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2022

Amakhala Volunteer Programme

CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY

Feel the heartbeat and rhythm of Africa at Amakhala Game Reserve, which has quickly become one of the finest tourist destinations in the Eastern Cape wilderness. Amakhala is a malaria free premier Game Reserve which is home to the famous Big Five of South Africa.

In addition to the king of the jungle, impressive leopards, magnificent rhinos, graceful elephants and mystic buffalo that make up the big five; a diverse abundance of antelope and other species such as giraffe, warthog and cheetah roam the plains of Amakhala which will provide you with everlasting African memories.

Amakhala's ethos is one of conservation and community support where volunteers get involved in the local Isipho Multi Purpose Center, Môreson Primary School and Sidbury Primary School and contribute by playing games, educating the children and partaking in several other fun educational activities. Volunteers also get involved with community clean ups and craft projects at the Amakhala Craft Center.

Introduction to Amakhala

Amakhala is actively managed as a protected area and successfully ran through a combination of the experienced owners, an exceptional team as well as professional external consultants.

Amakhala is located in the Eastern Cape, an approximate one hour drive from Port Elizabeth. The area was once densely populated with wildlife, however diversity changed dramatically after the onset of intense animal hunting. The hunting was followed by farming practices which saw a clash of domestic and wild animal interests, and the systematic eradication of problematic animals. Substantial parts of the area are

currently

undergoing a transformation back to wildlife and nature-based land usage after two hundred years of various forms of domestic animal and agricultural farming.

Climate - The area has mixed summer and winter rainfall averaging at 500mm per annum

Geology - Metamorphic (quartzite) and sedimentary rock (sandstone) form the basis of the soils in the area.

Soils / substrates - Soils vary from sandy to limestone to alluvial plains

Hydrological systems - Amakhala has approximately 16 kilometres of Bushman's River meandering through the reserve.

Topography - Undulating hillsides flank flat plains and valleys with sandstone kranztes and quartzite formations flanking the river sections.

Fauna and Flora - The Eastern Cape has one of the richest rich floral and faunal diversities on earth, being at the centre of the 'Albany Complex'. All seven of South Africa's terrestrial biomes are represented in the area, six of which occur on Amakhala or within 100 kilometres of the Reserve. The thicket biome characteristic of the Eastern Cape is primarily thorny vegetation, spreading over rugged slopes and ridges.

Our region has 'Malaria free' status and is now nationally and internationally recognised as one of the major safari destinations.

Field Conditions

During your placement, you will be out in the early morning, often straight into the bush to carry out the days' activities. You will be transported in an open land cruiser to and from the reserve. It is advised that you dress warmly as the wind-chill factor can be quite sharp during the early morning and late afternoon drives.

Weather Conditions in the Eastern Cape can vary from one extreme to the next and therefore has gained its name for having four seasons in a day. Expect refreshing mornings and evenings, with warm to hot conditions during the day, this is especially evident in the summer where 35 °C during the day is not an unfamiliar occurrence. Thunderstorms in the late afternoon are an identifying feature of the summer season, lip balm is highly recommended for those dry and windy days as well as a rain jacket for those unexpected rainfalls.

Preparation for bush survival and camping out require a warm sleeping bag and torch along with an optional travel pillow. Anti-tick spray, a penknife and warm sleeping-wear are optional items however they are recommended for a more enjoyable experience.

A Amakhala Volunteer Programme

The Amakhala Volunteer Programme form part of the main veins behind the heartbeat of the Reserve Conservation. For those volunteers seeking an experience to explore a corner of Africa and all its inhabitants, Amakhala will not disappoint. All aspects of conservation are addressed in your experience, no matter how short your time with us. Amakhala Game Reserve is continuously monitoring and managing game throughout the year. As an Amakhala Volunteer, you will assist behind the scenes of the reserve on various ongoing conservation and community projects.

The main focus for community is the Isipho Multi Purpose Centre for vulnerable children and those affected by HIV AIDS as well as Sidbury School and Môreson Primary School.

Projects:

As a Volunteer at Amakhala, your responsibility is helping to manage all aspects on a game reserve including predators, all other animal species as well as maintenance. The Reserve is strictly hands-off which implies at no point will there be physical touching or 'petting' of the animals but rather monitoring behaviour and checking fence lines etc.

Community support is also an important aspect with regular visits to community projects. The rest of the day is filled with tasks and duties based around Amakhala. You may also have the chance to assist with many ongoing short and long term projects on the reserve. A list below provides the details of various projects both on going and experienced by past volunteers.

Reserve duties at any one time may change, which means no week at Amakhala is the same.

Community projects:

- Interacting with vulnerable children and children infected and affected by aids
- Interacting with children of Môreson Primary School
- Assist with educational lessons at Sidbury Primary school
- Assist Amakhala Foundation in designated World Days namely Arbour Day, Water Day and World Read Aloud Day
- Celebrating World days with Isipho children – Mandela day, Animal day, Plant Appreciation day, Halloween and more.

