



# SRUC OATRIDGE PROJECT INFORMATION PACK



## Sibuya Conservation Experience

AFRICA

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# TRIP OVERVIEW

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## SRUC Oatridge – Booking Reference 4662

### Trip Dates:

27<sup>th</sup> July to 27<sup>th</sup> August 2025

### Flights:

Flight No	Flight Date	Dept.	Dept. Time	Arr.	Arr. Time
EK028	27/07/2025	Glasgow (GLA)	14:35	Dubai (DXB)	01:05 + 1 Day
EK761	28/07/2025	Dubai (DXB)	04:05	Johannesburg (JNB)	10:15
FA534	28/07/2025	Johannesburg (JNB)	13:05	Port Elizabeth (PLZ)	14:50
FA633	11/08/2025	Port Elizabeth (PLZ)	10:20	Johannesburg (JNB)	12:00
EK764	26/08/2025	Johannesburg (JNB)	19:10	Dubai (DXB)	05:25 + 1 Day
EK027	27/08/2025	Dubai (DXB)	07:50	Glasgow (GLA)	12:45

\*Always check the flight timings on your final documents

**Baggage Allowance** – 1 piece of checked baggage @20kgs, 1 piece of hand baggage @ 7kg max dimensions 56x36x23 cms

### Project:

Sibuya Wilderness Experience & Waterberg Biomonitoring



**AFRICA**

# **ABOUT THE PROJECT**

Our conservation work  
in more detail

# ABOUT SIBUYA GAME RESERVE

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## Sibuya Game Reserve

Sibuya is a Malaria-free Eco destination, on the Eastern Cape's Sunshine Coast, between Port Elizabeth and East London.

Sibuya Game Reserve incorporates the unique East Cape Valley Bushveld, Grasslands and Coastal Forests. Antelope abound, including the rare Bontebok and Oribi. Elephants, giraffe and plains zebra silhouetted against an Indian Ocean backdrop complete a truly memorable picture.

The ancient floodplains and pristine coastal forest host an abundance of wildlife: nearly 400 bird species and 45 species of recorded wildlife including the "Big Five". The lush vegetation ensures a high density of animals and special game-viewing experiences are guaranteed.



# YOUR PROJECT

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The **Sibuya Wilderness Experience** offers students and participants the unique and exciting opportunity to get hands-on experience in the conservation efforts of Sibuya Game Reserve.

The team of passionate conservationists work tirelessly to save endangered and threatened terrestrial and marine wildlife from extinction.

Students will take part in short and long-term projects which are intended to create sustainability for generations to come. Tasks may vary from physical work to interesting and interactive lecture-based content.

The newly launched Programme focuses on an impactful rescue and anti-poaching scope for wildlife and a strong marine conservation aim. By exposing participants to the conservation work and nurturing in them a hands-on mentality, the team believe they can make a difference.

Conservation does not stop at conserving nature alone but includes a responsibility to uplift local and impoverished communities. This responsibility includes environmental education of the community as to its role in and the benefits of conserving biodiversity and further stresses the importance of conserving natural resources.



ANY QUESTIONS?

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## Your Conservation Programme

- Lion monitoring
- Elephant monitoring
- Rhino monitoring
- Ocean Research Institute fish tagging
- Fencing and Alien Plant clearing
- Community Outreach
- Coastal Dunes and Rocky Shores
- Kayak Expedition 15km
- Pitfall trap insect collection and Identification
- Starry Night Constellation Observation
- SANCOBB visit

## Presentations and Talks on:

- Lion Conservation
- Elephant Ecology
- Rhino Conservation
- Ornithology (Birds)

## Conservation Programme – The Bush

There is so much opportunity in this newly established and expanding reserve. They are in the process of incorporating more land, and 'rewilding' needs to take place, so students are exposed to unique hands-on conservation and monitoring.

**Key species monitoring:** This involves locating the ecologically significant terrestrial species (**elephant, white rhino, lion**), identifying individuals using identikits and then monitoring their behaviour.

**Reserve maintenance:** fence and road maintenance as well as alien plant removal are important tasks on the reserve where students will have a chance to be physical and get their hands dirty.

**Insect surveys:** Pitfall traps are wonderful tools to collect data on insects, reptiles and anything else crawling along the ground. From digging the holes to finding the specimens and identifying them – students will be part of this exciting research.



## Conservation Programme – Ocean and Estuary

The unique aspect of this reserve is that it is accessible by boat along the Kariega River and incorporates the river, estuary and ocean – all important contributions to Sibuya’s biodiversity and for which the team have a great responsibility to conserve.

**Fish Tagging** – Students have the wonderful opportunity to contribute to a National fish tagging project. They will learn how to safely catch, tag, record data, and release the sensitive estuarine fish species.

