

African Lion Rehabilitation Project Victoria Falls - Zimbabwe



At African Impact, we see ourselves as the on-the-ground AFRICAN SPECIALISTS in volunteering. Founded in 2004, we have so far hosted over 6000 volunteers on our exciting Conservation and Community Volunteer Projects in Africa.

*We are also immensely proud to have been nominated as Finalists for the following Responsible Tourism Awards in 2009: The **World Travel Awards**; The **British Youth Travel Awards** and the prestigious South African **Imvelo Responsible Tourism Awards**. In 2010 we were once again nominated for a World Travel Award and were proud **Winners of an Africa-wide Imvelo Responsible Tourism Award**. An accolade awarded in 2009 to Sir Richard Branson's Uluksaba Eco-Lodge in South Africa. In 2011 so far we are nominated for a World Travel Award and are entrants once again in the Imvelo Awards, British Youth Travel Awards and Virgin Responsible Tourism Award.*

Our head office is in Cape Town, South Africa, with supporting operations offices in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia. We are determined to make a difference in the amazing communities and conservation areas in which we work. And so can you...



African Impact

PHYSICAL ADDRESS 6 Carlton Close, Noordhoek, 7985, Cape Town, South Africa.
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Your mission on the Victoria Falls Lion Rehabilitation & Conservation Project...

The majestic Victoria Falls set the scene for where you will be staying. Approximately a 15 – 20 minute drive from the project base, is a private Big 5 game reserve, Masuwe, where you will have the unique opportunity to walk and work with lions, exposing the cubs to the African bush as they hone their natural skills; be involved in the research of lions' behaviour and work with us on the world's only programme for their release into the wild. Also assist with conservation tasks such as clearing of alien invader plant species in the Victoria Falls National Park, and conservation education at a local primary school. There are opportunities aplenty to enjoy the wide range of adventure activities available around the Falls, which is one of Africa's adrenaline capitals.

Location: Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. The project is located on the outskirts of Victoria Falls town; a stone's throw away from the magnificent thundering waters of the Falls themselves.

Age limit: Minimum 17 years, maximum decided on potential participants' health

Required experience: No specific prior experience is required for this project but an interest in and passion for wildlife and conservation is important

Project Highlights:

- Walk alongside lions as part of the pride and enjoy the exhilaration of being part of a hunt as the young cubs learn to stalk their prey;
- Work on the world's leading programme for the release of lions back into the wild;
- Experience the African bush in a very special way as you spend time out in the "Big 5" Zambezi National Park. You will be actively involved in a number of conservation activities.
- Join the conservation education team in local schools giving you a wonderful insight into the community, as well as giving you a chance to help save the future of the Zimbabwean environment by educating the local children;
- Immerse yourself in local Zimbabwean culture;
- Enjoy the many adventure activities available from white water rafting on the mighty Zambezi River; bungee jumping from the Victoria Falls Bridge or taking to the air for a helicopter flight over the Falls giving a bird's eye view of this natural wonder;
- Take advantage of optional trips to see more of the area's spectacular wildlife areas in neighbouring Botswana or Zimbabwe including the enormous Hwange National Park, with the chance to walk with rhino at Matopos National Park and visit the lion rehabilitation programme's breeding base at Antelope Park;
- Make friends for life with the other international volunteers on the programme.

"This experience has been absolutely amazing. It has given me an awareness of the need for conservation, but also how difficult it can be to achieve the aims. The Zimbabwean people have also taught me a lot about priorities in life that I think in the west we have forgotten. It has made me realize that I want to take a new direction with my career."

Kerry Hunt, UK



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African Lion Rehabilitation & Release into the Wild Programme

In 1975 over 200,000 lions used to roam the African continent. Estimates from 2002 put the number of lions between 23,000 and 39,000, representing an 80 – 90% decline in less than 30 years.

The IUCN states that *“the causes of this reduction are not well understood, are unlikely to have ceased, and may not be reversible”*.

Lions are listed as Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Appendix II and are regarded as ‘vulnerable’ by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List [Version 3.1 2001].

“There is probably no other species whose distribution range has shrunk over historical times to the extent shown by the lion” (Smithers, 1983)

African Impact has partnered with ALERT, the African Lion & Environmental Research Trust, a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of the African lion. ALERT supports the Rehabilitation & Release into the Wild Program, founded at Antelope Park in Zimbabwe, which is seeking to provide solutions to the problem of rapidly decreasing lion populations by releasing into appropriate National Parks and reserves the wild borne offspring from rehabilitated captive bred lions, using a unique four stage program.

