

A country finally emerging from decades of political turmoil with dreams of returning to its former glory, and a light at the end of a long tunnel .

Once Africa's richest country, Zimbabwe has suffered the ravages of the rule of the infamous Robert Mugabe over the past 22 years.

While the new power-sharing initiative has not gone smoothly, positive changes are already in place for the better. The US Dollar replacing the Zimbabwean Dollar has brought an end to crazy inflation and the start of financial stability, Western governments have lifted their travel bans and once again NGOs and news broadcasters are being allowed back in – reinforcing our position that Zimbabwe is a country that volunteers will be safe to visit.

As Zimbabwe gets back on its feet, volunteers can make a real difference here – whether in the community projects helping people rebuild their lives, or in conservation projects where Zimbabwe's stunning wildlife has been so neglected.

Whichever project you take part in, you will be sure to visit the awesome Victoria Falls – the largest curtain of water in the world – and explore Zimbabwe's national parks where you can spot the big Big 5!

Your life outside the project

Whichever park you are based in, you can enjoy the adventure of the bush at night, listening to the sounds of the animals whilst enjoying the best local cuisine around the fire. Cool down during the days in the on-site pools and venture out on some spectacular trips at the weekends - making sure you don't miss the awesome views of the amazing Victoria Falls.

Weather

- Average Temperature: Wet season 30°C and dry season 20°C
- Wet Season: November - March
- Dry Season: May - September



Antelope Park Lion Breeding and Rehabilitation

The project

Volunteer in Zimbabwe on a world first lion breeding and rehabilitation project, supported by some of the worlds leading ecologists in the field. We invite you to walk with African Lions, to be involved in our in-depth research and data-collection activities and to help rehabilitate lions back into their natural environment. Spending time with the lions in the wild each day is an essential part of the cubs upbringing. If the cubs are to be successfully released it is important that they spend time out in a natural environment. They need to adapt to it, learn from it, understand, observe, feel and smell the wild.

Since the start of this intensive programme, we have noted a marked increase in the Lions awareness of their natural surroundings, as well as an improvement in their hunting skills. The larger cubs are now able to take down smaller game species whilst out on walks, and these abilities are being enhanced each day whilst under the supervision of volunteers. These are invaluable discoveries, which have earned us further support for our world first endeavours.

Join our team of professional guides and other dedicated volunteers, gain a deeper understanding of the King of Beasts and assist us in gathering vital information that will facilitate their eventual release.

Why the project needs you

Over 200,000 lions roamed the African continent as recently as 1975. In 2002 two surveys provided evidence of a dramatic decline estimating that only 23,000 to 39,000 remain, with the lowest estimate being just 16,500. This represents an 80 to 90 % population decline in less than 30 years. It is widely accepted that the population has continued to decline in the subsequent years. The end objective of the Antelope Park lion project, along with our Victoria Falls program, is the rehabilitation of captive-bred lions into a wild environment so that their cubs, raised by the pride, can learn the skills necessary to ensure their successful reintroduction into the wild.

Role of the volunteer

As a volunteer you will take part in lion walks and you will enjoy the exhilaration of being part of a hunt as the young cubs learn to stalk their prey. In the mornings especially you will help bottle feed the younger lion cubs if there are some on site at the time. Cleaning the enclosures and preparing meat for feeding times are daily tasks. You may also be able to learn to ride horses so you can cross the grass lands so you can effectively carry out boundary patrol and snare sweeping. Each day is exciting, exhilarating and an experience you will learn so much from.

Skills required

There are no specific skills required for this program. You will need to be of good health and have a decent level of fitness. Any previous experience of riding horses will also be an advantage. Aside from that enthusiasm and willingness to do what is required during daily tasks is the attitude required for the project.

Project location

You will be staying at Antelope Park, a 3000 acre game reserve located a few kilometres outside the city of Gweru in the centre of the country. The opportunity to live in the heart of a game reserve is not to be missed. Volunteer accommodation is a mixture of twin and quad rooms and at night all residents gather around the camp fire to listen to the sounds of the wild bush over dinner, looking out onto the dam. On site there is a swimming pool and sporadic internet access should you wish to connect to home.

Project facts

- Duration: 2-4 weeks
- Cost: £1245 for 2 weeks, £395 for each week thereafter
- Requirements: Age 17+
- Location: Antelope Park, Gweru, Zimbabwe
- Project activities: Bottle feed the cubs, lion walks in the bush, enclosure cleaning, cub walking, boundary patrols and meat preparation, snare sweeping, enclosure maintenance and horse riding lessons
- Working Hours: 06:00 - 18:00, Monday - Friday
- Project availability: Projects start 1st and 3rd Monday of each month and run year-round.

What's included

- Accommodation: Shared room in a Volunteer House
- Food: 3 Meals a day
- Weekly laundry service
- Airport pick up and drop off
- Training: Pre-departure information pack, on-site Orientation and project induction provided
- Horse Riding lessons
- Support: On-site coordinator providing 24 hour support
- Activities: Staff help organise weekend activities. (Activity price may be extra) Trips include; elephant back riding, bungee jumping, white water rafting and gorge swing across Victoria Falls.

What's not

- Flights
- Insurance
- Visas