



# PROJECT INFORMATION PACK



## Somkhanda Conservation Field Trip



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# **ABOUT SOMKHANDA GAME RESERVE**

History and location of  
the project



# ABOUT SOMKHANDA

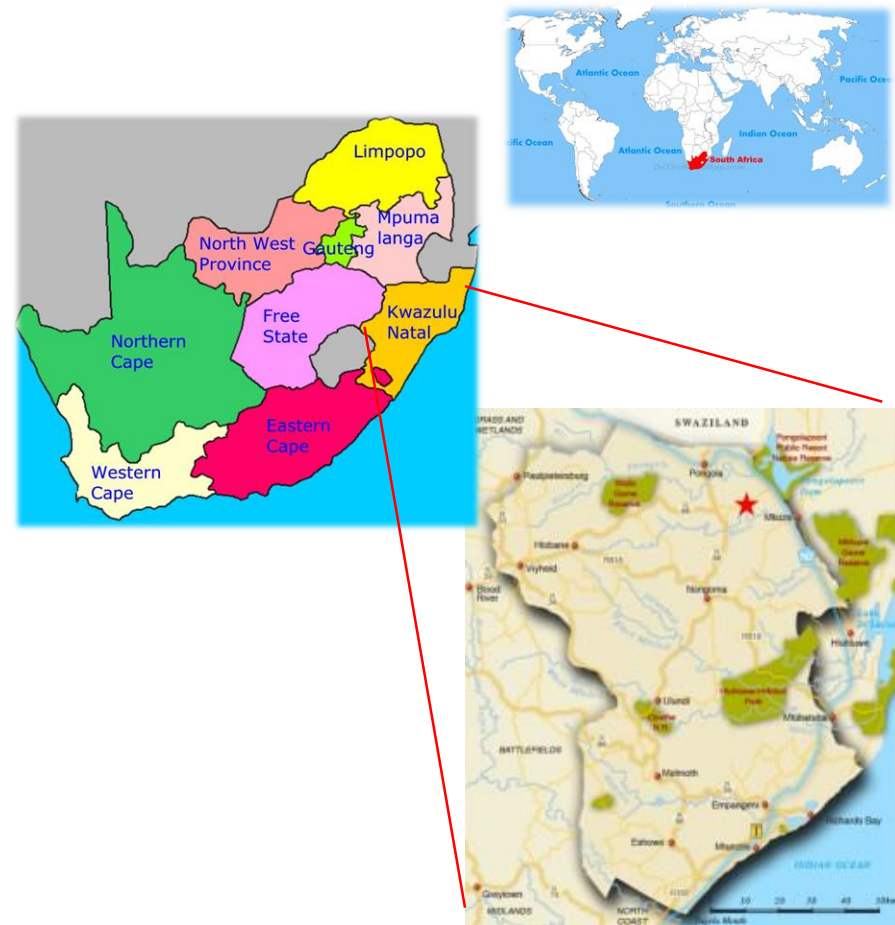
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## Somkhanda Game Reserve

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 man

### History of the reserve

The Gumbi Tribe lost their tribal land during the years of Apartheid and in 2006 successfully won an ancestral land claim over a large area of Zululand and on a section of this they established the 12000ha Somkhanda game reserve. The reserve supports the local community with job creation through ethical ecotourism and by providing schools and support to the local tribe.







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# **ABOUT THE PROJECT**

Our conservation work in  
more detail

## Your Conservation Programme

- Alien Vegetation Control / Reserve Maintenance
- Spatial Distribution and Habitat use of species
- Use of Telemetry Tracking
- Wild Dog Monitoring
- Elephant Monitoring / Population Study
- Rhino Monitoring – Awareness and Anti-Poaching
- Monitoring Herbivore Condition & Health
- Camera Trapping – Research: Leopard | Hyena | General
- Habitat and Prey Selection of Predators
- Birds in Reserve Census – ID and Migrations
- Educational Bush Walks – Ecology & Botany
- Tracks, Signs and Spoor
- Reserve Sleep Out – Wilderness Experience
- Cultural Home Stay
- Community Development



### 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 reserves 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.





