



GAP AFRICA PROJECTS



**SOUTH AFRICA
CONSERVATION FIELD TRIP**

BISHOP BURTON COLLEGE



PROJECT LOCATIONS

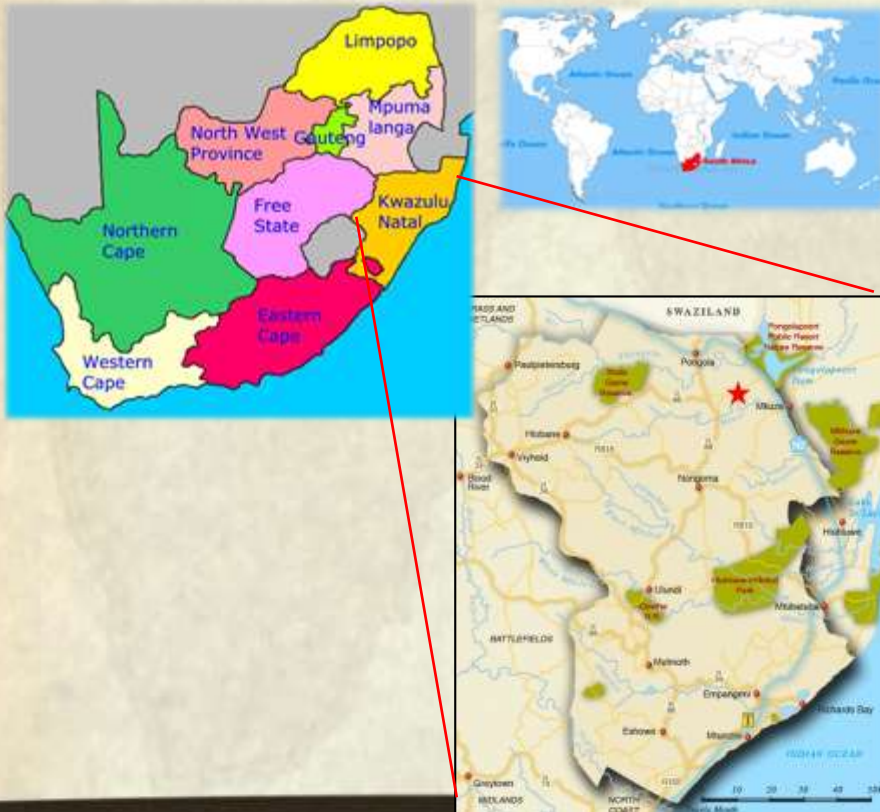
SOMKHANDA GAME RESERVE

Somkhanda is a 12000ha community-owned game reserve in the Zululand district of KwaZulu Natal and is home to the last of the 'big 5'. Somkhanda is home to breeding populations of two key endangered mammal species - Black Rhino and the African Wild Dog. The full complement of species that historically occurred in the area includes Lion, Elephant, Hyena, Giraffe, White Rhino, Wildebeest, Zebra, Impala, Nyala, Kudu, Bushbuck, Reedbuck and many more.

ZINGELA WILDERNESS RESERVE

The Reserve covers 5000ha of pristine African bushveld and students will be participating in a host of adventurous activities during your stay. Each activity is led by experienced and accredited guides to ensure students learn as much as possible from the experience and do so in a safe and controlled manner.

As well as adventure, you will have the opportunity to be involved with some of the tracking and research that takes place at the property; in particular, paying close attention to the reserve's giraffe meta population and their migration habits in an unfenced environment.



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SOMKHANDA GAME RESERVE

WILD DOG TRACKING:

One of the highlights of visiting Somkhanda Game Reserve, is the chance to see these magnificent endangered animals. Wild dogs are the most endangered carnivore in Africa requiring a vast area of land to sustain one pack. Somkhanda is surrounded on three sides by tribal communities, whose livelihoods are dependent on cattle and goat farming; prior to the introduction of wild dog to Somkhanda an agreement was made with the community that the reserve would monitor and track the pack of dogs twice daily. There is a permanent team dedicated to this; you will be able to join in with their work, watching the dog hunt and play!



