## Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Location</strong></th>
<th>Plettenberg Bay, South Africa.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>From 2 weeks.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dates</strong></td>
<td>This project is open from mid January to mid November.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Requirements</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Minimum age: 18.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• You must have an Upper Intermediate level of English.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Special skills: You must have a love and true interest in the ocean as well as in community work.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Your impact</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>The impact of your volunteer work depends on the nature of the project. In addition, it may also depend on whether the project offers a full volunteering experience or a combination of volunteering and tourism. For details, please see the description of the project and what’s included in the project fees.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Documents required</strong></td>
<td>Enrolment form, curriculum vitae, letter of motivation, passport copy, proof of medical insurance.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Day of arrival</strong></td>
<td>Monday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day of departure</strong></td>
<td>Monday.</td>
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Highlights

• Learn about and practice ocean conservation techniques together with biologists and conservationists and apply them first hand in the field.
• Volunteer on the water every day – with dolphins, sharks, seals and whales.
• Be involved in community education programmes.
• Live and work in a beautiful seaside town.
• Experience the Garden Route’s natural beauty.
• Enjoy a variety of activities outside of the project: Bloukrans Bungy (the world’s highest commercial bridge bungee jump), waterfall zipline, elephant & snake sanctuaries, wine estates, skydiving, adventure boating, kloofing, kayaking, etc.
• Make new friends from all over the world.

Project information

The Ocean Conservation project is part of a volunteer community dedicated to marine conservation in South Africa. Like many conservation projects, this organisation depends on the willingness of others to contribute their time and dedication to further volunteering and conservation ethics, which go hand in hand for a better future.

This project found its humble beginnings during a conversation between two friends in the Plettenberg Bay area when they noticed silverfish, a staple in the dolphin diet, being caught by foreign boats in the distance. In the weeks following, dolphins began to disappear from the bay. Not surprisingly, the cause for their disappearance was the dissipating food source; silverfish were almost removed from the bay entirely by fisherman.

This event raised many concerns for the citizens of the local community in Plettenberg Bay, which is home to some of the most diverse marine wildlife, including bottlenose dolphins, humpback dolphins, common dolphins, orca whales, humpback whales, southern right whales and great white sharks. In response to these concerns, the Ocean Conservation project created an education wing to add to their pre-existing marine eco-tourism company. This addition focused on marine education, conservation, and research, and was aptly named Ocean Conservation. When the program first started in 2000, its main goal was to create a bay management plan with the help of its first research students. A partnership was arranged with the government organization, Cape Nature, to police the Bay. The Ocean Conservation project provided the needed equipment and Cape Nature enforced the law in the area. Within a couple of months, no illegal boats could be found in the bay. The Plettenberg Bay municipality eventually accepted this plan, and the Ocean Conservation project has since continued to monitor the bay under the supervision and guidance of many universities and governmental institutions.

It wasn't long before the community started noticing improvements and expressing curiosity about the different “works in progress” at the foundation. The local interest and desire to help the Ocean Conservation cause snow-balled into what is now the volunteer programme, where people from all over the world come to dedicate their time and help progress education, research, and conservation initiatives.
Programme details
This volunteer programme is designed to increase awareness about conservation issues and initiatives, and to help create a conservation model for the Plettenberg Bay area. People of all ages and with different backgrounds come from all over the world to learn while helping further the work in sustaining marine and coastal resources.

Projects are both sea and land based, and daily activities include whale and dolphin watching, elasmobranch egg case surveys, fin profiling for animal movement studies, hikes and walks, marine debris cleanups, planting indigenous trees and removing alien species, White Shark monitoring (in collaboration with the Plettenberg Bay Hope Spot), river health assessments, and education of preschool children.

Besides the education and research work, the project is also involved with various other conservation activities. Such activities include maintenance of the Ocean Blue Aquarium, which holds a collection of fish and represents the ecosystem of the surrounding bay. Volunteers collect food for the fish, clean the aquarium, facilitate water changes, and collect specimens for the aquarium while, at the same time, learn about the rivers, estuaries and sea, and the delicate balance between them all.

Your role
You work from Monday to Friday, from 08:30 to 16:30. On some days, you can be on the water as early as 06:00 and then finish as early as 16:00. Evenings and weekends are your personal time.

The project involves a conservation and community focus. Many of the activities happen on a weekly basis, but some are more irregular.

Regular environmental activities:
- collecting bait for aquariums
- beach cleanups
- investigating intertidal rock pools
- dolphin and whale watching trips and GPS monitoring
- fin profiling
- maintenance of aquariums at Ocean Blue Adventures
- data capturing
- contributing to citizen science projects (e.g. Mammal Mapping, ELMO, iSpot)
- hikes and walks
- tree planting
- alien vegetation clearing
- assisting local rehabilitation and conservation centres
- bird ringing
- river assessments (miniSASS protocol)
- collecting elasmobranch egg-case

Irregular environmental activities:
- sea horse monitoring project
- fish capture for marine aquarium
- fish monitoring on reefs (Open Water Diving license required)
Regular community activities:

- assisting at Siyakula Creche (disadvantaged children)
- assisting at Sterreweg (children with disabilities)
- community clean-ups
- assisting at PAWS (animal welfare)

Subject to availability:

- scientific lectures by researchers/academics
- stranded marine animal rescue
- animal necropsies
- turtle rehabilitation
- township tours
- lunchbox theatre shows (environmental education)
- field band practice

Extra cost activities:

- prodive scuba diving course
- cultural dinner in the Qolweni Township
- fish tagging project

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.

Getting to and from the project

The Ocean Conservation project is situated in Plettenberg Bay, in the heart of the Garden Route. You need to arrive at George Airport where you will be collected by the volunteer staff. Transport is provided on both your arrival and departure. Preferred arrival time is between 12:00 and 15:00.