### 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.



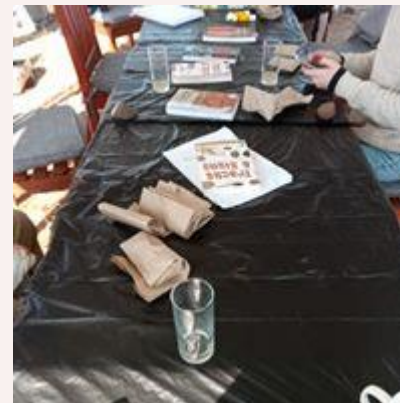


## Bespoke Research Projects

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.

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



## Bespoke Research Projects

- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Biodiversity heritage** – How do we manage the ecosystem beyond the fence line of the game reserve
- **Alien Plant Management** – Invasive plants play havoc with natural habitats; infestation need to be investigated, mapped out and recommendation made for their removal.
- **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
- **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.
- **Environmental education** – For children both in local schools and abroad, an adult education course is needed.



### Bush Walks and Ecology Trails

One of the unique aspects of Somkhanda is the ability to utilise the reserve for walking trails and ecology lessons.

Groups will be accompanied by professional guides as they navigate through the reserve observing the smaller aspects of the flora and fauna that the African Bush has to offer.





### Wilderness Experience – Scotia

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.





### Cultural Home Stay – Gumbi Zulu Tribe

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.





## Kosi Bay – Coastal Research – 3 Day Add On Excursion

This module takes place in the Maputaland region of KwaZulu Natal province which is home to the Maputaland Coastal Forest and Marine Reserves. These make up the northernmost section of iSimangaliso Wetland Park which links protected ecosystems; a continuous World Heritage Park stretching 220 km from the Mozambique border southwards to St. Lucia and 5 Kilometres out to sea.

Species of conservation relevance such as: loggerhead and leatherback turtles, from November to March come onto the beaches to nest and Humpback whales pass along this coastline between June and November.

There are several unique educational opportunities including snorkelling on the reef just inside the estuary; observing marine life is a great experience where one enters a world inhabited by creatures often very different to those which we are familiar with on land. Snorkelling is low tide dependant.

**Accommodation:**  
Utshwayelo tented camp  
**Activities:**  
Fish trap tour, snorkelling  
and rocky shore studies  
(both tide dependent), 3  
lakes boat trip.







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# **ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE**

Life in the African Bush





# ACCOMMODATION

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## Somkhanda Game Reserve – Main Camp

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; sleeping out under the stars and learn how to make a fire and cook on it!





# ACCOMMODATION

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## Food at Somkhanda

Three meals are provided a day prepared by the kitchen staff.

Breakfasts will consist of toast and cereals; lunch may include pasta, wraps, burgers, stir fry; dinners include meat, fish and vegetables with rice, potatoes or pasta.

On weekends a braai (BBQ) is often organised. Tea, coffee and fruit is available all day from the volunteer area.

Please advise us of any dietary requirements in advance so we can ensure that you are adequately catered for.





## Kosi Bay Coastal Research

Located at the entrance to ISimangaliso Wetland Reserve you will be staying in tented accommodation there are communal showers with hot and cold water.

Food is provided in the communal dining areas.

Solar powered electricity, so be aware that power is limited.