LEOPARD MONITORING:

Due to the importance of cattle to the economy of the rural community outside of Somkhanda and the reserve's commitment to fostering good relations with the tribe, there is ongoing monitoring of the leopards on the reserve. You will learn how to set camera traps and identify individual leopards as well as recording their movements.



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SOMKHANDA GAME RESERVE

BLACK RHINO PROJECT:

Black Rhino populations are under threat throughout Africa with the total number having plummeted from approximately 65000 to 2400. In recent years successful conservation efforts have resulted in numbers rising again to a current population of approximately 3000. South Africa is home to the largest number of black rhino and certain key populations have reached their optimum biological carrying capacity. Overpopulation can negatively impact on population growth and so breeding populations have to be carefully established and controlled in a suitable habitat. Whilst on Somkhanda you will have the chance to help restore the ideal habitat for the black rhino; by eradicating the plant species of chromoleana odorata. You will also take part in patrols looking for signs of poaching and learn to track the rhino as well as identify birds, plants and animal tracks. Rhino tracking is essential, the information must be recorded daily so the reserve can keep an eye on their movement patterns, their physical condition and their associations with other animals and other rhino; there is a permanent team dedicated to this on the reserve and you will be able to join them.



COMMUNITY CATTLE DIPPING:

As a free service to the community the reserve, with the backing of the state veterinary department, undertakes community cattle dipping to eradicate ticks. The programme takes place every week throughout summer and every second week throughout winter. The aim is to control tick population and reduce the incidence of tick-borne diseases. This improves the health of the animals which increases milk production and decreasing calf-interval. It is also a great opportunity to experience traditional Zulu life.



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SOMKHANDA GAME RESERVE BESPOKE - RESEARCH PROJECTS

There is also scope to include time where the students are able to work on their own research programmes; either during the 9 day module or in place of the other add on modules. Students can use this as their individual research component and are able to create group projects. All research projects are aligned with the game reserve management objective and can be broad and dynamic. The research will benefit both the student and the game reserve. Many research programmes allow for hands-on experience where life skills, not available in their present environment, are encouraged and taught. Once a project subject is chosen, a project proposal should be developed and materials and methods can be discussed. These projects must be carefully prepared in advance of the trip so that the reserve can put all the necessary requirements in place so the research can run as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

- **Alien Plant Management**- Invasive plants play havoc with natural habitats; infestation need to be investigated, mapped out and recommendation made for their removal.
- **Aquatic Systems - river, springs and dams** - The Mkuzi river forms the southern boundary of the reserve and there are several streams, ponds, dams and water holes that need monitoring and measuring for rainfall.
- **Geology and Soils** - Current land use practices need their impacts monitored and recorded.
- **Small and Medium herbivore management** - Grazing and browsing impacts, especially near to artificial water points. Impacts of hunting and sale of game.
- **Mega Herbivore Management** - Cape Buffalo, a protected species, need to be monitored and tracked daily. Feeding habits and their impact need to be reported on.



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- **Small Predator Management** - All species need to be identified, mainly via camera trapping. A catalogue of animals is being made so we can identify as many individuals as possible on the reserve. More information is desperately required by the reserve, especially in relation to prey species.
- **Large Predator Management** - Lion, Leopard, Wild Dog, Spotted Hyena, Brown Hyena and Caracal have an impact that needs to be identified and recorded. Mapping their home ranges and activity.
- **Conservation Management** - Aspects of the physical management of the environment and other supporting infrastructure needed to manage a game reserve. Fencing, road and tracks, erosion, planning and mapping.
- **Amphibians** - Many of which are threatened or endangered, the reserve has a check list of the species but little is known about their status and distribution
- **Insectavora - including spiders** - Only 21 are recorded on the reserve when thousands of species occur. Insects are important environmental indicators so they need to be identified and monitored.
- **Environmental education** - For children both in local schools and abroad, an adult education course is needed.
- **Biodiversity heritage** - How do we manage the ecosystem beyond the fence line of the game reserve.

Once you have chosen your specific area of interest, we can provide examples of project titles within that area of research.



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SOMKHANDA GAME RESERVE

WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

As part of your conservation experience, groups will have the opportunity to sleep out on the reserve at Scotia Wilderness Camp. Activities during this time will include traditional cooking over an open fire (potjie), wildlife tracking, signs/spoor and survival skills

The evenings are spent around the fire learning about Zulu culture.



