

Extensive information:

Project Marine Adventure
Including whales and dolphins
South Africa



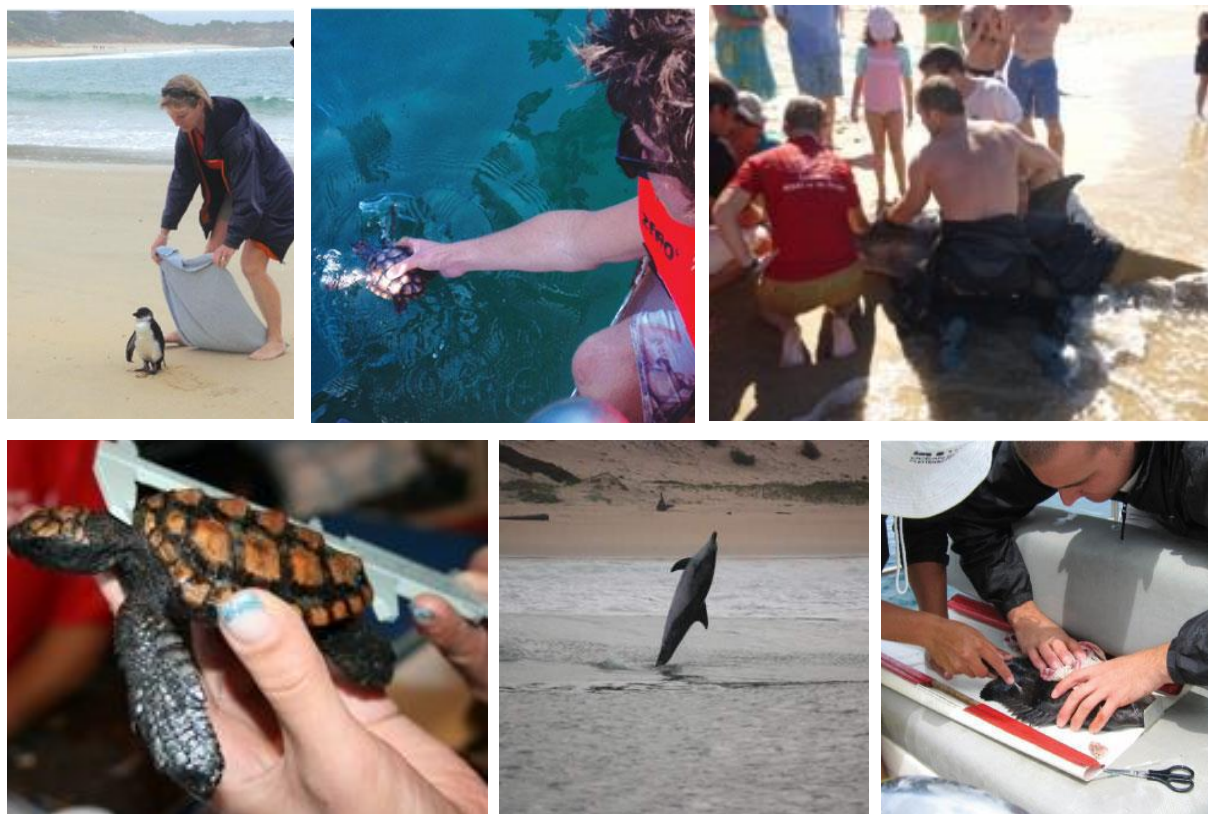
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Note: Annually the text of this extensive information will be developed and will be kept up with regularly in cooperation with this project. Because there can be made some changes or because there will be some changes be necessary because of certain and unexpected results, etc., it could be that this text not every time will compare in practise at this project.

Join the project with an open mind, and a flexible attitude and you will leave South Africa with unique, special and unforgettable memories!



1. Introduction

The location you are going to is home to some of world's most fascinating marine species, including:

