



MERRIST WOOD COLLEGE PROJECT INFORMATION PACK



Waterberg Wildlife & Veterinary Course Entabeni (Vet Nurses)

AFRICA

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

TRIP OVERVIEW

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Merrist Wood College – Booking Reference TBC

Travel Dates:

5th April 2026 – 18th April 2026

Flights:

Flight No	Flight Date	Dept.	Dept. Time	Arr.	Arr. Time
VS449	05/04/2026	London Heathrow (LHR)	22:15	Johannesburg (JNB)	10:05 + 1 Day
VS450	18/04/2026	Johannesburg (JNB)	20:15	London Heathrow (LHR)	06:20 + 1 Day

*Always check the flight timings on your final documents

Baggage Allowance – 1 piece checked baggage @ 23kgs, 1 piece hand baggage @ 10kgs max dimensions 56x36x23 cms

Project:

Waterberg Wildlife & Veterinary Course – Entabeni

Trip Cost:

£2595.00 per person

£300.00 deposit

£1147.50 Instalment due 15/12/2026

£1147.50 Balance due 09/02/2026



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PROJECT LOCATION

The Waterberg
overview

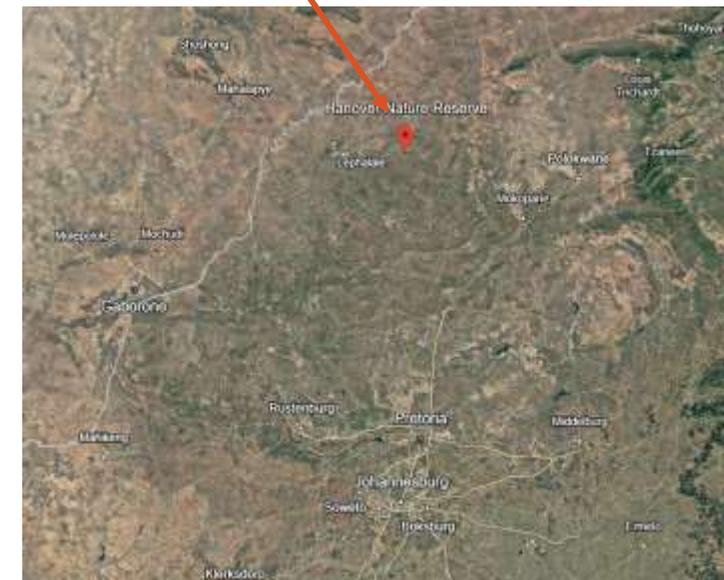
ABOUT THE WATERBERG

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Location

The Waterberg conservation research programme is based in the Waterberg region of South Africa, which is a pleasant 4.5-hour drive from Johannesburg making this project one of the most accessible premier **malaria free** wilderness areas in the country. It borders the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve which was officially declared by UNESCO in 2001 and currently covers an area, in excess of, 4000 km².

The Waterberg region is famed for its mountainous terrain that is dissected by deep valleys and kloofs while flat plateaus characterise most hilltops.



ABOUT THE WATERBERG

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Hanover & SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

A Hub for Research, Conservation and Education

Nestled in the heart of the Waterberg region, the Waterberg conservation research programme is a pioneering conservation initiative dedicated to preserving South Africa's rich biodiversity while fostering ecological research and community engagement. Covering over 2,000 acres of pristine wilderness, this collaborative project works in unison with the neighbouring SwebeSwebe Wildlife Reserve. Together, these areas form a unified conservation space of 15,000 acres, removing barriers to wildlife movement and creating an uninterrupted haven for flora and fauna.

Our mission extends beyond preservation. We believe in taking direct action to safeguard natural ecosystems, which is why we've invested in integrating cutting-edge conservation technologies, enhancing infrastructure and building strong partnerships with local and international stakeholders. The reserve is a hub for international academic research and student engagement, offering participants the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to conservation while gaining hands-on experience in a diverse ecological setting.



ABOUT THE WATERBERG

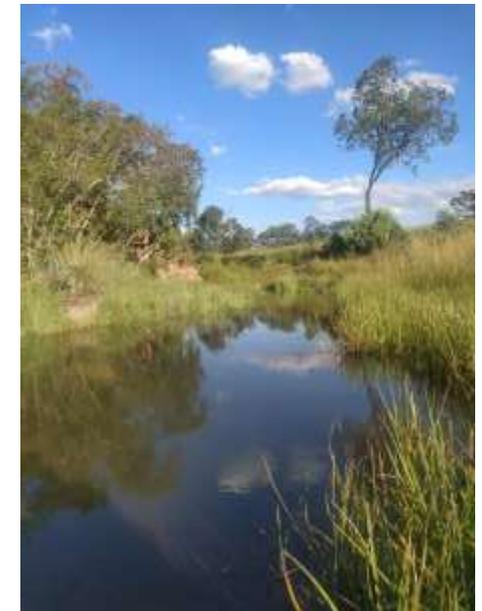
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Welgevonden Game Reserve

