

Big Cat Research and Conservation

Project

OTJIWARONGO. NAMIBIA



At African Impact, we see ourselves as the on-the-ground AFRICAN SPECIALISTS in volunteering. We were founded over 5 years ago in Zimbabwe and have our head office in Cape Town, South Africa, with supporting operations offices in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. To date, together with our project managers out in the field, we have had the privilege of sharing Africa with over 3,000 volunteers who were determined to make a difference in the amazing conservation and community areas in which we work.

And they did... and so can you...

Your mission on the Namibian Big Cat Research and Conservation Project...

Situated 225 kilometres from Windhoek you will be greeted by sweeping savannah plains and the smell of the African bush. Here you will find more than just a big cat rehabilitation sanctuary, but a haven in the wild, where you will have the chance to experience mother nature at her very best. Focus on restoring the land and local ecosystems back to their original state in this exciting eco-tourism project and work alongside the AfriCat Foundation, the world's largest animal welfare programme committed to the long term conservation and release of Namibia's large carnivores, especially cheetahs and leopards.



African Impact

PHYSICAL ADDRESS 6 Carlton Close, Noordhoek, 7985, Cape Town, South Africa.

TELEPHONE +27 217 854 319 Direct Line or CALL US TOLL FREE (UK) 0800 098 8440 (USA) 1-800-606-7185



Project Highlights:

- Cheetah and leopard tracking and monitoring for research
- Hyena tracking on foot
- Alien plant removal and bush chopping
- General reserve and fence maintenance
- Plant and animal studies
- Animal tracking and bush crafts
- Bone collecting in the cheetah camp
- Behind the scenes feeding run at AfriCat
- Accompanying specialised staff for the collection and release of Leopard and Cheetah through the rehabilitation programme
- Game counts at the waterhole
- Fence patrols

(Please note volunteers spending a short period of time on the project may not have the opportunity to get involved in all of the above activities)

Location: Okonjima Lodge, Otjiwarongo, Namibia

Participant Requirements and Age Limit: The programme is open to anyone from the age of 18 and there is no upper age limit for volunteers, however all participants must be in good health and able to carry out all duties required of them.

The most important requirement is a passion to help, have fun and make a difference. No previous knowledge or experience is required, only a desire to learn and assist wherever necessary!

“I spent two wonderful weeks volunteering. I was given the opportunity to take part in a huge variety of activities, from bush chopping which was incredibly hard work to enclosure maintenance and cleaning and even the rescue and release of wild cheetahs. This in particular was a rare and unique privilege which I will remember always – especially the four hour drive with a wild cheetah on my knee! I had an amazing time on the project. The hard work was more than worth it and it was fantastic to stay in such a beautiful and natural camp in the heart of the African bush. Clive and Roma, who manage the project, are very welcoming and knowledgeable. Throughout my stay they ensured I got the best possible experience with numerous chances to view and track game. The project is excellent value and I am very grateful for the unique experiences and the extraordinary memories which will always be with me.”

Jo Howden, UK



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More about our Big Cat Rehabilitation Project

Vast areas of Namibia over the last 150 years have been affected by cattle farming which has left its scar on the natural environment. Bush encroachment is destroying Namibian flora and fauna. Over-grazing has led to topsoil erosion, decreasing the survival of natural plants and grasses and, therefore, the game dependent on them. The vision of this project to restore the land back to its original state and once again witness the magnificent cheetah stalking and hunting its prey in its natural environment. Africa's fragile ecosystem and wildlife are inseparably linked, co-existing successfully since time began.

Unfortunately due to man's influence this delicate balance is rapidly changing and the need to reverse this damage and protect our environment has become paramount. Combining the management and implementation of fundamental conservation principals we aim to restore this balance and in time recreate this sustainable eco-system once more. Through your involvement and commitment we are creating valuable employment and training opportunities for the local community to aid us with our vision. In restoring the land we will also create the opportunity of introducing an amazing new variety of Namibian game into the area.

Located in the heart of the Okonjima Game Reserve, this exciting eco-tourism project works alongside the AfriCat Foundation, the world's largest animal welfare programme committed to the long term conservation and release of Namibia's large carnivores, especially cheetahs and leopards. Your tasks may be challenging at times but you will find it highly rewarding and satisfying to know that you have been part of the team helping to restore the local ecology back to its original natural state.

In addition to your working morning, each afternoon (apart from your day off) you will be taken out on an exciting Game Drive to witness some of our amazing animals up close and personal!

Project Facilitators

Everyone at the reserve has a contagious passion for nature conservation and nature, especially for the cheetahs. You will be working side by side with the staff and will find their knowledge and expertise invaluable and very interesting during your stay.

