



WESTON COLLEGE PROJECT INFORMATION PACK



Waterberg Biomonitoring Programme



GLOBAL reach. **ADVENTURE** for all. **PROJECTS** to inspire.

TRIP OVERVIEW

AFRICA

Weston College – Booking Reference 4664

Trip Dates:

15th March 2026 – 29th March 2026

Flights:

TBC 15th March London Heathrow – Johannesburg arriving 16th March*

TBC 28th March Johannesburg – London Heathrow arriving 29th March*

*Always check the flight timings on your final documents

Project:

Waterberg Biomonitoring Programme

Trip Cost:

£2295.00 – £2455 per person (to be confirmed once numbers and flights are secured)

£300.00 deposit

50% Instalment due 24/11/2025

50% Balance due 19/01/2026



AFRICA

PROJECT LOCATION

Welgevonden Game
Reserve overview

ABOUT WELGEVONDEN

AFRICA

Location

The Waterberg Biomonitoring programme is based at the Welgevonden Game Reserve, (Dutch for "well found" or "serendipitous discovery"), a 36,000ha wildlife reserve in the Waterberg District of the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

A pleasant 3.5-hour drive from Johannesburg makes Welgevonden one of the most accessible premier **malaria free** wilderness reserves in the country. It forms part of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve which was officially declared by UNESCO in 2001 and currently covers an area, in excess of, 4000 km².

The reserve comprises mountainous terrain that is dissected by deep valleys and kloofs while flat plateaus characterise most hilltops.

The altitude varies from 1080 m in the north to ±1800 m in the southern section of the reserve.



ABOUT WELGEVONDEN

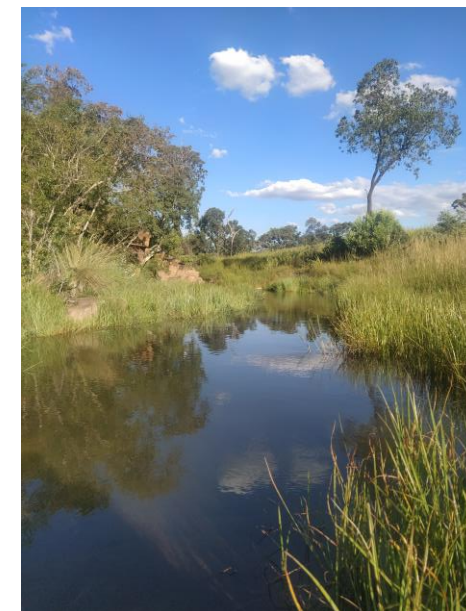
AFRICA

Welgevonden Game Reserve

Welgevonden is home to over 50 different recorded mammals, including the Big Five. There are rare and cryptic species too, such as brown hyena, pangolin, aardwolf and armadillo.

The savanna bushveld abounds with antelope from the largest eland to the diminutive duiker with large herds of plains zebra and blue wildebeest as the most abundant herbivores. Apex predators including lion, hyena and cheetah as well as small carnivores like the black-backed jackal are never far. Megaherbivores; both rhino species and elephant thrive and have important roles in the ecosystem. It is the diversity of habitat on the reserve that encourages such a wide range of wildlife including over 300 bird species and rare reptiles.

At 36,000ha in size, Welgevonden Game Reserve lies in the Waterberg plateau, about 250km north of Johannesburg. Welgevonden protects a unique and special environment and the reserve's management is deeply committed to ongoing conservation research and development.





AFRICA

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Our conservation work
in more detail

Welgevonden Biomonitoring Overview

Welgevonden Game Reserve's conservation management practices are arguably some of the best in the world. This is largely due to management's continued efforts in obtaining robust data on the ecological functioning of the Reserve, ensuring a thorough understanding of ecosystem dynamics within the protected wilderness area. This is where the Biomonitoring Programme comes in. The programme was established in 2015 and has since been responsible for the collection of research data and dedicated monitoring of fauna and flora on the reserve. From monitoring herd dynamics and animal condition, to assessing the state and ongoing changes in the ecosystem, the programme offers participants a truly hands-on experience in the management of a world-class, Big Five reserve. All this data is then analysed and processed by the Research Ecologist and used to inform management decisions.

If you are looking to gain some experience in ecological monitoring or are simply looking for a way to get out into the bush in a useful and meaningful way, becoming a participant in the Welgevonden Biomonitoring Programme is the way to go!



