



**WORKINGABROAD**  
TAKE ACTION FOR NATURE AND SOCIETY

## **DESERT ELEPHANTS**

### **FAMILY VOLUNTEERING PROJECT**



Our first family volunteering projects started in 2013 and were such huge successes that the organisation is welcoming families again this year.

The itinerary is a little different from our normal volunteer project to make it more child friendly and included more activities on the patrol week, keeping the children in mind. The building project will be based at our partner school, Okongue Primary in Okongue village and the project work will be tailored to suit the whole family. Our ethos of 'community' remains, with families taking it in turn to be on 'kitchen duty' cooking over the fire for other members of the group.

The project will be led by Hendrick Munembome, our head tracker and community liaisons manager. Hendrick has been with us for the last 10 years, is also a registered tour guide and has all his first aid qualifications. Hendrick has many fascinating stories to tell about his life, is a brilliant communicator and elephant expert.

## Itinerary



Arrival in Swakopmund by Sunday at the latest, ready for the briefing at 6.30pm (venue TBC). Families should arrive a day before in Swakopmund, so you have time to acclimatise and explore this friendly and safe seaside town. We will help you organise airport transfers and accommodation bookings. Most families have chosen to go on a self drive tour around Namibia whilst they are here and we can also help you to make these arrangements. Namibia is a beautiful, safe and friendly country which is easy to navigate and well worth exploring.

### **Day 1**

Transfer to our camp (+-4 hours) on the banks of an ephemeral river, a short walk away from Okongue Primary School, where the group will be working for the next few days. We will arrive in camp around 4pm, unpack and get settled in. In the evening Hendrick will give the group a briefing about the week ahead and health and safety issues out in the bush.



Camping on the Ugab River

## Day 2

Start of build project. Early in the morning we will get to school to participate in the morning's assembly and meet the teachers and pupils of Okongue School. The group will be assisting the school by repainting dormitory or classrooms. Throughout the time at the school there will be a chance to participate in lessons and interact with the pupils after school hours with sports and crafts.



The main reason for our organisation to be involved in the school is to try and promote the elephants in a positive light. Over the past 14 years we have tried to encourage the community and pupils that elephants are a benefit as they do bring development to the school through the renovation work we are doing there.

We run an educational project, The PEACE Project, which Hendrick leads and also focuses on schools to make sure the pupils understand how to behave when elephants are close by. We plan 'Elephant Safety Weeks' where older pupils are trained as elephant mentors to keep the younger pupils safe if elephants are in close proximity.



We focus on the communities, to try and create situations where people are happy or at least equipped with the knowledge on how to live safely with the elephants, that they feel protected and understand the elephants so that they are accepting of living with elephants. This then helps to prevent 'problem animal' declarations.

The village and school is unique in terms of how closely they have to live with elephants and thanks to the projects at the school and the surrounding farms there is a big shift in attitudes towards the elephants.

The school is as integral a part of our anti conflict work. All the children that attend and board at the school are living on farms where elephants are roaming. This new generation need to grow up empowered with the skills and knowledge to live with elephants, something that due to poaching is lacking for their parents.

We will get organised and start the project work after assembly, then take a long lunch break during the heat of the day back at our camp. We will start work around 2pm and work until 4.30pm. We will also organise that we do arts and crafts lessons with the children at the school some afternoons, especially for younger children.



Elephant safety sign in local language



Typical homestead

Throughout the week there will be a chance to meet local people and to really understand how Namibian's live, from what they eat, to how they make their houses and what their daily life entails.

Every day a family will be on kitchen duty together which involves waking up first to make the morning coffee, tea and breakfast, to the sandwiches for lunch and the big dinner in the evening. Each evening we prepare a big healthy meal over the fire, ranging from roast chickens, spaghetti bolognese, lamb tagine, thai curry to name a few! We can cater for vegetarians as well.



Everyone gets to do washing up!

### Day 3

Continue with school project.





Volunteers building

#### **Day 4**

Today is the last day of the school project. We will then head back to base camp to relax – a job well done!



Base camp in the trees!



Children on cooking duty!

### Day 5

Today the group have a day to relax and explore the area surrounding base camp. In the afternoon Hendrick will take those who are interested on a nature walk (+- 3kms) and will also tell the group about different survival skills and edible plants from the desert. Today's challenge is to make a chocolate cake – cooked on the fire!



Chocolate cake making on the fire challenge!



Relaxing at base camp

In the evening Hendrick will give the group a briefing on patrol, covering what the aim of the next few days is in terms of the elephants we need to track and specific information on safety whilst in close proximity to elephants.