The program is a multi-faceted one as ALERT believes that for the lion to survive in viable numbers then its programs must also consider the environment within which it can thrive as well as the communities that live alongside it. As such the program incorporates the Conservation Centre for Wild Africa (CCWA) and the ALERT Communities Trust (ACT) to ensure that habitat is protected, that research is conducted to provide a basis for sound conservation management plans to be developed and that those communities bordering the conservation area are involved every step of the way to foster support for wildlife conservation.

All elements of the project are carried out in partnership with appropriate national and local authorities and we work alongside partner organizations to ensure that cross program cooperation is maximized.

Commercial enterprises are encouraged to develop around all programs to provide long-term financial security to the projects, and here in Livingstone we work very closely with Lion Encounter Zambia which operates stage one of the rehabilitation programme. Tourists are given the opportunity to join the lions on their daily walks through the wild and experience our programme first-hand. The additional funding raised by these walks goes back into the project to further our conservation and community development aims.

The highest standard of care for the lions whilst in captivity is paramount, and as such the program is linked to PAAZAB, which provides an ethical code for us to abide by in good animal husbandry techniques.

Further detailed information regarding ALERT and the lion release program can be found by visiting www.lionalert.org where a number of PDF documents are available to download providing a step by step guide to the project in full.



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Your involvement:

The involvement of volunteers on the project is paramount to achieving our aims on all fronts. You can expect days to be long, but you will also be able to end each day knowing that you have given something back to Africa; having made a difference to the animals and people that you come into contact with.

Your primary task whilst on placement will be to assist management and their team of guides, handlers and scouts in all aspects of care for the animals in their charge; giving them the opportunities to develop their natural instincts in preparation for their release into the next stage of the program.

Research is a significant part of your role; collecting data not only on the development of the lions, but also joining our research team in the Zambezi & Victoria Falls National Parks.

You will also help us with our various community programs that may include conservation or health education as well as a number of other projects that you will be told about on arrival.

To give you an idea of how your time will be split between the different aspects of the program, the following should be taken as an approximation:

Lion Rehabilitation & Release into the Wild Program	75%
Conservation work within the National Park	20%
Conservation Education & Community Development	5%

Your daily tasks may include:

Lion Walks. 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 lion walking 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.

Alongside the walks you will be involved in the care of the animals which overnight in enclosures. They need feeding, cleaning, and occasionally will need veterinary care to ensure that they are kept in the best of health.

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 back into the wild.



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Research. As part of the program we conduct a number of research activities to better understand lion behaviour and ecology. The lion walks offer unique opportunities to observe lions close up in their natural environment with the data collected assisting us to make the best decisions for the animal's welfare and eventual release. Volunteers will assist our research technician in gathering and analyzing this vital data. The research studies being undertaken whilst on your placement will vary depending on the needs of the project at the time but may include looking at hunting development, character traits, spoor sizes or mane growth. You will receive all the training you need in order to ensure that you are able to provide valuable input to this program regardless of previous experience.

Work in the National Park. There is a vast amount to do to keep a National Park ecosystem healthy, and this project is blessed by having two unique parks right on its doorstep. As a volunteer you will work with the research team and National Park rangers on any number of conservation activities that may include some or all of the following, based on National Parks needs at the time of your placement:

- Assisting in the development of a new waterhole and renovation (please note this is dependent on funding)
- At Masuwe concession: Carry out snare sweeps to remove the wires set by poachers to illegally catch the animals that inhabit the Reserve;
- Work with local communities to mitigate lion/human conflict.
- Victoria Falls Rain Forrest: Volunteers will be involved in the removal of Invasive Alien Plant species as and when required by the Park Warden.

***Please note:** Research activities will be conducted on a case by case basis in collaboration with the National Parks team and their needs at the time as well as seasonality and accessibility to the bush based on the time of year. Please understand that whilst we have made every effort to be as accurate as possible in our explanation of what conservation and research activities you will be involved in during your placement, it is essential that you are flexible and accommodating during your project visit, and that you understand that our team on the ground will make every effort possible to maximise your involvement in these areas.

Teach a conservation class. Volunteers will join our conservation education program visiting local schools to garner support for conservation through education. The syllabus was originally devised under the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) "We Care!" project and adapted to Zimbabwe by The Curriculum Unit of the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture. Lesson plans are designed to offer children a full understanding of their environment and to build an appreciation for the need to conserve what remains of the wild areas of Zimbabwe.

