

Garden Route Elephant Park

This is a place of safety for elephants. The park started off with only two elephants in 1994, but they have since been joined by ten others. The park offers a rare and exciting opportunity to get close to these gentle giants.



Highlights

- Learn about ethical and non-harmful research of captive elephants in South Africa.
- Experience close interactions with the herd of elephants.
- See the elephants on a daily basis and form bonds - become part of the herd.
- Assist with research activities, data collection and field observations.
- Visit the local children's school to run eco-educational activities.
- Take part in amazing tours and excursions outside of the project: You receive free admission or discounts on most activities along the Garden Route.
- Make new friends from all over the world.

Overview

Location	Between Knysna and Plettenberg, Garden Route
Duration	3 weeks minimum
Dates	all year round from mid-January to mid-December
Requirements	upper intermediate level of English Being passionate about Elephants
Minimum age	18
Documents	enrollment form, curriculum vitae, letter of motivation, passport copy, proof of medical insurance,
Date of arrival	once a month, see dates
Date of dep.	Monday

Project Information

The Garden Route Elephant Park was established as the first captive elephant research unit dedicated to captive elephants in South Africa. It is based between Knysna and Plettenberg Bay in the Western Cape and was set up by the project team as they identified that there is a serious lack of research carried out on captive elephants in South Africa, particularly with respect to their welfare and husbandry. The objectives of the project are the following:

- To conduct and facilitate research of the elephants based at the Garden Route Elephant Park and other facilities in South Africa.
- To promote ethical and non-harmful research of captive elephants in South Africa.
- To guide management of captive elephant operations through science.
- To provide information relevant to wild elephants to improve their protection and conservation.
- "Conservation through education".

Working with elephants is a humbling and awe-inspiring experience. All volunteers are asked to be enthusiastic, dedicated, willing, able and keen to get involved with anything and have a genuine love of wildlife.

The project works closely with many universities and other captive elephant facilities on research projects as well as carrying out research on the elephant park herd. As a volunteer you will assist not only with the collection of data but also with all aspects of education, husbandry and conservation. This includes field observations of the herd, cleaning and preparing the elephant boma, night-time observations of behaviour and sleeping activities, making improvements and general maintenance around the park, preparing food for the elephants, data entry, gardening and visiting the local children's school to run eco-educational activities.

Many of the projects involve long hours of data collection in the field and getting your hands dirty so this project is not for the faint hearted. However the rewards are many, especially when the elephants begin to recognise you and trust you – and you become part of the herd!

The project is NOT primarily a research facility. It is also a large tourist facility, hosting tourists and group visits on a daily basis. Volunteers need to be aware that this park is open to the public, and not primarily a research facility.

Your Role

As a rule, you will work 5 days per week, but you may be asked to help over weekends and evenings, should the need arise. Working hours during your stay at the Park vary, according to the different activities you will be asked to participate in. However, an elephant working day starts at 06:30 and lasts until 17:30.

Monday to Thursday: The day starts at 06:30 in the boma with mucking out the pens and helping to clean the boma or walking out with the elephants into the field (2x per week). The day is split into 1,5-hour shifts where you will spend 1,5 hours in the field and then 1,5 hours doing husbandry, maintenance or data entry. Not all non-field activities take 1,5 hours so there is time to have a break as well as a 1,5-hour break every day. The day finishes at 17:30. You will be asked to help with the evening feeding of the elephants or with morning/evening boma observations twice a week.

Friday: After early morning activities, there is a meeting at 11:00. After that, you leave for town for a shopping trip. Friday afternoon is free.

You are involved in every aspect of the programme. However, volunteers who stay for longer will be more involved in the research because we are able to spend longer training them on our more in-depth data collection. The days can vary when help is needed on the farm, but it is not too often. In the winter the workday is from 07:00 to 17:00, plus the out-of-hour's activities.

It is important to note that this description serves as an example only. The daily tasks and challenges depend on the volunteer, the time of the year and the work that needs to be done. The final job description can therefore vary substantially from the above.

Accommodation

You are based at the Elephant Park, situated 9 km west of Plettenberg Bay and 22 km east of Knysna. You live in the bunkhouse in comfortable dorm-style rooms, so you may be sharing with two or three volunteers. There is an en-suite bathroom per room. The bunkhouse has a lounge (TV, DVD player, board games, dart board and books) and is equipped with a basic but fully-functioning kitchen with a fireplace, seating area, dining table and chairs; the bunkhouse also has an outside decking area with benches. WiFi (limited) is available. Bedding is provided and changed weekly. There is a housekeeping service which cleans the bunkhouse rooms and bathrooms twice a week. Laundry is self-service – you are responsible for your own laundry.

In addition, two very adorable cats are waiting there to be hugged by you.

Prices

Project fee 2017
3 weeks: € 1.297
4 weeks: € 1.688
8 weeks: € 3.253
Additional week: € 391

Included	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project placement• Airport transfer on arrival and departure• Project accommodation (dorm-style rooms, self-catering, laundry with self-service)• Welcome pack• Weekly site visits from our coordinator• 2 T-shirts as a uniform• Shopping shuttle (once a week)• Orientation• Electronic certificate (printed copy on request)• Local support including a 24 hour emergency number• WiFi
Not included	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food• Local transport• Weekend excursions• Towels