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SOMKHANDA GAME RESERVE

CULTURAL ZULU VISIT

Students are given the option to spend a night staying in a family home in the local community; eating traditional African food and sleeping in traditional village huts. Students will stay in small groups with individual families, they will have to join in with chores and help prepare dinner. This is an eye opening and incredibly rewarding experience for students.



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ACCOMMODATION AT SOMKHANDA

In keeping with the safari adventure theme, groups are accommodated on the reserve in comfortable safari tents, with communal hot and cold showers and regular flushing toilets. All meals are provided in a communal dining room. If students opt to sleep out there are basic camps around the reserve that can be used for sleep outs; sleep out under the stars and learn how to make a fire and cook on it! There is also a lodge available for students and lecturers at an additional cost.



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ZINGELA WILDERNESS RESERVE

GIRAFFE POPULATIONS

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has assessed Giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) as Vulnerable following a population decline of 36-40% over the last three

decades. The factors causing this decline (levels of exploitation and decline in area of occupancy and habitat quality) have not ceased and may not be reversible throughout the species' range.

Historically the species has been overlooked in terms of research and conservation, but in the past five years, considerable progress has been made in compiling and producing a species-wide assessment of population size and distribution by the members of the IUCN SSC Giraffe and Okapi Specialist Group. Some Giraffe populations are stable or increasing, while others are declining, and each population is subject to pressure by threats specific to their local country or region. The aim of the Zingela Giraffe Conservation Project (ZGCP) is to investigate and address the threats specific to the Giraffe population residing in our area.

GIRAFFE CONSERVATION

Conservation measures typically include habitat management and protection through law enforcement and community based conservation initiatives. Successful protection of habitat and cessation of habitat encroachment with the use of fences and border protection can result in large herds building up within an area.

The continued growth of these populations however is limited by the ability of that ecosystem to support a particular number of Giraffes due to space, water and forage availability (i.e., limited carrying capacity). Over population of Giraffe can have deleterious effects on indigenous flora which may in turn adversely affect other animals within the conservation area and it is necessary to calculate a sustainable carrying capacity for a specific area. This will help in planning for the future expansion of conservation areas or for reducing the population size through game capture.



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ZINGELA WILDERNESS RESERVE

GIRAFFE RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Historic and current estimates adopted a variety of methods (which we will use) that included both aerial and ground surveys, as well as photographic capture/re-capture, interviews and best estimates. The conservation actions most useful and appropriate for Giraffes will differ as a function of Giraffe population dynamics, ecological stability, national policies, and legislation. Giraffes are subject to various degrees of legal protection in their range states. Large populations occur in national protected areas and on private farms, but many populations also exist in unprotected and communal areas. Private farms make up 6 500ha of our 10 000ha focal conservation area while 3 500ha is community owned. Our conservation project therefore requires an integrative approach including both local community members and private land owners in order to build a consensus on how to best manage and conserve our shared Giraffe population.

Throughout Eastern and Southern Africa, an increasing number of Giraffe translocations have repopulated former habitats with Giraffes, fostering wildlife enterprises including tourism and consumptive use, and maintaining genetic diversity given small, enclosed and fragmented populations. Through our ongoing Giraffe Conservation Project we aim to gather all the data necessary for generating a conservation plan for our Giraffe while also gathering funds to implement this plan.



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ZINGELA WILDERNESS RESERVE

WHITE WATER RAFTING

There is an excellent 20km stretch of rapids and pools on this section of the Tugela Canyon including the intimidating Washing machine and Finger rock rapids. Water levels alter the mood of the river but whether the river rises along with adrenalin levels or whether the water converts to a “smell the roses” experience, these adventure trips are unforgettable.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

Zingela offers some wonderful single track riding and interspersed with rugged 4x4 vehicle bush tracks. The ride in from both Weenen & Colenso offers 30kms plus dirt road riding at its best. The abundance of game in the bushveld wilderness adds to the riding experience. Guests are welcome to bring their own mountain bikes. Eco-friendly quads are also a great way of seeing the area and sensible riding often results in excellent game viewing along with the 4x4 terrain.

ABSEILING

The cliffs overlooking the Tugela Canyon provide dizzying abseil sites. Face your fear or watch other participants step over the edge. Registered, experienced guides are there to provide reassurance and safety. The following poem says it all!