Your Conservation Programme – Biomonitoring Research Team

As part of your project, you will be heavily involved with the day-to-day field work conducted by the biomonitoring team. Activities include, but are not limited to:

- Game transects – estimates of numbers, body condition and herd structure
- Telemetry tracking of collared animals
- White Rhino monitoring and condition scoring
- Camera Trap Surveys (Black Rhino and other cryptic animals)
- Nocturnal species ID and night game drive
- Predator monitoring
- Mortality/kill recording
- Visit temporary holding bomas (enclosures)
- Animal tracking
- Waterberg Wild Dog Project
- Collecting faecal samples for research
- Local wildlife auction (Only on certain weekends)
- Alien plant species eradication
- Vegetation Condition Assessment
- Waterberg Biodiversity Project Data Collection with experts in their fields

Research and Ecological Biomonitoring

Rhino monitoring – participants identify uniquely marked individual rhinos in the field using an identikit. Data is captured electronically in the field and later automatically downloaded to a secure database. Information recorded includes animal ID, location, social groupings, body condition, etc. The data is analysed by the research ecologists and used to make informed management decisions regarding the rhino population.

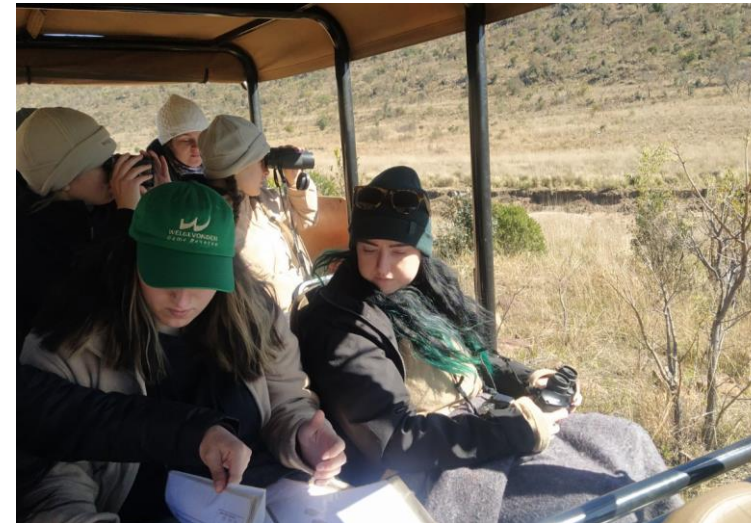
Predator monitoring – this includes all the large predators: lion, cheetah, leopard and spotted and brown hyaena. Individuals are occasionally collared for research and/or management purposes. Participants monitor these collared individuals using telemetry or GPS tracking technology. Camera trap surveys, in conjunction with Panthera, are conducted annually to determine the range and population dynamics of the resident leopard population as part of the larger Waterberg population. These camera traps are tailored for leopards, but capture photographs of the smaller, meso-predator population of the reserve – this is useful as these cryptic species are seldom seen otherwise.



Research and Ecological Biomonitoring

Game transects – pre-determined routes are driven along which game is counted. Transects are driven monthly during which the team collects data pertaining to animal species, body condition, herd structure and herd location. Analysis of this data provides an in depth understanding of the reserve's prey base and the population dynamics of the more important/common species.

Vegetation surveys – Grass species composition and biomass are determined on an annual basis. This information is used to understand the quality and quantity of available food for grazing species as well as helping to decide where best to establish fire breaks (an obstacle to the spread of fire). Woody (tree) monitoring occurs every five years and is used to determine: species composition, recruitment and growth rates and the impact of fire, elephant, browser and invertebrates on the woody plant layer.



Research and Ecological Biomonitoring

Plains monitoring – Welgevonden Game Reserve was not always a protected wilderness area with its early history rooted in agriculture. Upon conversion into a game reserve, many old agricultural fields were rehabilitated into grazing lawns. These fields, as well as the animals that make use of them, are monitored on a monthly basis to evaluate the effectiveness of this long-term programme.

Special Interventions – As these interventions occur sporadically, where possible, participants and volunteers will be given the opportunity to join and witness these special veterinary interventions which could include elephant collaring, rhino notching, predator captures and animal releases.



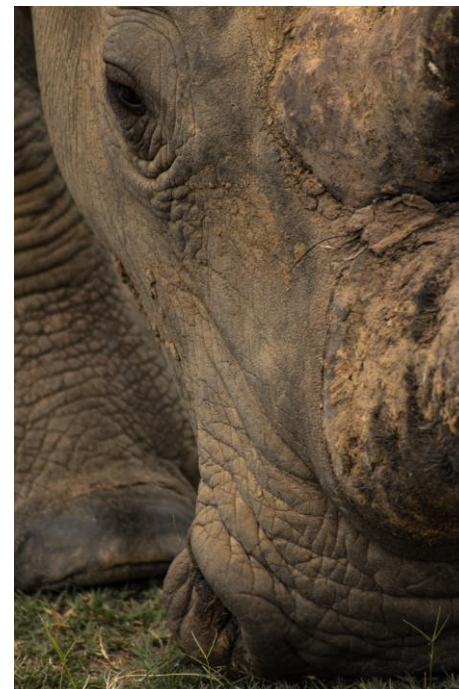
Rhino Monitoring Focused

Welgevonden Game Reserve is a significant sanctuary for two rhino species. The reserve is home to an important population of southern white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*) with its conservation status of Near Threatened as well as Critically Endangered black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*).