**Rocky shores and coastal dunes** – Learn about and monitor the coastal marine environment’s biodiversity which includes the largest dunes in the southern hemisphere!

**Outreach Project** – This takes place with the coastal village’s community and an important aspect is the beach and riverside clean-up.





## Sample Itinerary

### Week 1

Day 1: Arrival and settling into accommodation

Day 2: Welcome presentation, elephant monitoring, elephant conservation talk, camera trap set up

Day 3: Rhino conservation talk, rhino monitoring

Day 4: Fence management, alien plant removal

Day 5: Bird count, ornithology presentation

Day 6: Community outreach (delivering dog food), town trip

Day 7-8: Leisure time/adventure activities

### Week 2:

Day 9: Lion conservation presentation, lion monitoring, buffalo management

Day 10-11: Alexandria Dune Trail, rocky shore practical

Day 12: Fish Tagging, Boat cruise

Day 13: Wildlife monitoring drive and picnic

Day 14: Camera trap collections and farewell dinner

Day 15: Team breakfast and depart



## Project Overview - SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

The Waterberg conservation research programme serves as a living laboratory for ecological research, offering students and researchers a chance to work alongside experts in the field.

Participants will play an active role in a variety of immersive conservation and research activities. Through activities like wildlife monitoring, vegetation surveys, and data analysis, students gain practical experience using tools such as GPS devices and biomass sampling equipment. Each project offers a unique opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the reserve's ecological goals while developing valuable skills in fieldwork and conservation management.

Beyond research, the programme fosters community empowerment and sustainable conservation practices, inspiring future generations to protect this remarkable landscape while equipping participants with valuable skills for careers in conservation.



## Flora: Vegetation Surveys and Ecological Studies – SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

### Objective:

To assess, monitor, and enhance the ecological health of flora in the Northern Waterberg region, ensuring sustainable biodiversity conservation and habitat management.

### Activity Descriptions:

#### 1. Grasses Survey and Full Collection (Annual):

- Collect and identify grass species using field guides and sample collection techniques.
- Establish baseline data on grass species composition and distribution.
- Use findings to assess food availability for grazers and inform firebreak planning.

#### 2. Plant Plots (Baseline Study):

- Set up and monitor vegetation plots in various ecosystems and floral zones.
- Record species diversity and analyse habitat differences and similarities.



## Fauna: Wildlife and Ecological Projects SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

### Objective:

To monitor and protect animal populations and their habitats, contributing to a deeper understanding of species behaviour, ecological roles, and conservation needs.

### Activity Descriptions:

#### 1. Known Animal Group Counts (Monthly):

- Conduct surveys to monitor population dynamics of key wildlife species.
- Use GPS devices and observation techniques to collect data on herd sizes, locations, and behaviours.

#### 2. Leopard Project (Collaboration with Ingwe Foundation):

- Develop ID kits to monitor individual leopards.
- Cast and identify leopard spoor to map territorial boundaries.
- Collect and analyse prey base data and faecal samples to study diet and ecological impacts.



## Fauna: Wildlife and Ecological Projects SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

### 6. Reptile Pitfall Trap Study

- Install and monitor pitfall traps in predefined locations to safely capture small reptiles.
- Identify species using field guides and photographic records.
- Record environmental conditions to assess habitat preferences and seasonal activity.

### 7. Bird Ringing and Ornithology:

- Set up mist nets in various habitats to capture birds for ringing and data collection.
- Record physical measurements, health indicators, and unique identification details before safely releasing birds.

### 8. Camera Trap Study and Surveys:

- Deploy camera traps in strategic locations to capture images and videos of wildlife.
- Analyse data to identify species, document behaviors, and estimate population densities.



## Eco System: Practical Management – SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

### 3. Water System Maintenance:

- Inspect and repair water systems, ensuring a reliable supply for wildlife and reserve operations.
- Develop strategies to reduce water waste and optimize usage.

### 4. Gardening (Vegetable Garden and Orchard):

- Cultivate and maintain vegetable gardens and orchards to support sustainable food production.
- Learn organic farming techniques and composting practices.

### Learning Outcomes:

- Acquire practical skills in infrastructure and resource management.
- Learn sustainable agricultural practices and their ecological benefits.
- Contribute to maintaining essential reserve operations.



## Community: Rural Development and Support – SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

### Objective:

To explore the intersection of conservation, culture, and community, fostering social awareness and empowering local populations.

### Activity Descriptions:

#### 1. Herbology in Local Communities:

- Study the use of local plants for medicinal and cultural purposes.
- Assess community preferences and practices related to herbology.

#### 2. Rural Youth and Education:

- Investigate the social status and aspirations of rural youth in local villages.
- Examine the impact of social media on perceptions of manual labor and rural lifestyles.