Ecology projects:

- Predator Tracking and monitoring using telemetry
- Herbivore monitoring
- Predator health and breeding monitoring
- Document the number of herbivore lambing

- Monitor Buffalo feeding behaviour

Maintenance duties:

- Erosion control
- Fence patrol and maintenance
- Alien plant control
- Bush clearing and Road clearing
- Road maintenance
- Removal and documentation of old farm material on the reserve
- Monitoring and documenting water points on the reserve
- Maintaining our Aquaponics system and earthworm farm

Seasonal & circumstantial based projects:

- Game capture, counts and monitoring
- Guided walks and trails through the reserve
- Nocturnal predator monitoring
- Darting and relocation
- Viewing Amakhala veterinary completing field work on animals
- Boma maintenance

Future and Ongoing Projects for 2022:

- Providing basic pre-school education at the Isipho Multi Purpose Centre
- Get involved in active sport games at Isipho to aid children's health and fitness
- Assist Amakhala Foundation with future projects at Sidbury Primary School
- Assist with maintenance of Isipho Center's building.
- Renovation of the Isipho facilities – junglegym, creche, chicken coop.
- Bi-annual neutering of stray dogs and cats in and around the Amakhala villages and Paterson
- Wetland restoration
- Spekboom Project – Replanting spekboom on the Reserve and surrounding community properties

Fun Activities:

- Bush camping and Star Gazing
- Bush Survival skills with Navigation and Compass Orientation included
- 4-Star Lodge Experience
- Game drives
- Visit Addo Elephant Park
- Visit Born Free Foundation
- Horse riding on the reserve
- Canoeing
- Volunteer diary for our website
- Rent a vehicle and explore surrounding areas
- Enjoy swimming pool at Volunteer house
- Relax at the local pub and grill by Volunteer house
- Various entertainment (rugby ball, soccer ball, card and boardgames) at housing

Detail on certain activities

Bush Camping

Camping on Amakhala is an experience in itself; setting up nothing but a sleeping bag and fire to cook on for the night. You can watch the beautiful night sky unravel above, hear the vibrant nocturnal life and maybe the lions roaring after a kill. The experience is exhilarating yet relaxing as you braai on an open fire and watch the stars above.

Navigation and Compass Orientation

This involves volunteers learning how to navigate during the day using signs of the bush and the stars by night. Compass skills are essential when lost in the bush and

these useful skills are refined and adapted for the African Bush.

4-Star Lodge Experience

Volunteers are treated to a 5-star guest experience at the Safari Lodge. The Safari Lodge is tucked away in a valley of indigenous bush; its location is ideal for the best wildlife viewing. This intimate thatched lodge with its unique safari huts offers all the comforts of a graded 5-star lodge and is an undisturbed retreat where you can regenerate your soul and tune into the sounds of nature. In the evening the haunting sound of the kudu horn will summon you to the fireside to enjoy local cuisine under a magnificent canopy of stars.

Game Drives

Volunteers will get the chance to view our stunning game while out on the reserve completing their daily activities. The volunteer coordinators are both qualified guides that makes the experience much worthwhile.

Volunteer Diary at our website

As part of the Volunteer Programme you may be asked to write a diary account of your week at Amakhala which will be published on our Instagram, facebook and website. This will show other interested travellers and potential volunteers just how involved and how diverse the work at the volunteer project can be, but most of all how much fun and experience you are having in the African Bush.

Project objectives

CONSERVATION

Predator monitoring

Telemetry is used to track the territorial ranges of the lions and cheetah. This information is used to make management decisions regarding the predators. An upcoming project will be to translocate and habituate a leopard to increase the visible population of these elusive cats. The Key Objectives with Predator Monitoring is to monitor the general well-being of the predators by logging their condition, behaviour and possible kills.

Herbivore Monitoring

Giraffe, Elephant, Rhino and Buffalo are the main consideration for large herbivore monitoring while Blesbok, Impala, Springbok, Red hartebeest, Wildebeest and Duiker

are

considered small herbivore monitoring. The Key Objectives in Herbivore Monitoring is to identify individuals, create an age chart, create family tree listings, log sightings, monitor territorial ranges, breeding, health, feeding preferences, monitor competition between species and population counts, density per area and censuses.

Darting and relocations:

Amakhala is a fully operational reserve, therefore there may be occasions where you are required to assist with work involving both the vet and the ecologist. Please note that darting and relocations only occur if it is necessary to do so or called upon by the vet and mostly during winter months.

Erosion Control

South Africa loses 40 to 60 tons of topsoil per hectare of land per year due to erosion. This amounts to 500 million tons of topsoil per annum. Erosion occurs naturally due to wind, water, and drought. It can also be caused due to poor farming management – ploughing incorrectly and overgrazing.

Wetland and Watering Hole Management

Watering holes are the heart and soul of an ecosystem providing life for all wildlife. This project ascertains that man-made wetlands and watering holes providing an essential

source of water to a water deficient landscape is a stable self-supporting ecosystem.

Alien Plant Control

All species of alien plants should be removed, for the following reasons: They often out-compete indigenous flora, thereby forming impenetrable thickets reducing available fodder to grazers and browsers. In addition to this impact on the environment, their presence in the area is unnatural and often not aesthetically pleasing.