More information on the rehabilitation programme

The property turned from cattle farming to tourism in 1993 and shortly after launched an exciting animal welfare foundation. Since being registered as a non-profit organisation, the project has grown significantly. What started out primarily as a welfare organisation has, over the years, identified the need to include a focus on education and research, believing this to be an integral part of accomplishing their mission – "the long term conservation of Namibia's large carnivores".



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The reserve is home to a 20,000 hectare (50,000 acre) Cheetah Rehabilitation Reserve giving previously non-releasable cats a second chance to be wild and free. The reserve's total expanse encompasses a 22,000 hectare (55,000 acre) operational private nature sanctuary. Game to be seen, besides the cheetahs and leopards include: giraffe, oryx, kudu, zebra, impala, eland, wildebeest, red hartebeest, duiker, steenbok, dik-dik, and warthog. Also nocturnal animals such as porcupine, honey badger, brown hyena, spotted genet, armadillo and over 200 bird species may be seen.

Please note this project has specific start dates, as follows:

2010: 9 October | 23 October | 6 November | 20 November

(Please note the volunteer aspect of the project will be closing for the year on 3 December 2010 and re-opening on 29 January 2011)

2011: 29 January | 12 February | 26 February | 12 March | 26 March | 9 April | 23 April | 7 May | 21 May | 4 June | 18 June | 2 July | 16 July | 30 July | 13 August | 27 August | 10 September | 24 September | 8 October | 22 October | 5 November | 19 November

Exciting Daily Afternoon Game Drives you can expect to get involved in include

Leopard Tracking and Monitoring

With the aid of a telemetry system and antennae your guide will use all his valuable skills to track and search for this magnificent and elusive creature. Volunteers will also be shown how to use the telemetry equipment and given the opportunity to track the leopards for themselves. Leopard tracking is always vehicle based.

The Cheetah Welfare Programme

Volunteers will be taken into one of the cheetah rehabilitation enclosures where they will witness these cheetahs at very close proximity surrounding the game vehicle. The guide will feed the cheetahs with small pieces of meat and explain the important and essential work of the cheetah welfare side of AfriCat's work.

Cheetah and Hyena Tracking and Monitoring on Foot

To experience witnessing a cheetah or hyena at close proximity and at ground level is truly amazing and very special. This is exactly what you'll be doing on this activity. Again a telemetry system will be used by the guide to locate the general area of the animals.

Cheetah Rehabilitation Programme

This programme was initiated to give some of the captive cheetahs an opportunity to return to their natural environment. Although hunting is instinctive for carnivores, many of the cheetahs lack experience in this due to being orphaned or removed from the wild at a very young age. The 20,000 hectare Cheetah Rehabilitation Area provides these cheetahs with the opportunity to hone their hunting skills and, ultimately, become self-sustaining.



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A day in the life of a Big Cat Rehabilitation volunteer...

Your normal working morning will start as the sun rises over the horizon, start off with coffee and breakfast and then head to our work site. By choosing this project you will be undertaking a variety of essential reserve maintenance tasks which include: dismantling windmills, fence-lines, and old water troughs; bush clearing tasks; repairing waterholes; dam and bridge maintenance, etc. You will also have the fantastic opportunity of working directly at the AfriCat Foundation itself which include: bone collecting within the cheetah camps; cleaning out the wild dogs' water trough; erecting and repairing fences and netting; fence maintenance, etc.

We will work, with breaks interspersed, until approximately 12 noon, then we will stop for a well-earned lunch break and siesta time until about 15h30. Volunteers tend to find the time out in the bush quite therapeutic and very educational. We then head off for your exciting afternoon game drive to witness firsthand the amazing animals living within our reserve. Volunteers will have the opportunity during this time to take part in a multitude of exciting activities including: visiting the cheetah conservation programme AfriCat; leopard tracking; cheetah & hyena tracking on foot; bushman walks; visiting the lions and wild dogs; birding walks and game drives; sundowners; sleeping under the stars (Camping out in the river bed. A bi-weekly event and an absolute must!)

There is also unique opportunity to go behind the scenes of the AfriCat Foundation to witness first hand the feeding of all these beautiful animals at this sanctuary. On occasions cheetahs and leopards need to be rescued by AfriCat and re-released back into the wild and a lucky volunteer may be given the unique and very exciting opportunity to accompany one of the AfriCat team to do just this!