## Other Possible Activities: Non-Research

Beyond research, students will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in unique and enriching experiences :

### San Rock Art Talk and Trail:

Learn about the fascinating history and cultural significance of ancient San rock art, followed by a guided trail to a rock painting site for an up-close exploration.

### Stargazing:

Experience the breathtaking clarity of the southern hemisphere's night sky, free from light pollution, and discover the stories and science behind its constellations.

### Fresh Water Swimming:

Enjoy the serenity of our 20 km stretch of pristine riverine habitat, with scenic swimming spots perfect for relaxation and connection with nature.

### Potjie Cooking Competition:

Embrace South African tradition with a lively potjie (cast-iron pot stew) cooking competition. Students will team up to prepare their own creations over open fires.





## 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 aardvark.

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.



# YOUR PROJECT - WELGEVONDEN

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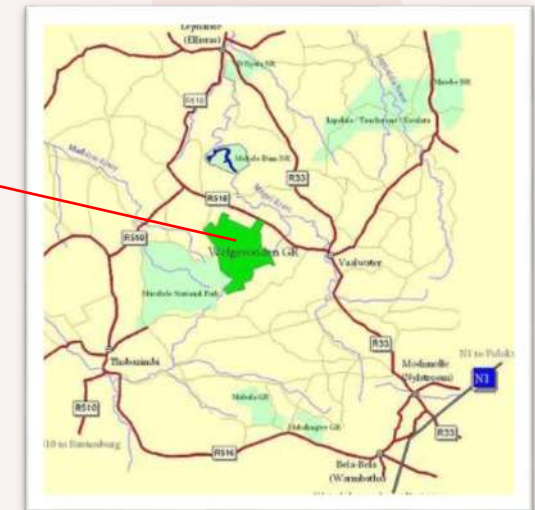
## Location

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 km<sup>2</sup>.

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.



## 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 PROJECT – WELGEVONDEN

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## 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.







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# **ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE**

Life in the African Bush

## Sibuya – River Camp

Together with the team, the group will be accommodated and hosted at Forest Camp.

Happy family vibes.

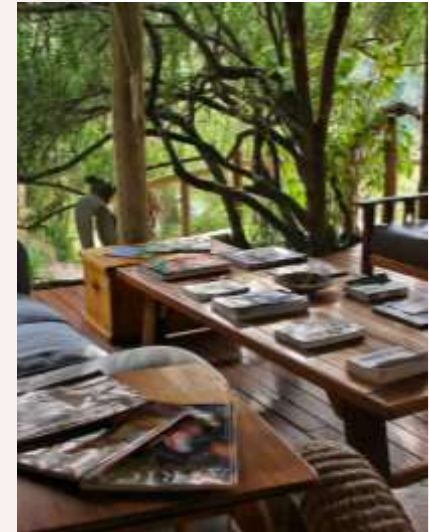
Participants will share comfortable four bedded rooms with en-suite bathrooms, including full board (3 meals a day).



# ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

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## River Camp



ANY QUESTIONS?

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# ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

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## Food

3 meals a day are provided

Please remember to advise us of any dietary requirements to enable us to ensure you are adequately catered for.



# OPTIONAL WEEKEND EXCURSIONS

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Weekend Options  
will be sent in  
advance of your  
departure.

Pre-Booked or  
Paid Locally



## SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve Accommodation

Students and academic groups will be accommodated at our purpose-built camp on SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve, designed to provide comfort and foster community living. The camp features shared twin and triple rooms with communal ablution facilities. At the heart of the camp is a spacious communal area, equipped with a shared kitchen and dining space, which also serves as a hub for relaxation, lectures, and group activities.

For evening gatherings, there's a cozy firepit/boma area where students can unwind and cook meals over the fire under the stars. On weekends, groups are welcome to enjoy the main farmhouse and pool area for some well-deserved relaxation. Ingredients for meals are provided, and students cook together, creating a vibrant and social camp atmosphere.



## 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!



# ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

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## 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.





## 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.**





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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 & lunch during transfer to St. Lucia
- Any activities not specified as part of the project
- Visas/travel documents
- Tips

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



## Suggested kit list

- Short and long sleeve T shirts \*
- Long work trousers and shorts \*  
(Or work trousers with zip-off longs)
- 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
- Socks
- Warm Hat (winter only) /Hat for sun protection (all year round)
- Working gloves
- Gloves for warmth (winter only)
- Water bottle (filtered rainwater provided at the lodge)

\* All work clothes should be neutral or earth tones for working in the bush. No skimpy or bright coloured clothing to be worn.

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

### Other useful items:

- Binoculars
- Good torch
- Camera
- Spare batteries
- Sunglasses
- Personal medical items/First Aid kit
- Sunscreen
- Mammal/bird book
- Notebook/diary and pen
- Power Bank



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