Each lesson may focus on a specific species or introduce conservation methods. Learning is achieved through a mixture of classroom-based talks and discussion as well as involving the children in smaller groups and practical activities such as visits to the lion programme, or Victoria Falls themselves.



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A day in the life of a Victoria Falls volunteer...

Every day is different as animals rarely operate to our schedule. We ask that you remain flexible, but here is an example of a typical day on the project, as a guideline only:

- **6:15am** You will be collected by your project manager and driven out to the lion project base at Masuwe lodge located within the Zambezi National Park. This is a approximately a 10 minute drive.
- **6:30 – 9:00am** Meet your guide and their clients and join them for a lion walk, taking cubs from 4 months to 18 months out into the bush. Watch and take data capture recordings as the cubs practice their hunting skills on the many game species they encounter.
- **9:00 – 10:00am** Breakfast.
- **10.00- 12.00pm** One group might head off to nearby Chamabondo school to begin the day's Conservation Education classes – sometimes there are up to 60 kids in a class! Chaotic but fun! The other group will be cleaning or feeding the cubs, or driving into the National Park to conduct a game census.
- **12:30 – 2:00pm** Lunch back in Victoria Falls town at our volunteer base.
- **2.30 – 5:00pm** Your afternoon duties could include updating the species inventory in the Victoria Falls National Park or a lion walk at Masuwe.
- **6.45pm** Briefing by your project manager about the following days activities.
- **Evening** The volunteers socialize at dinner at 7.00pm at cosy Rest Camp. On some nights volunteers venture off into Victoria Falls town to experience the night life of this tourist Mecca. For others you may be camping out at a water hole to watch the African Bush come alive at night – you may spot the rarely seen Aardvark, known as the “earth pig”.

Project Support:

Throughout your placement you will have the support and guidance of our experienced project managers. They are part of our greater African Impact support team, which will provide you with competent 24-hour field support and assistance.

Project Accommodation:

You will be staying at Pamusha Guest House exclusively with your fellow volunteers, ideally situated a short 15 minute walk from the beautiful town of Victoria Falls. The premises have a lovely braai (barbeque) and pool area for you to relax and chill out in on hot summer days!



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You will be sharing this lovely Guest House with your fellow participants and there are 5 Rooms, 4 of which have en suite bathrooms as well as two outside toilets and two showers. You will be sharing a room with 1 – 4 other volunteers on the project. The dining and lounge areas are very comfortable and spacious, perfect for relaxing after a day with the cubs by either playing a game of cards or watching a DVD. We hope that you will be able to make this a home away from home!

The premises are very secure with 24 hour security patrols and you will have to sign any visitors in at the entrance, however NO visitors will not be able to stay over - security will ensure this.

If you are travelling with a friend, family member, or a partner, please make sure that we are aware whether you want to share a room with them so that we can make the necessary arrangements. We will do our best to accommodate these requests, availability permitting, but cannot always guarantee these arrangements. The accommodation is simple and rustic but comfortable and completely suited to your needs.

Breakfasts and lunches will be enjoyed out at the Masuwe concession (where our lions are based) and volunteers can relax with a hot dinner back in town at Pamusha Guest House when you return at the end of the working day.

Project Orientation:

On arrival at the Victoria Falls project, the following orientation will take place:

- You will receive your volunteer's manual which includes information that will help with your integration into the project, as well as give you further tips for your involvement at the Victoria Falls programme
- Introduction to all senior project staff and heads of department
- Familiarization of the work areas – including rivers, internal roads and tracks and some of the wildlife species
- Introduction to the lions and cub enclosures
- Briefing on how to complete data capture forms and enter data into the computer systems
- Further information on the lion breeding programme and our ultimate objective of free releasing lions into the wild
- Familiarization with all duties you will be involved in

The Fine Print...

