



Ukutula Lion Research Project

About the Project

Known as “the place of quiet”, this Lion Research Project is nestled in lush bushveld approximately 1.5 hours from Johannesburg. The game reserve and farm comprises 260 hectares of unspoiled bushveld and boasts a wide variety of antelope species, giraffe and zebra, plus over 130 different bird species.

This project specializes in lion breeding and genetic research for the White Lion Gene. The project was recently appointed to host a long-term lion research project through South Africa’s largest veterinary institute, Onderstepoort. In addition to its research, the farm serves as an environmental education center for thousands of school children who visit the farm throughout the year to learn about conservation and wildlife preservation.

Ukutula is owned and operated by a South African family very much involved in the management and operations of the project. Volunteers will have the opportunity to meet the owners while at the reserve, and learn first-hand about their mission to create a safe and educational environment for lion reproduction and genetic diversity research.

Necessary Experience

You do not need wildlife or research experience to volunteer at Ukutula. You will be trained on premises to work with the lions and assist as-needed.

Activities

The Lion Research Project is a very hands-on program. From day one, you will be expected to help with the day-to-day care of lions, especially cubs. The farm is divided into 3 segments with scheduled duties: caring for lions and cubs, ranger duty, and kitchen duty. Each day’s tasks differ, according to your assigned segment that day.

Ukutula also houses cheetah and other smaller cats on the property, so you may also get to assist with their needs as well. Daily tasks may include but are not limited to:

- Caring for lion cubs
- Making bottles and feeding cubs every 3-4 hours
- Cutting up meat and feeding adult lions
- Assisting with educational activities
- Monitoring of sick or injured lions and cubs
- Help with the maintenance of lion enclosures and upkeep of facilities
- Participate in the daily running of the farm



Typical Day

Your days will begin with breakfast around 8:30 – 9am followed by your morning activities. Each day there will be a printed schedule in the dining area – this will tell you your assigned duties for the day as well as your volunteer team. This ensures that you get to work with a variety of people during your stay and get to know the different aspects of Ukutula’s daily operations. Lunch is served around 1pm, and dinner between 4-6pm after your duties are complete for the day. All meals are taken together with Ukutula staff in the central dining area. Volunteer teams typically finish their work between 4 – 4:30pm each day.

Your evenings are free to spend as you wish – perfect for socializing with other volunteers. Volunteers are welcome in the bar to hang out and play cards or other games. Please note: the legal drinking age in South Africa is 18 and alcohol is served in Ukutula’s bar. If you wish to drink, please do so responsibly and in moderation. Alcohol will not be served after 11 pm, but volunteers are welcome to continue hanging out in the bar provided they are not too loud or disruptive to others.

Volunteers typically work about 6 days a week, but you may have additional free-time during the week.

Optional Extras

Additional excursions are available for volunteers, and transportation is regularly arranged between Ukutula and town. These trips are scheduled according to requests, and whenever transport is available volunteers may avail themselves of this opportunity to go shopping or explore town.

Please speak directly with Ukutula staff to arrange any of the following activities (at additional cost; subject to availability):

- Elephant sanctuary visit
- Monkey sanctuary visit
- Pilanusberg safari & wildlife game drives

Accommodation & Food

Volunteers stay in new two-sleeper en-suite chalets. Each of the 14 chalets is fully furnished and equipped with electricity and running water. The project also offers a full complimentary laundry service and a snack shop. All meals are prepared on site by Ukutula’s chefs. Breakfast typically consists of coffee/tea, yogurt, muesli, cereals, fresh fruits, bacon, eggs, toast, etc. Lunches are typically light, with dinners consisting of vegetables, some kind of bread or potato, and a meat. Ukutula can cater to dietary restrictions – vegetarian, vegan, lactose intolerant, gluten free, etc. Please let us know at the time of application if you have allergies or other dietary restrictions.

Wifi is accessible in common areas near the pool at additional cost.