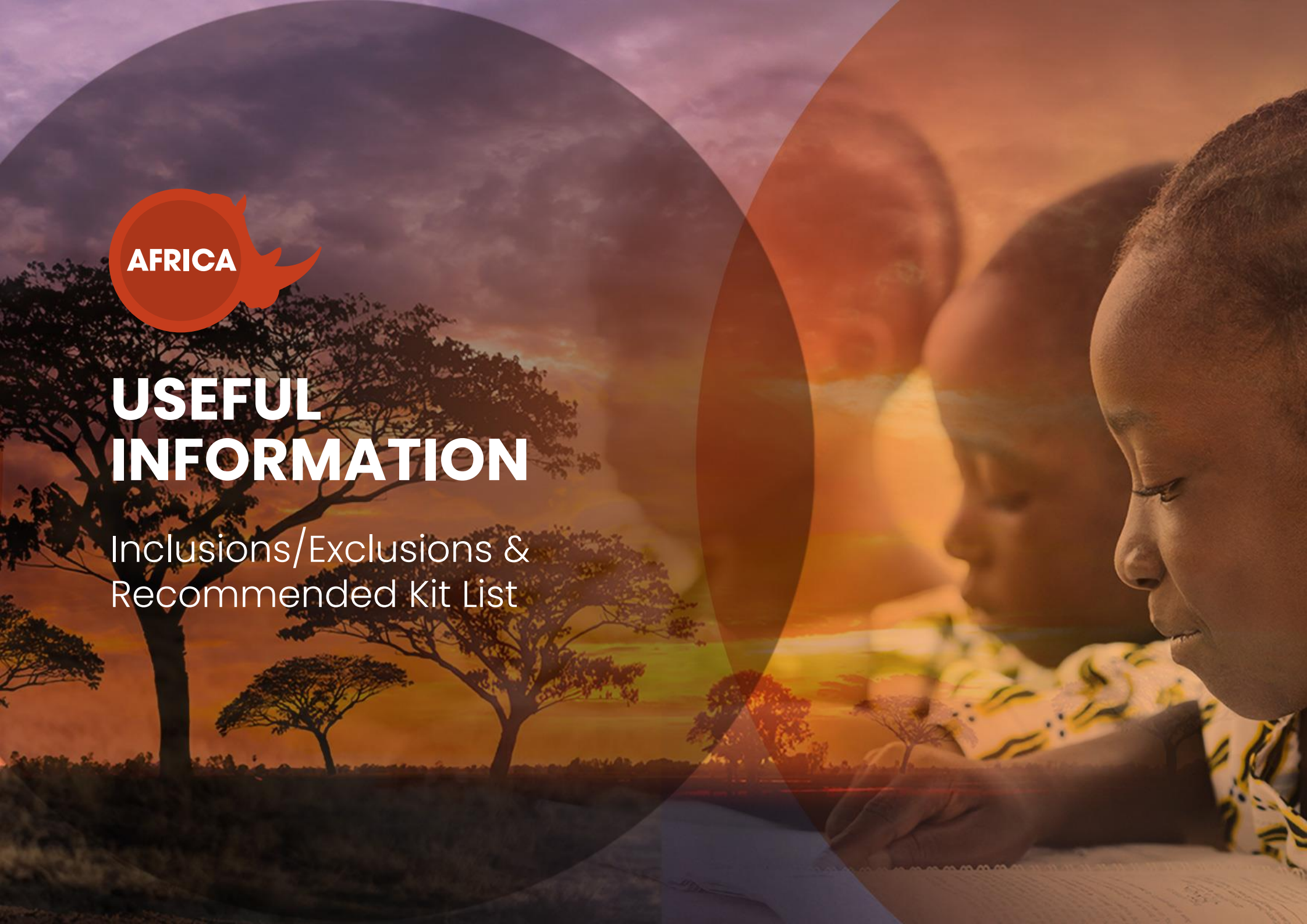




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# **USEFUL INFORMATION**

Inclusions/Exclusions &  
Recommended Kit List



# WHAT'S INCLUDED

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## What is included?

- Flights
- Transfers to/from project
- Accommodation
- Three meals per day
- All activities as part of the project
- ATOL protection
- Airport meet/greet
- 24/7 In country support



## NOT Included

- Personal Travel Insurance \*
- Meals on travel days – before arriving & after departing from project
- Any activities not specified as part of the project
- Visa's/travel documents

\* We recommend that you take out personal travel insurance as soon as your booking is confirmed.



## Suggested kit list

- Short sleeve shirts
- Long work trousers and shorts  
(Or work trousers with zip-off longs)
- T shirts
- Hiking Boots/comfortable walking shoes to work in every day
- Rain jacket
- Sweatshirt/Fleece (Winter months pack plenty)
- Padded parka jacket/windbreaker - warm  
(it can get very cold on an open vehicle - even on a summer evening)
- Daypack rucksack
- Sleeping Bag - for sleep out / camping in summer months  
(weather dependent)
- Socks
- Warm Hat (in winter only) /Hat for sun protection  
(all year round)
- Working gloves
- Gloves for warmth (in winter only)

- Changes of casual clothes for evenings
- Underwear
- Sandals / comfy shoes to wear after work hours
- Bath towel
- Beach towel
- Swimming costume
- Toiletries
- Tick / insect repellent

### Other useful items:

- Binoculars
- Good torch
- Water bottle
- Camera
- Spare batteries
- Sunglasses
- Personal medical goodies
- Cards/CD's
- Sunscreen
- Mammal/bird book
- Notebook/diary and pen



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