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





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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Our conservation work
in more detail

ABOUT THE WATERBERG

AFRICA

Your Project Locations

Your trip is split between three locations, in two neighbouring provinces of South Africa. You will first spend time at SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve involved in conservation and research activities before travelling to the Entabeni Safari Conservancy to observe a focused wildlife veterinary practice, both on a reserve in the Waterberg, Limpopo Province. You will then travel South to the Gauteng Province where you will have a tour of the Johannesburg Wildlife Vet – the only small animal practice in the country that only works on wildlife; assist with some shelter and community cases, learn about a K9 conservation unit and participate in lectures and debates. Project locations and duration are as follows:

Itinerary

6 Nights

SwebeSwebe Conservation Research, SwebeSwebe Game Reserve, Waterberg – Limpopo Province

4 Nights

Waterberg Wildlife Course, Entabeni Wildlife Conservancy, Waterberg – Limpopo Province

2 Nights

Kyalami, Midrand and surrounding areas – Gauteng Province



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ABOUT THE PROJECT: SWEBESWEBE NATURE RESERVE

Our conservation work
in more detail

Project Overview – SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve (6 Nights)

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



Flora: Vegetation Surveys and Ecological Studies – SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

3. Woody Plant Density Report:

- Conduct surveys to determine tree species density and diversity
- Identify ecological nodes and assess recruitment, growth and impacts of fire and herbivores on woody plants

4. Identification of Ecological Nodes:

- Map and analyse differences and similarities across floral zones, focusing on critical ecological nodes that influence biodiversity

5. Photo ID of Waterberg Trees:

- Create a photographic database of tree species for educational and research purposes

6. Herbology of the Northern Waterberg:

- Collect and sample indigenous plants to study their ecological and medicinal properties
- Investigate herbivory patterns and their role in shaping ecosystems



Flora: Vegetation Surveys and Ecological Studies SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

7. Alien Plant Control – Queen-of-the-Night (Ongoing):

- Identify, monitor and remove invasive Queen-of-the-Night plants to protect native vegetation
- Implement sustainable methods of controlling alien plant species

8. Seed Dispersal Study:

- Investigate how baboons, birds and cattle disperse seeds within the reserve
- Assess their role in maintaining ecosystem balance and aiding reforestation efforts

Learning Outcomes:

- Gain expertise in plant identification and ecological survey methods
- Understand the role of vegetation in supporting diverse ecosystems
- Learn sustainable practices for alien plant control and seed dispersal monitoring



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

3. Small Mammal Project (Collaboration with Prof. Mark Keith):

- Humanely capture, photograph and identify small mammals
- Assess ecological niches and predator-prey relationships

4. Fish Project (Collaboration with Prof. Darragh Woodford):

- Capture and photograph fish species to establish a database
- Study ecological roles and predator-prey dynamics of aquatic systems

5. Fence Immigration and Emigration Project:

- Monitor animal movement across fences to evaluate the impact of barriers on wildlife connectivity
- Use this data to inform decisions about fence removal or modifications



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 behaviours, and estimate population densities



Fauna: Wildlife and Ecological Projects SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

9. Wild Dog Project (Collaboration with WWDI):

- Track wild dogs using GPS and VHS technology
- Collect faecal samples to study diet and ecological roles
- Develop strategies for predator-human conflict mitigation

10. Dung Beetle and Butterfly Collections:

- Collect, identify and catalogue dung beetles and butterflies to assess their roles in nutrient cycling and pollination
- Focus on species unique to the Northern Waterberg region

Learning Outcomes:

- Develop skills in animal identification, data collection and ecological analysis
- Understand the complexities of predator-prey relationships and species-specific conservation needs
- Participate in community-focused conflict mitigation strategies for wildlife conservation



Eco System: Practical Management – SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

Objective:

To develop essential skills for reserve management, focusing on infrastructure maintenance and sustainable living practices.

Activity Descriptions:

1. Road Building:

- Construct and maintain roads to improve accessibility within the reserve
- Use environmentally friendly materials and methods to minimize habitat disruption

2. Fence Maintenance:

- Repair and maintain fences to ensure effective wildlife management
- Identify and address issues related to animal immigration and emigration



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



Community: Rural Development and Support SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

3. Education and "Back to Nature" Initiatives:

- Design and implement programmes to reconnect local communities with nature
- Provide experiential learning opportunities that emphasise sustainable living

4. Natural Resource Exploitation Studies:

- Assess the social and environmental implications of natural resource exploitation
- Develop strategies to promote responsible resource use within communities

Learning Outcomes:

- Gain insights into the cultural dimensions of conservation
- Develop strategies for community engagement and education
- Understand the social challenges and opportunities in rural development



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.



