to tackle the Lantana Camara plant which has invaded the reserve. This evening, you'll be able to relax knowing the weekend is at your leisure!

Day 7-8

It's the weekend! You may wish you take a trip into town to soak up some Zimbabwean culture, revisit the Victoria Falls for an adrenaline filled activity or spend some time relaxing by the pool with your fellow volunteers. You can also visit the famous Boma restaurant for an incredible meal and some authentic entertainment.

Day 9-13

During this Monday to Friday you will take part in a variety of conservation activities on the reserve from rhino monitoring to alien plant removal. Rest assured, you'll be kept busy with a range of exciting and important tasks that help towards the conservation of all the animals that call this reserve home, especially the renowned 'Big 5'.

Day 14

Saturday marks the end of your stay at the project, so it is time to say your goodbyes and begin your journey home, ready to reminisce for years to come! Please be aware that the return airport transfer is not included but can be provided for US\$30 which can be split between all volunteers leaving that day.

Accommodation

Whilst on the project, you will be allocated your own room at the conservation centre in the heart of the reserve. Each room has a single bed, ceiling fan, desk, chair and storage facilities. Bathrooms are shared by up to four volunteers of the same gender and include western-style toilets and hot showers. (A double room is also available for any couples taking part.)

Elsewhere, the centre offers an open-air communal area, as well as a swimming pool and 'braai' (barbeque) area, plus picnic tables. Volunteers will also have access to a fully equipped kitchen and canteen area. Whilst on-site, staff will clean the accommodation and common areas throughout the week, though volunteers are asked to keep the areas as tidy as possible.



Food & Drink

During your time on the project, you will receive three meals a day, all prepared and served by the on-site chef, with some meals packed and taken to eat out in the field. On the weekends, you will receive brunch and dinner, but will also have the option to prepare any extra snacks or meals you may want.

Meals will consist of a mix of western and traditional Zimbabwean foods. Breakfast may include toast, cereals, fruit and porridge, whereas lunch will be a mixture of sandwiches, quiches, burgers and salads. Dinner will be comprised of pasta or rice with fish or meat, and is typically served with vegetables or salad. The chef is happy to accommodate any special dietary requirements such as vegetarian, vegan or gluten-free, though we do kindly ask that you let us know of any in advance of your arrival on the project.



What's Included

- An Airport transfer on arrival
- Accommodation
- Three meals per day
- A donation to the project
- A trip to the Victoria Falls

Not Included

- Flights
- Visas
- Travel insurance
- A return transfer back to Victoria Falls International Airport (this will cost approximately \$30 but can be split between all volunteers leaving on that day)

Volunteer Reviews

Andrew

"I'll never forget the big male rhino visiting our veranda at midnight. Everyone got out of bed to spend some time with him in the beautiful darkness and silence."



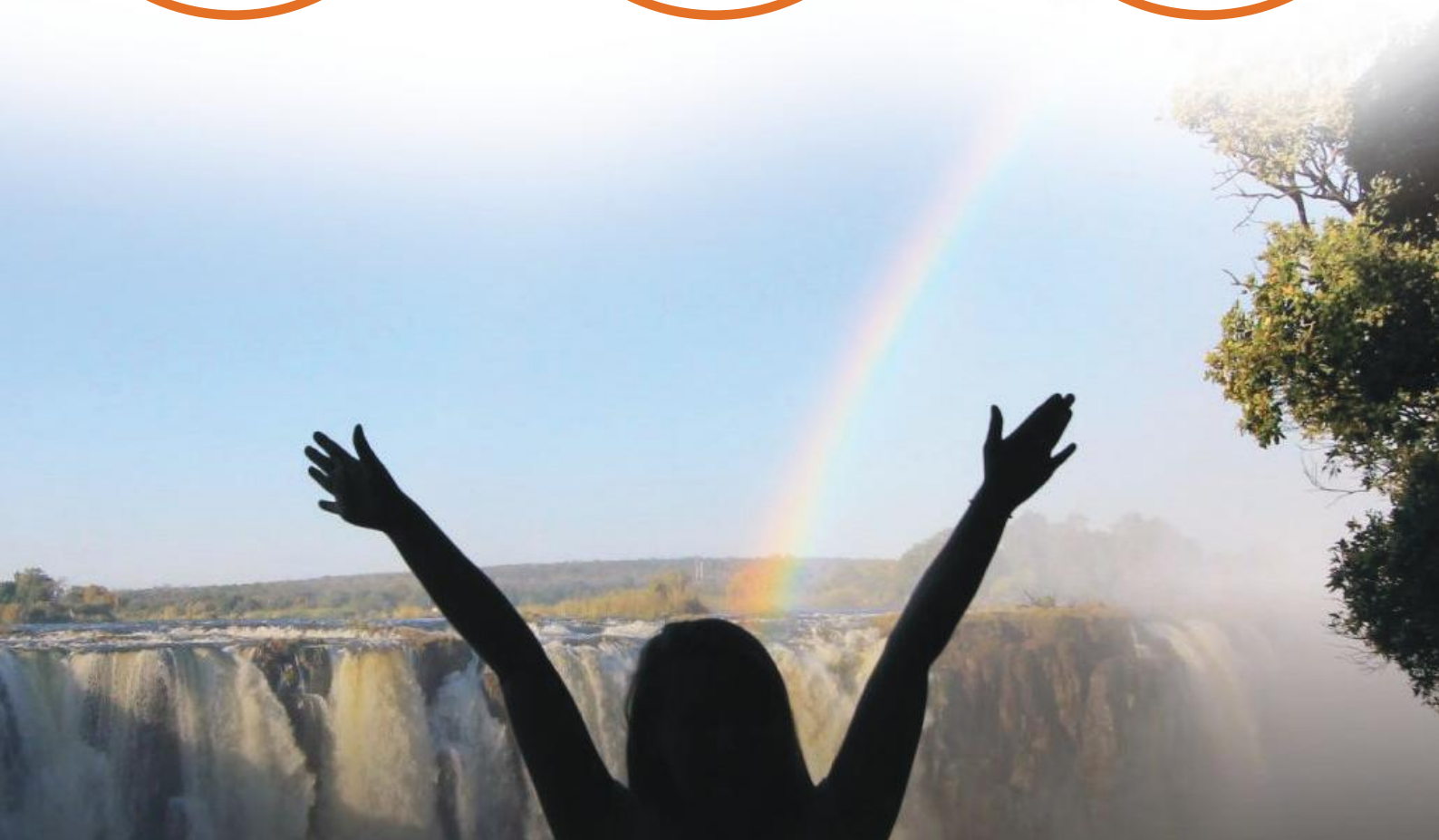
Stephen

"Everything about this project was awesome. The people, the location, the day to day life. Go, just go!"



Katarzyna

"I'll never forget seeing a leopard crossing our path and watching the rhino transfer operation in action! The reserve is a beautiful place and the staff are brilliant."





What Next?

Becoming a volunteer on the Victoria Falls 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 Zimbabwe!



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

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