Welgevonden has a reputation for its strong, high-tech approach to anti-poaching; preventing criminals from entering even near the Reserve.

The Biomonitoring department has the very essential function of closely monitoring the rhino populations and participants have an active role in this. Modern technology is utilised and the team is supported by experienced scientists and managers. A rhino's life expectancy can reach over 40 years so the same college/institution or individual participant that returns regularly can see the same rhino through its life stages over all the years.

An extraordinary opportunity considering the current plight of the species.





AFRICA

ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

Life in the African Bush

ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

AFRICA

Welgevonden Accommodation

Participants are accommodated at the Research Camp, based on the reserve and boasts ten tents that sleep two to four people per tent in single beds, each tent also has lighting and electricity supply. There are communal hot and cold showers and regular flushing toilets. There are communal facilities including a lecture room, canteen, entertainment area and storage fridge. The centre also has access to Wi-Fi. The camp is fenced off inside the boundaries of the reserve, check out the aerial shot of camp! You can wake up and find an elephant 10 meters from your door!



ANY QUESTIONS?

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ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

AFRICA

Welgevonden

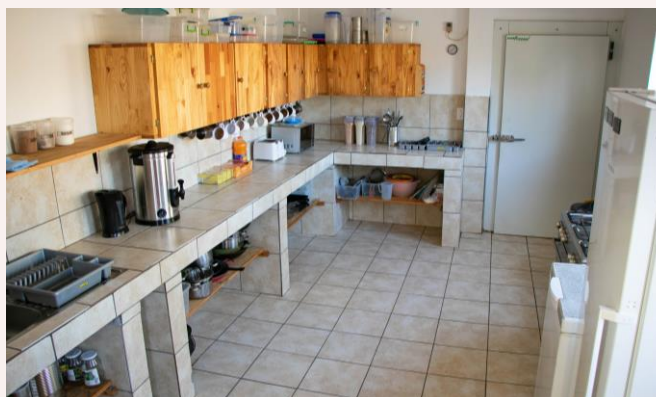
All meals are enjoyed together mostly in the outside eating area and sometimes inside on colder evenings.

Three meals are provided daily on a self-cook basis. The evening meal is prepared by the group in small teams. Students are responsible for the communal cooking and washing up.

Evening meals and breakfast are served at the facility and lunch is normally brought into the field and taken picnic-style in the bush.

The biomonitoring team normally work 6 days a week so time off is often limited to Sundays only.

Most evenings are spent at leisure in camp mostly outdoors at tables and benches or around a campfire.



ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

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Weekends – Sunday only

Vaalwater Town and Township Tour

10h00 – 13h00: Visit local art gallery, curio shop, craft market,

13h00: Traditional lunch (at own cost)

14h00 – 16h30: Traditional beer brewery and visit to Lapa for traditional dancing and music.

Horse Riding Excursion

2 hour bush ride from 08h30 – 10h30

Lunch included

(Above varies depending on provider)

Weekend Activities can be booked and paid for locally. Or pre-booked with GAP Africa and paid locally.



A large rhinoceros and its calf are the central focus of the image, standing in a lush green savanna. The rhinoceros is on the right, and the calf is on the left, both facing towards the left. In the background, there are several tents with green and grey roofs, suggesting a safari camp. The overall scene is bright and sunny, with a clear sky and a mix of green grass and brown earth.

AFRICA

USEFUL INFORMATION

Inclusions/Exclusions &
Recommended Kit List

WHAT'S INCLUDED

AFRICA

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
- Tips

* 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 (especially during summer months)
- Sweatshirt/Fleece (Winter months pack plenty)
- Buff/neck warmer useful all year round
- Padded parka jacket/windbreaker - (it can get very cold on an open vehicle - even on a summer evening)
- Daypack rucksack
- Microfibre Sleeping Bag liner (for extra warmth in winter)
- Socks
- Hat for sun protection / Warm hat (winter only)
- Gloves for warmth (winter only)
- Work Gloves
- Changes of casual clothes for evenings
- Underwear

- Sunscreen & Sunglasses
- Sandals / comfy shoes to wear after work hours
- Toiletries
- Tick / insect repellent
- Personal medical items & First Aid Kit
- Binoculars
- Torch/headlamp
- Water bottle

Other useful items:

- Camera
- Spare batteries
- Cards/Music
- Mammal/bird book
- Notebook/diary and pen
- Mosquito net in summer



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