Watching elephants from safe distance

On each patrol we have a different aim, at the time of writing our current focus is two fold, one is to have a presence in the area where elephants are under threat and check that all herds are together and without injuries, and secondly we need to start compiling identification files of 'new' herds of elephants in the northern reaches of our area, as these elephants are causing a lot of damage to farms. On each patrol we also spend a lot of time speaking to farmers and communities and chance will be given to the group to interact with local people.



Local Herero Woman at her stall

### Day 6 Patrol

We pack the patrol vehicles and head out early on patrol. During patrol week we sleep under the stars, with out a tent which is an amazing experience for all!



Typical patrol camp



A favourite patrol camp

### Day 7

On each day of patrol we will include an element of walking so that children don't get bored on the cars for the whole day! If we head down into the wetland areas of the river system we may even have a fishing competition! Hendrick will explain how he tracks the elephants and the group will have the chance to put their tracking skills to the test. For those who are keen bird enthusiasts, the wetlands, river system and desert are home to some beautiful birds including Hornbills, Love Birds, Egyptian Geese, Rollers, various fabulous Eagles and other birds of prey and some stunning owls such as the Pearl Spotted Owl.

**Day 8 –**  
Continue patrol.



Elephants in the Ugab Wetlands



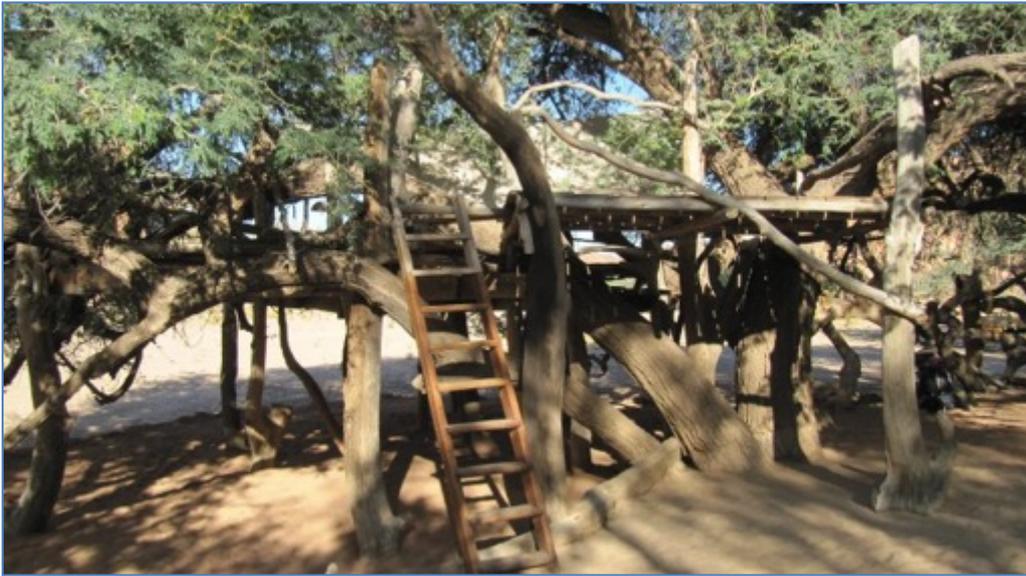
On foot tracking through the desert



On the game drive trucks

### **Day 9**

Today is the last day of patrol! Throughout the week you can expect to see other wildlife, besides elephant, such as black rhino which is rare but there is a small population in our area which are often spotted, springbok, oryx, kudu, giraffe, zebra! Around lunch time the group will head back to the base camp, for yet another fabulous shower in the rocks and last night around the fire and sleep in the tree house!



Tree house at base camp

### **Day 10**

After a leisurely breakfast we will pack up the Toyota Quantum and head back to the coast town on Swakopmund on the Skeleton Coast. We will aim to be back around lunch time and we can help make bookings for various activities which are fun for everyone including sandboarding, quad biking, desert tours, dolphin cruises and kayaking to name a few!



To book your place on the programme, please email:

[Victoria.McNeil@workingabroad.com](mailto:Victoria.McNeil@workingabroad.com)

**Cost per adult is £1090 and per child is £945**

Your payment covers all your food, transportation and accommodation during the project once you arrive at the meeting point in Swakopmund. In addition, it goes towards the project cost such as building materials, fuel, vehicle cost, as well as backup and placement support.

The airfare to Namibia, travel/medical insurance and personal expenses (weekend in Swakopmund are not included within this price. It is mandatory for you to take out travel and medical insurance for the duration of the project.