Possible Lectures – SwebeSwebe Nature Reserve

Conservation Ecology and Ecosystem Dynamics

- Overview of ecosystem structures and functions
- How species interactions (predator-prey dynamics, competition) shape ecosystems
- The role of keystone species in maintaining biodiversity

Vegetation Ecology and Fire Management

- Grass and tree identification techniques
- The impact of fire on savanna ecosystems and its role in vegetation dynamics
- Strategies for firebreak design and implementation

Sustainable Grazing and Herd Management

- Rotational grazing practices and their ecological benefits
- Water usage efficiency in grazing systems
- The socio-economic implications of sustainable livestock management

Wildlife Population Monitoring Techniques

- Methods for conducting game transects, spoor tracking, and population surveys
- Use of GPS and remote sensing tools in wildlife studies.
- Data collection, entry and visualisation for informed decision-making

Biodiversity and Invasive Species Management

- Understanding the ecological impact of invasive species (e.g., *Queen-of-the-Night*)
- Strategies for control and eradication
- Importance of maintaining native biodiversity

Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation

- Understanding the causes and consequences of human-wildlife conflicts
- Techniques for conflict resolution (e.g., predator tracking and prey management)
- Conservation tools like fencing and compensation schemes

Animal Behaviour and Ecological Niches

- Study of animal behaviour to determine ecological roles
- Special focus on species like leopards, wild dogs and small mammals
- Understanding territoriality, prey selection, and habitat use

Water Systems and Aquatic Ecology

- The role of freshwater ecosystems in biodiversity conservation
- Methods for fish identification and sampling



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ABOUT THE PROJECT: ENTABENI SAFARI CONSERVANCY

Our conservation work
in more detail

Waterberg Wildlife and Veterinary Course – Entabeni

This course provides the opportunity for hands-on practical wildlife experience for pre-vet/vet nurses/technicians or those studying in the veterinary field.

Based at the reserve's student camp working directly with the monitoring team; this department runs and manages the day-to-day decisions and monitoring of the wildlife and ecosystem of the reserve.

The team and their work are crucial to the management and welfare of all wildlife on the reserve, as they monitor the animals' conditions, herd structures, locations and behaviours.

Time will be spent working with the reserve's veterinarian and other local wildlife vets with whom the team work.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

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Entabeni Safari Conservancy (4 Nights)

- Introduction to Entabeni Safari Conservancy and Research Projects
- Rhino orphanage – assist with orphaned rhino calves
- Time spent with the research team conducting conservation activities
- Wildlife Veterinary work and intervention (Dr Pierre Bester)
- Build up to possible intervention and planning

It's important to remember that wildlife does not work to an agenda, therefore activities may change at short notice!



ABOUT THE PROJECT

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Dr Pierre Bester – Wildlife Veterinarian

Rhino orphanage veterinarian, Dr Pierre Bester has a mixed animal practice treating large and small domestic animals as well as wildlife. The main scope of his work includes the immobilisation, treatment, and translocation of African wildlife, including megaherbivore: rhinos and elephants.

He has been involved with the immobilisation and translocation of thousands of rhinos, as well as countless other species.



The Rhino Orphanage

The Rhino Orphanage was the first-ever specialised, non-commercial centre dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, raising and release of orphaned rhinos back into the wild.

Although newborn rhinos can weigh up to 50kgs, they are essentially “helpless” and require protection so that they may survive and ultimately thrive.

Rhino calves and rhino mothers are closely bonded. Rhino young are fiercely protected by their mothers in the wild, so when a rhino mother is killed, the rhino orphan becomes particularly vulnerable, and their longevity is endangered. Under normal circumstances, rhino calves will stay with their mothers for around 3 years. For this reason, the rhino orphans in their care typically require the same intensity and timeframe of nurturing from the carers.





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ABOUT THE PROJECT: KYALAMI, MIDRAND AND SURROUNDING AREAS

Our conservation work
in more detail

ABOUT THE PROJECT

AFRICA

Kyalami, Midrand and surrounding areas – Gauteng (2 Nights)

- Visit to Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary hospital.
- Assist with some animal shelter and community cases
- Assist with a K9 conservation unit.

It's important to remember that wildlife does not work to an agenda, therefore activities may change at short notice!



Kyalami – Johannesburg Wildlife Vet

Johannesburg Wildlife Vet is a registered wildlife veterinary hospital and a rehabilitation centre that rescues, rehabilitates and releases indigenous wildlife in South Africa.

Specialising in treating sick, injured and orphaned animals, this non-profit company provides expert care while promoting conservation through education and research.