Project Cost:

2 weeks: GBP 1095 / US\$ 1970 / EUR 1425

3 weeks: GBP 1540 / US\$ 2775 / EUR 1995

4 weeks: GBP 1985 / US\$ 3575 / EUR 2580



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Project Cost Includes:

- Project Fee: this entails financing that goes directly back into the project that you are involved with. This project fee facilitates funding for items such as food for lions, management and maintenance of parks infrastructure, and the development of the lion breeding and rehabilitation programme
- All transfers to and from Victoria Falls Airport upon your arrival and departure
- Assistance in your projects by various trained guides, ecologists and field staff during your stay
- Any wildlife education talks that take place during your stay and that you might wish to partake in
- Full board and lodging which includes 3 meals a day
- Unlimited tea, coffee and juice throughout the day
- Laundry service during your stay
- The service of a cleaner to attend to your room each day

Project Cost Excludes:

- All items of a personal nature, such as curios, gifts, clothing (work and other)
- Flights to Victoria Falls International Airport
- E-mail and telephone calls made during your placement (charged out at cost)
- Any excursions over and above your planned itinerary in Zimbabwe e.g. visit to the Victoria Falls
- Personal insurance cover for the duration of your placement, which must include cover for evacuation and repatriation

Project Getting There... *We will meet you at the airport!*

Arrive into Victoria Falls International Airport where one of our project staff will greet you and transfer you to the volunteer base at Hunters Lodge.

Project Travel Highlights...

There are a huge number of optional activities and trips that are available to you, at additional cost, whilst on your placement. Here are just a few ideas:

On your time off why not take advantage of the multitude of activities available at Victoria Falls itself, Africa's "adrenaline capital"; there are helicopter or microlight flights over the Falls; bungee jumping; white water rafting; horse rides; elephant rides; game drives; gorge jumps; skydiving; canoeing and a host of other options. There are also day and weekend trips available to neighboring Botswana.



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During your stay in Victoria Falls you may have the opportunity to **enjoy an excursion to some of the other spectacular spots that the region has to offer.**

Trip itinerary: (subject to slight alterations)

- Day 1: Leave Victoria Falls after breakfast for Miombo Safari Lodge in Hwange National Park; the largest national park in Zimbabwe. You will get the opportunity to go on a game drive where you could get up close and personal with a herd of elephant, buffalo, a pride of lion, pack of hyena and many more.
- Day 2: Leave after breakfast for Granite Ridge in Motobo (aka Matopos) National Park. Enjoy a half day scenic drive in this spectacular park, and if you are lucky enough to see one of the white rhinos you will be able to get out the vehicle with the guide for a close encounter. Time permitting, you will also visit a cave to view some of the remarkable local cave paintings.
- Day 3 & 4: Leave after breakfast from Granite Ridge for Antelope Park, home of our lion rehabilitation program. You can enjoy a lion walk as well as a tour of the lion breeding centre to meet the adult lions. You will also have the opportunity to ride or even swim on the back of elephants and horses (swimming is seasonal), take a leisurely carriage ride or enjoy a sunset cruise. You can also meet our young cubs.
- Day 5: Depart for the 8 hour journey back to Victoria Falls.

Please note: This trip only operates with sufficient volunteer interest and is only available to volunteers joining the project for a minimum of 3 weeks.

We look forward to welcoming you for a unique, rewarding and unforgettable experience!

Our Preferred Travel Insurance Partners :

Visit <http://www.mindthegapyear.com/> for a great deal on reliable Insurance!



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- For news and updates on all of our projects please join us at African Impact's official main page:
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/African-Impact-Offical-Page/140942759303157#!/pages/African-Impact-Offical-Page/140942759303157>
- Follow us on Twitter - Want to hear what is happening at the projects in real time Follow us on Twitter @
http://twitter.com/#!/African_Impact



We are proud to let you know that African Impact were recently announced as the **WINNERS** of the South African **Imvelo Responsible Tourism Awards 2010** in the Best Social Involvement category.

This is a huge honour for us, and enormous thanks must go to all our past volunteers and project teams who have supported our work here in Africa and have helped make this possible! More information on these Africa-wide awards is available on our website: <http://www.africanimpact.com/news-article/african-impact-win-responsible-tourism-award-2010/20101112>

Sir Richard Branson's prestigious private game reserve **Ulusaba**, here in South Africa, was the winner of this category last year, so that's the level of competition for these awards!



Our Partners

The Happy Africa Foundation www.happyafricafoundation.org

African Impact is proud to have been instrumental in the establishment of The Happy Africa Foundation in 2007 and continues to be one of the Foundations major supporters. UK Registered Charity Number: 1123529.

The mission of The Happy Africa Foundation is to empower the African people through the support of community and conservation based initiatives that operate at grass roots level.

We are proudly affiliated to the UK-based **Know Before You Go** campaign that promotes education and knowledge-sharing amongst travellers.

African Impact is delighted to have been nominated as a **2009 World Travel Awards Finalist** and see this as exciting recognition of our position as African specialists in Volunteering, with over 5 years experience in sharing Africa with travellers who have a passion for making a difference.



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