Project Costs for 2011:

2 Week Placement: £ 720 | € 936 | US\$ 1296
4 Week Placement: £ 1440 | € 1872 | US\$ 2592
6 Week Placement: £ 2160 | € 2808 | US\$ 3888
8 Week Placement: £ 2880 | € 3744 | US\$ 5184

Project Cost Includes

- Transfers to and from Windhoek International Airport on scheduled dates
- All accommodation, food and housekeeping costs
- All game drives / activities, including the feeding run
- All project-related transportation and equipment required to carry out your project work
- 24 hour support and guidance from the project management team
- All wildlife and conservation education during your stay



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Project Costs Exclude

- Return flights to Windhoek International Airport.
- Any items of a personal nature, such as gifts and curios and additional food, drinks and snacks
- The appropriate personal medical insurance, which must cover the entire duration of your programme, and should include cover for repatriation and any activities that you will undertake
- Any additional trips or activities organized in your free time

Project Support

Before and during the programme you will have full support from African Impact and your project managers to ensure that you receive all the assistance that you need. We are committed to ensuring you have the best possible time at the project, and your health and happiness is of the utmost importance to us.

Project Accommodation

The camp is situated in the heart of the Namibian bush, and consists of basic but comfortable thatched/tented hut accommodation, surrounding a central eating and socialising area. Two single beds with mattresses, and lockable trunks are available in each tent plus the use of a central safe for smaller valuables. Hot and cold running showers and western style toilets are provided, electricity and electrical plugs are available in the main central area. The aim is that volunteers get back to their roots during their stay in the wild and feel part of the natural world they are aiming to help. There is a real community feel to the programme, with daily rotas in place to ensure that everyone gets involved in the day-to-day running of the camp including wake-up calls and the preparation of all meals.

Due to the location of the camp there is no laundry service and hand washing powder can be purchased from the camp store. There is a signal for mobile phones however this signal can sometimes be a little temperamental. Internet facilities are also available in the evenings at a small charge.

Evenings will be based around the campfire listening to the sounds of the wild and reliving our day. Live on the wild side for a few weeks... Get back to your roots... Feel like a bushman in our own little volunteer community.

Saturdays will be your well deserved day off where you are free to relax, enjoy one of our walking trails, or perhaps visit the local swimming pool to catch some rays! This is your day, enjoy it!

The closest town is Otjiwarongo, 75 kilometres away, so you are well and truly in the bush!

Project Meals

The three meals a day include a cereal breakfast, prepared at the campsite before work commences; sandwiches and fruit for lunch and a hot nutritious meal prepared each evening back at the base campsite. Refreshments such as tea, coffee, squash are provided during meal times and water at all times. All vegetarian and other dietary requirements can be catered for if advised in advance on the booking form. Other refreshments such as soft drinks, beers and snacks (biscuits, crisps, nuts etc.) can be purchased from the camp store.



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Project Training and Orientation

Upon arrival you will be fully briefed and trained in all appropriate / necessary areas. You will be introduced to all members of staff and given a full tour of the reserve. You will also be given more information on our reintroduction project and the plight of the cheetah, so that you will fully understand just how important your work with this project is.

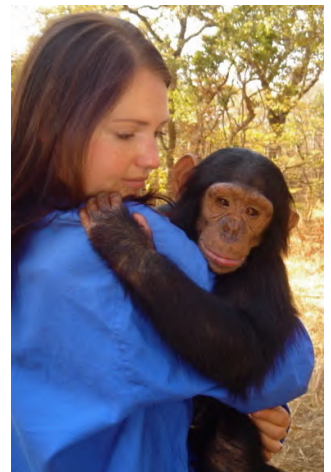
How to get there: *We will meet you at the airport!*

Fly into Windhoek International Airport arriving on Saturday morning by 12 noon or arriving on Friday and spending a night at one of the backpackers' lodges in Windhoek. There are many places to stay in Windhoek but one we recommend is Chameleon Backpackers (www.chameleonbackpackers.com)

In order to try to conform with incoming European flight timings we will arrange transportation for all team members to be collected from Windhoek International Airport **or** from a central location in Windhoek on **Saturday mornings only**. From here, volunteers will be transferred directly to the project base, once every 2 weeks. We will arrange return transportation on the same basis from the reserve to Windhoek on **Friday mornings only** once every 2 weeks. Due to the distance of the reserve from the airport, these transportation guidelines will be strictly adhered to; please take note of this when booking your flights.

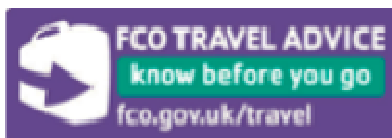
Meet your Destination Manager for this project!

Originally from the Netherlands, Marleen joined African Impact as a volunteer in Zimbabwe in 2005. She fell in love with the continent straight away, and joined African Impact permanently to develop and manage projects in Zambia, and later in South Africa. Marleen now lives in Cape Town, where she works at our head office. Marleen will guide you through the whole pre-arrival procedure for this placement and you will receive comprehensive information throughout to ensure you are fully prepared for your project placement with us.



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 travelers.



African Impact is proud to be **WINNER** in the Africa-wide Imvelo Responsible Tourism awards 2010, as well as **FINALISTS** in the 2010 World Travel Awards. We see this as exciting recognition of our position as African specialists in Volunteering with over 6 years experience.



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