Alternatively, you can fly directly into Plettenberg Bay. Limited flights are available on Cemair (http://www.flycemair.co.za/) which flies directly to Plettenberg Bay from Cape Town and Johannesburg.
each week. Please let the Good Hope Volunteers coordinator know if you need more information on these flights.

Accommodation
You stay at the project’s volunteer house, which is located in Plettenberg Bay, minutes away from the beach and steps away from the estuary. You are accommodated in dorm-style rooms (4 to 8 volunteers per room) with shared bathrooms (2 to 4 volunteers share a bathroom). With your fellow volunteers, you share communal areas like kitchens and living rooms.

The relaxed atmosphere at the volunteer house offers an amazing South African experience while still feeling very much like a home with many friendly faces. Often, volunteers join together for evening get-togethers that range from enjoying dinner prepared by the projects’ own cook, Teliswa, or going out to a restaurant for a casual drink in town.

Free WiFi as well as a laundry service and satellite TV are available.

Meals
Food is supplied but you need to prepare most of your own meals. You will make your own breakfast and lunch. Evening meals will be prepared for you five nights per week. On all other days, you need to cook your own dinner. A vegetarian option is available and it is also possible to cater for special dietary requirements.

You are also welcome to eat out but this will be at your own expense. The volunteer house is located near a variety of restaurants and fast food outlets, both local and international.

Free time
The project is situated in an area where the country’s best adventure activities are offered. You are spoilt for choice with a variety of activities that can be done over weekends and during your free time in the area of Plettenberg Bay, The Crags, Tsitsikamma, George, Mosselbay, Oudtshoorn, etc. You can go bungy jumping, sky diving, whale watching, swimming with seals, adventure boating, kloofing, kayaking, horse-riding and shark cage diving, or you can do a tree-top canopy tour, or visit the waterfall Zipline, elephant and snake sanctuaries, wine estates, and many more.

Local transport
The volunteer house is within walking distance of the project. Transport to project-related activities is provided by the project staff in their vehicle.

Transfers to town or to activities during your free time will be at your own expense.

What to bring
Items you will need are:

- a waterproof (and windproof if possible) coat/jacket
- long trousers for evenings and cool days (winters can be chilly)
• shorts for sunny days
• T-shirts, both long and short-sleeved
• old jeans or trousers (for working outdoors) and shirts
• a jumper or fleece jumper
• comfortable walking shoes, old trainers, or sandals
• swimming trunks/costumes/suits
• pajamas - remember that winter evenings are cold (July-September)
• underwear and socks
• a day rucksack/backpack
• a hat or cap for the sun (and for winter a beanie or woollen hat)
• sunglasses (preferably good polarized ones)
• smarter casual clothes if you go out at night
• sunscreen and mosquito repellent

Items you could bring are:

• a camera
• binoculars
• a torch or flashlight
• some books to read in the evenings
• work gloves

All these items (and anything else you might need) are readily available at local supermarkets in South Africa.

While there is no specific uniform, volunteers are asked to wear sensible clothing, e.g. long shorts and closed shoes. Hot pants, string bikinis and flip-flops are not suitable for work.

Medical insurance

It is required that you take out medical insurance before travelling to South Africa. For stays exceeding 90 days, it is compulsory to take out a South African medical insurance. We recommend NetworX from Compcare, which is specifically designed for people who visit South Africa for 3 to 12 months. You will receive an information leaflet and an application form together with your confirmation of booking.

Health

No vaccinations are required except for travellers going to the north-eastern areas of South Africa, where anti-malaria precautions are recommended. Clients should consult their doctor for recommendations.

A yellow fever certificate is compulsory for those persons who have travelled from, or intend travelling through, countries in the yellow fever belt:

South America: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guyana, Guyana, Panama, Peru, Surinam, Venezuela, Argentina and Paraguay.

Bring medication just in case you suffer from any travel-related illnesses, e.g. stomach upsets, since your body needs to adjust to the change in food and water during your first few days in South Africa.

It is important to keep in mind at all times that HIV and Aids are widespread diseases in South Africa.

The project is situated in a malaria-free area so no anti-malarial drugs are required.

Safety

While all safety precautions are followed, you are still working with wild animals and must be aware at all times and follow the safety guidelines. HIV and AIDS are a major public health concern. You should be aware that you are working with children that could be affected.

Cultural diversity

We suggest doing some light reading regarding the history of South Africa and its people. Please note it is a very ethnically diverse population, and there are many different groups of people with different ideas and behaviors. We suggest being as open minded as you can - try understand the history and note that in rural areas the differences can be more pronounced. Please try to be modest in what you wear and how you behave.

What’s included / not included

Included:
- Project placement
- Airport transfer on arrival and departure (George Airport)
- Accommodation (dorm-style rooms, breakfast, lunch and dinner, laundry)
- Transport to project related activities
- Good Hope Volunteers welcome pack
- Weekly site visits by our coordinator
- T-shirt & a cap
- An orientation at the beginning of your volunteering
- Electronic certificate (printed copy on request)
- Local support including a 24-hour emergency number
- WiFi

Not included:
- Any other transport
- Excursions
Visa

You can volunteer in South Africa on a visitor’s visa for up to 90 days.

Nationals from certain countries (e.g. Brazil, Switzerland, Germany, Australia, France, Netherlands, Spain) will receive their visa when entering South Africa. Other nationals need to apply for a visitor’s visa at a South African Embassy in their home country before travelling.

If you come to South Africa on a visitor’s visa, you can extend once by another 90 days.

If you plan to come for more than 90 days, you need to apply for a visa at a South African Embassy in your home country.

For the latest information contact the South African Embassy or Good Hope Volunteers.