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ACCOMMODATION AT ZINGELA

Accommodation at Zingela is one of the reserves most unique and enjoyable qualities. There are several camps that have all been built with unity to its immediate environment. Depending on the group size will determine which accommodation you will stay. The lodges are rustic and authentic in their African theme, all boasting amazing views of the reserve and river.

Evenings are spent socialising at dinner and relaxing around the fire. As the property is predator free, groups are safe to explore the surrounding area of the campy during daylight hours.



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Gap Africa Projects is an ATOL Bonded travel company that specialises in academic trips and volunteering opportunities. Operating since 2010 we have organised hundreds of field trips for schools, colleges and universities.

We offer a full support system to teachers and lecturers that want to organise a school trip, whether students are travelling with lecturers or without.

WHY TEACHERS & LECTURERS TRAVEL WITH US

We take all the hassle out of organising a field trip. Our level of support includes:

- Introductory presentation - we will come to your school or college and present your field trip to your students and gauge interest.
- If you choose to proceed with booking your field trip, we organise all the paperwork and process all payments so you don't have to collect or chase any payments from students.
- Telephone and email support at all times; whenever your student has a question or a concern, we are on hand to answer their queries.
- Pre departure information evening; we will host an evening for students to attend with their parents 6-8 weeks before their departure to give students and their parents the chance to ask any questions and provide further information surrounding the trip, their departure and arrival information in the UK and what they can expect!
- Airport meet and greet; we will see you off at the airport making sure you have all the documents you need to travel and then meet you at the other end. If there are any international-domestic transfers we will meet you at the international arrivals and ensure you make it to domestic departures without a problem.
- 24/7 In country support. We are always at the end of the telephone to respond to any queries that may arise once the programme commences if it is needed.



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MANAGING THE GROUP EXPERIENCE

This part is largely managed by us, we don't want your time being taken up by managing a group expedition, that's what we are here for.

We manage every student as an individual client, they make deposit, instalment (if requested) and balance payments directly to us. We also have a reporting function for all the students within the group, so we can keep track on the group as a whole; we will send you this report every month.

Each student will individually receive:

- Confirmation documents
- ATOL certificate
- Opportunity to attend a question and answer session
- Opportunity to invite their parent/parents/guardians to an evening question and answer session
- Online access to the group area of our website, containing:
 - Itineraries
 - Kit lists
 - Country information
 - General information

ATOL FINANCIAL SECURITY AND HEALTH & SAFETY

We are a fully bonded ATOL operator, this means we can organise all elements of the trip and provide full financial protection and peace of mind for everyone involved by using our ATOL Licence. The prices are inclusive of flights, transfers, accommodation, housekeeping/laundry, all meals and of course all the itinerary activities. We can also arrange some fantastic extra mural activities for the students over the weekends which help add an extra element of adventure to the trip.

All the relevant insurances are in place from ourselves and the reserve where we operate the group expedition. We also have individual risk assessments for all parts of the experience and if requested can put together a combined risk assessment to encompass any additional activities such as weekend excursions that may be added on as part of the trip.



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Individual travel insurance is not included in the cost, should the college not have an overseas policy in place for the students then we can assist with this, either through a group policy or individual policies with our preferred insurer Endsleigh.

In terms of the journey we would ask that the group arrange their own transport to London Heathrow on the day of departure, a member of the Gap Africa team will meet the group at the airport and assist with check-in and any other requirements the group may have.

Upon arrival in South Africa, if the group have a domestic onward flight, they will be met by a member of the GAP team who will assist with transit to the domestic terminal as well as any further requests. On arrival at their final destination airport our preferred transfer company will meet the group at arrivals and transfer them to the project.

I have attached all relevant documents to this email pertaining to insurance and risk assessments for the trip. Any further information required can be obtained on request.

REFERENCES

To date, we have run many successful group experiences to South Africa and we are always proud to present you with some references or testimonials from previous trip leaders. They will give you an excellent unbiased opinion of our service and the project.

Please visit our Group Leader Feedback Page for more information:

<http://gapafricaprojects.com/discovery-hub/reviews/shamwari-conservation-experience-a-school-leaders-perspective/>



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