



Welgevonden Big 5 Research Project

About the Project

Welgevonden Game Reserve is situated in the heart of the Waterberg Reserve. Vast, peaceful and incredibly beautiful, this reserve is home to Africa's Big 5 and many rare species of animal such as the brown hyena, aardvark, pangolin and aardwolf. The reserve sprawls over 37,200 hectares and is situated approximately 2.5 hours north of Johannesburg. The name translates from the Dutch phrase meaning "well found reserve" – an apt name for such a striking region. Here you can explore cheetah-loved grasslands and savannahs, leafy wooded mountains cut by deep rocky ravines, and perennial rivers flowing throughout the reserve and which feed the robust plant life and over 50 different types of mammals – not to mention some 250 species of birdlife! Once to home of native Bushmen, you'll also get to explore the rich cultural legacy of this area and even visit ancient Bushmen rock art.

Welgevonden Reserve is a privately managed "Protected Area" that maintains the spirit of true untouched wilderness. With a relatively small team of about seventeen, volunteers make a truly meaningful impact during their time here. You're not just another face in the crowd at Welgevonden – you're a vital part of their long-term efforts and receive personalized attention from staff as you learn and develop a wide array of conservation and management skills. The reserve has never allowed hunting, and limits the number of guests on the reserve at any given time to minimize human impact and provide truly intimate experiences with nature. Welgevonden's over-arching management vision is to ensure the ecological integrity and long-term viability of the reserve as both a conservation and recreational tourism entity.

Necessary Experience

You do not need prior experience with wildlife or reserve management to volunteer at Welgevonden Game Reserve. Everything you need to know is explained in detail before any activities take place. If any special training is necessary for activities, this will be conducted on the reserve.

Activities

This project is quite extensive in nature, and volunteers will be expected to assist in ongoing projects as managed by the reserve. You will be directly involved with the Research Ecologist (also a fully qualified trails guide) and will report to him/her on a daily basis. Volunteers typically work in teams, and each day your cohort will accompany two reserve researchers and participate in everything they do. You're not merely "along for the ride" but are actively involved in any monitoring and research that takes place.

You will be based at the research camp, and complete most of your work with the same set of staff-members/researchers during your stay. Special activities that arise – such as animal captures for relocations – will give you the chance to work with other team members from around the reserve.



Tasks may include but are not limited to:

- Game capture and game relocation
- Game feeding in the breeding camps (winter months only)
- Fence line patrols
- Learn about anti-poaching efforts
- Daily monitoring of the newly released animals
- Monitor trip cameras for nocturnal animal activity
- Collect physical samples and data analysis for the monthly reports
- Help with the maintenance of enclosures and upkeep of facilities
- Leopard research assistance
- Exposure to wildlife veterinary practices
- Monitor vegetation & control alien plant varieties
- Erosion control
- Work with highly qualified and dedicated conservationists
- Opportunities to visit ancient Bushmen paintings with guide (additional cost)

Typical Day

Most days will begin with an early breakfast (self-serve), and have you out in the field by around 7am. Lunch is taken in the field with other volunteers and staff – typically between approximately 12 – 2pm. Volunteers are typically divided into teams and take turns to prepare lunch and dinner. All food is provided by Welgevonden. While fairly basic, all food is meant to be wholesome and nutritious with fresh fruit and vegetables along with chicken or other meats. Dinner is a shared event back at camp, typically served between 7 – 8pm, though this may vary according to each day's projects. Usually volunteers return to camp around 4pm after their day's activities. Evenings are yours to enjoy at camp at your leisure – ideal for socializing with other volunteers after a day of action. Movie nights and star-gazing can be arranged at camp upon request.

Accommodation & Food

Volunteers stay in a permanent tented site with ten tents total, enclosed by electric fencing. Tents are not en-suite, but do have electricity and plug-points for charging electronics. Wifi is also available in camp, though strength of connectivity may vary. Volunteers have access to the main building, complete with kitchen, social recreation area, research labs, and bathroom facilities with hot water, electricity and Internet accessibility. There is also a bird hide on premises, a braai area and fire pit, and swimming "gat" (hole) for your enjoyment.

All bedding and towels are included. Volunteers do pay a nominal fee for soaps to wash their own personal laundry. There are plans to get a washing machine installed at camp in the coming months, but currently there is none.



Typical meals may include a breakfast of cereal, oats, toast, jams, fruits; Lunches of sandwiches or leftovers from the previous night's meal; Dinners consist of a protein (chicken, beef or game), along with vegetables, potatoes, salad, etc. There is always tea, coffee and fruit available as well.

*****Vegans, vegetarians, and food allergies can be catered to. Please inform us of any dietary restrictions at the time of your application, so that we can communicate this to our partners.***

*****The legal drinking age in South Africa is 18 and alcohol is allowed on Welgevonden Game Reserve, but is not supplied by the reserve. If you choose to purchase your own, please enjoy responsibly.***