General Reserve Maintenance

General reserve maintenance is ongoing projects, which assist reserve management. They may include fence patrols checking for snares or faults, filling holes created by aardvark or porcupines, brush-packing closed roads, seeding eroded areas, searching for permanent water sites, clearing old fences and alien vegetation control etc

Aquaponics

We are the proud owners of a fully functioning aquaponics system installed in October 2021. Sponsored by Rosatom, we gladly accepted the lovely gift with the purpose of helping our surrounding community through giving them the produce grown in the Aquaponics. The practice, care and technique that goes into aquaponics is a great learning experience for the volunteers and the community involved.

COMMUNITY

Community Up-liftment Projects

Projects currently running include:

- Vulnerable Children and Isipho Multi Purpose Center
- English Reading Club at Ispho
- Budding Q motorskill program with Moreson and Sidbury School
 - Assisting Amakhala Foundation with educating school groups

Isipho Multi Purpose Center:

Part of Amakhala Volunteer programme is to assist and help the Isipho by educating and playing with the children at the centre.

Most of the children at the Isipho centre either have no parents or little support from their parents in terms of love and affection. For the volunteers to visit them twice a week and form bonds with them, it offers the children affection and attention which they may not ever see at home. The role of the volunteers is crucial in their upbringing to show that love and compassion do exist and provide some hope to these children.

Most of their home languages are either Afrikaans or isiXhosa, which could be challenging at times. Innovative sporting games and exercise challenges is a universal language and also assist with personal health and fitness. Amakhala Foundation and Volunteers are involved heavily in generating money and donating to the Isipho Centre to help it stay open and running.

FUN and EXPLORING the area

Each week we will offer one of the following excursions as part of the program.

1. Excursion to world-renowned Addo National Elephant Park.
2. Amakhala Horse Riding Trails
3. Day trip to Kenton-on-Sea (for extra fee overnight offer available)
4. Amakhala Big5 Game walk
5. Day trip to Kirkwood, Citrus valley, to visit a Citrus farm
6. Bushcamping on our Big5 Game Reserve, tent free

Lifestyle Information

Accommodation:

Volunteers are accommodated in a one-storey 11-bedroom house, which overlooks a large garden and within walking distance of the local bar and basic shops. Most of the rooms are twin bedded and 5 bathrooms available.

A communal dining and sitting room with digital TV (Netflix available) is central to the house, with well equipped kitchen. A Wi-Fi connection are available at no extra cost but trust that volunteers will not abuse the system by downloading music/movies etc.

The house also has an outside seating area with braai (BBQ) and fire pit for chilly nights and social gatherings as well as a swimming pool.

The electrical sockets in the house are 2 and 3 round- prong and will require international adapters which should be purchased before arrival.

Food:

All meat, fruit and vegetables are provided for the volunteers at the house. Volunteers are responsible for cooking evening meals in the communal surrounding. Breakfast and lunch are to be prepared individually due to the nature of the week varying. Always take enough food and drinks out with you in the vehicle to last the day. Sweet treats and snack food can be purchased at your own expense in Paterson on the way into the Reserve.

PLEASE NOTE: Vegetarian and other dietary requirements can be catered for with prior notification when booking your stay.

Follow these links for photos etc:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/amakhalavolunteers/>

Webpage: <https://www.amakhala.co.za/conservation/amakhala-volunteers>

General Information

- Summer Months in South Africa: November – April.
- Winter Months: May – October (mornings & evenings are cold).
- Please Note that immigration in South Africa now requires you have 2 completely empty pages in your passport are side by side. Passports must be valid for at least six months after your arrival in South Africa.
- Visas: UK passport holders not required. Please contact us for further details on other nationals.
- Immunisation: Tetanus is highly recommended. Please consult your GP for advice on immunisation requirements. Amakhala is in a MALARIA FREE area.
- We advise that you take £60 - £80 per week as spending money depending on what activities you would like to do in your leisure time.
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For further information please see www.southafrica.net

Relaxation Time

The working week at Amakhala will usually comprise of a 5 day week working 8 hours a day (Monday-Friday). Time to start and finish work will depend on the activities of the day and time of year. Evenings and weekends are therefore allocated for your leisure to either relax in the pub or sit in front of an open fire. Alternatively, a wide variety of activities can be booked from the volunteer house. A full list of activities is available at the house and on the volunteer website, which includes car hire companies should you simply like to explore the area for yourself.

Booking

You have no doubt decided that an Amakhala conservation placement is for you. To confirm your placement simply follow these steps:

- We require 50% deposit to confirm placement (Full payment if under 8 weeks prior to departure)
- Take your time to do fund raising, sponsorship or work to raise money to fund your placement
- 1 month prior to departure – submits your Volunteer Profile, arrange Travel Plans, Air tickets and Preparation Pack sent to you.
- Shared transfers at R825.00 pp one way (Depart every Monday at 07:00 from Paterson and leave again from Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth) at 14:00)
- If a transfer is needed outside of this window the cost will be R1750.00pp one way
- ARRIVE at AMAKHALA GAME RESERVE!!

It's as simple as that to organize a truly life changing experience.