Johannesburg Wildlife Vet exclusively treats, rehabilitates, releases and protects small to medium indigenous wildlife, free of charge. The species treated range from the most common to the highly endangered and include all mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and even arachnids.

It is lead by Dr Karin Lourens who has been a practicing veterinarian for 22 years with a specific interest in wildlife veterinary medicine and wildlife rehabilitation of South African species.

Watch this [NETFLIX documentary](#), about a baby pangolin embarking on a journey back to the wild, featuring Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

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Kyalami – Society for Animals in Distress

Vet care is provided by Vets, Vet Nurses, Animal Health Technicians and Animal Welfare Assistants.

The organisation's focus is to provide access to veterinary care for all, to serve vulnerable communities and animal care organisations.

Students will assist professional Masterton method practitioner and veterinarians at the rescue centre with horses, dogs, cats and other small animals.

The animals have been rescued from impoverished circumstances and are rehabilitated to be rehomed.



Kyalami – Pit-Track K9 antipoaching unit

Pit-Track is a registered NPC Non-Profit Company specialising in K9 Conservation and Anti-Poaching, made up of highly skilled, and dedicated operators,, who have devoted their lives to the protection of wildlife.

Pit-Track has operated extensively on anti-poaching operations and has continued to remain in the field on the frontline of the war against poaching.

Students will meet the K9 antipoaching team. A talk about the poaching crisis will be delivered as well as a K9 demo. Students then have the opportunity to assist these working dogs with any physio needs.





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ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

Life in the African Bush

ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

AFRICA

SwebeSwebe – Hanover Nature Reserve Accommodation

Students and academic groups will be accommodated at our purpose-built camp on Hanover 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 is 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.



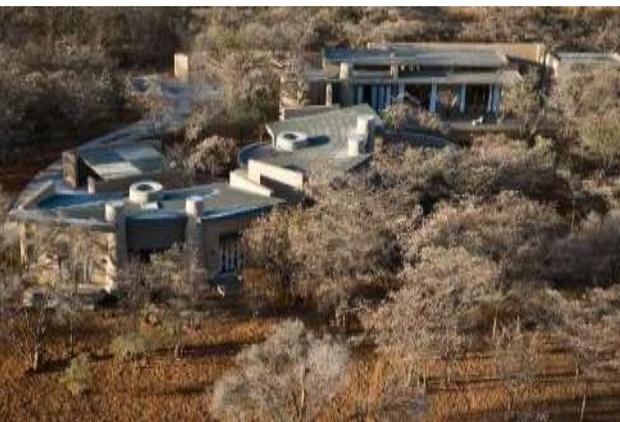
ACCOMMODATION & LIFESTYLE

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Waterberg – Entabeni Accommodation

You will stay in twin bedded rooms with ensuite facilities.

There are 4, 5 and 6 bedroom units each of which has an open plan layout with lounge and dining area and a fully equipped kitchen.



Gauteng – Fair Glen Guest House

You will be staying in twin bedded accommodation with en-suite facilities.

There is a swimming pool and outdoor seating area and the guest house has WiFi.

The guest house offers comfortable areas to relax and unwind and is based in an equestrian-themed suburb.

Ideally situated for the visits to the Johannesburg Wildlife Vet Practice and Animals in Distress.



Meals

At SwebeSwebe and Entabeni all meals are included. The students will self prepare meals as a group in one of the kitchens.

Some days lunch will be had back at camp, other days lunch will be brought into the field to be had as a picnic.

Evenings are spent at leisure around the campfire.

Only Sunday will be an off day to 'chill' in camp or do extra activities.

All meals will be provided at Fair Glen Guest House. A packed lunch will be provided if the group are not returning to the accommodation at lunch time.





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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 (self prepared)
- 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
- Visas/travel documents
- Tips

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

Suggested kit list

To allow for ease of transfer to the project a soft holdall/ soft suitcase is preferred.

- Short and long sleeve t-shirts
- Long work trousers and shorts (or work/zip-off trousers)
- Hiking boots/comfortable walking shoes to work in every day
- Waterproof jacket
- Sweatshirt/Fleece (Winter months pack plenty)
- Padded jacket/windbreaker (Winter months) although it can get very cold on an open vehicle even in summer
- Socks
- Underwear
- Change of casual clothes for evenings
- Sandals / comfy shoes to wear after work hours
- Warm hat (Winter only) / Hat for sun protection (all year)
- Gloves for warmth (Winter only)
- Working gloves
- Daypack rucksack
- Swimwear
- Sunscreen and Sunglasses
- Personal medical items
- First aid kit
- Toiletries
- Tick / Insect repellent
- Water bottle

Other useful items:

- Binoculars
- Camera
- Power bank
- Good torch

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



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