- Bottlenose dolphins: The Bottlenose Dolphin is the most common and well-known dolphin. They are gray, varying from dark gray at the top near the dorsal fin to very light gray and almost white at the underside. Their elongated upper and lower jaws form what is called a rostrum, or beak-like snout, which gives these dolphins its common name.
- Humpback dolphins: The humpback dolphins are very shy animals and move in very small pods. They are light grey colour with a distinct hump under their dorsal fin. They are also endangered and one of the subjects of the project's research
- Common dolphins: the Common Dolphin is the name given to up to three species of dolphin making up the genus *Delphinus*. Their colour patterns is highly variable, but are generally identified by their brown and cream colourations and the hourglass figure on their flanks.
- Orca's or Killer whales: The Orca or Killer Whale is the largest species of the oceanic dolphin family. Orcas are distinctively marked, with a black back, white chest and sides, and a white patch above and behind the eye. Orcas have a heavy and stocky body and a large dorsal fin with a dark grey "saddle patch" at the fin's rear. These animals are only seen 1-2 times per year.
- Southern Right whales: The southern right whales are baleen whales with bow-shaped lower jaw and a head that is up to one-quarter of the body length. The head is hairier than most whales. Right whales are similar to bowhead whales, but smaller. They are called "right whales" because whalers thought the whales were the "right" ones to hunt, as they float when killed and often swim within sight of the shore. They are seen only from July to October.
- Humpback whales: The Humpback Whale is a baleen whale. One of the larger rorqual species. The Humpback has a distinctive body shape, with unusually long pectoral fins and a knobbly head. It is an acrobatic animal, often breaching and slapping the water. They can be seen from November to December
- Bryde's whales: Bryde's Whales are the least-known and in many ways the most unusual of the rorquals. They are small by rorqual standards and prefer tropical and temperate waters to the polar seas that other whales in their family frequent. "Bryde's" is pronounced "broo-dess", and the name is sometimes mistaken as "brutus whale". The Bryde's whale got its name from Norwegian consul to South Africa, Johan Bryde, who helped set up the first whaling factory in South Africa in the early 1900s. Can be seen all year long, but mostly from December - March.

Other marine life you will probably meet are sea turtles, cape fur seals, pelagic birds, and sometimes sharks.



2. The project

The project officially started in 2001 and was designed to create awareness about marine conservation issues. Today, the project combines conservation, education and research into its comprehensive volunteer program. Like many conservation NGO's the foundation depends on the willingness of volunteers such as yourself to contribute their time and dedication to help further our work. Volunteers of different ages and backgrounds come from all over the world to learn and provide valuable assistance in a wide variety of meaningful projects. This allows them to make a valuable contribution to increased knowledge and awareness regarding local conservation efforts.

2.1 The mission

- To raise awareness and interest in marine conservation issues.
- To support applied research that informs management authorities with scientific advice when making decisions concerning the conservation of local marine species.
- To expose volunteers to local marine research, conservation and community education initiatives
- To teach young children about the value of our oceans.
- To install a sense of community and support by collaborating with other conservation organizations and research institutes in the region.

This project gives volunteers a unique once in a life time chance to work, by combining education, conservation, community development, science, tourism and viable business model.



2.2 Research

Overview

The project offers a unique learning experience for volunteers who are passionate about the marine environment. It will allow you to make valuable contributions to increased knowledge, awareness and conservation efforts while supporting applied marine research. As part of our comprehensive volunteer programme, you will regularly receive the opportunity to assist our research team and obtain hands-on participatory experience in boat-based and landbased fieldwork, as well as marine mammal stranding response and necropsy.

Our biologists study various marine top predator species in Plettenberg Bay, some of which are endangered (eg. Indian Ocean humpback dolphin and great white shark) and others that are more prolific (eg. Cape fur seal). They collaborate on various long-term monitoring projects focusing on cetacean photo-ID, abundance estimates and habitat use; seal population growth, seal diet and estuarine habitat use; and seal-fisheries and seal-shark interactions. Furthermore, our researchers are members of the Plettenberg

Bay Marine Animal Stranding Response Network, a voluntary group acting on behalf of the Port Elizabeth Museum. They are appointed as agents of the museum to attend to marine mammal strandings, perform necropsies and collect samples for research purposes.



Things to be aware of during your involvement

While assisting our biologists during boat-based fieldwork you may be required to move around the vessel whilst underway, sometimes in choppy conditions. Seasickness is a possibility and we suggest you take the necessary precautions if you are prone to this condition. Hiking to landbased observational sites and stranded marine mammal carcasses on remote beaches can be physically demanding and at times mentally challenging. However, we do realize that every volunteer has their own physical and mental capabilities, and therefore won't expect you to venture beyond your limits. It is important to notify us at the start of your stay if you have any disability or injuries that may affect your participation in any of the fieldwork activities.

You will need to be prepared for regular last-minute changes in the research work schedule. It is important to understand that most of our research activities are highly weather dependent, especially boat-based fieldwork. Bad weather days will be used to catch up on data entry and other database tasks. Opportunistic research on whale and dolphin watching boat trips may also be cancelled or delayed depending on available space and last-minute tourist bookings. Marine mammal strandings often occur without warning. Events involving fresh carcasses or live animals ashore require immediate response and therefore take priority over all other research activities. When we receive a report of a marine animal ashore (mostly Cape fur seals and seabirds) we often drop what we are doing and rush out to investigate as data and samples collected from stranded animals are very valuable in current research.



Project description

Opportunistic Boat-Based Data Collection

We regularly join on the commercial whale and dolphin watching trips to record opportunistic sightings of marine animals such as whales, dolphins, seals, sharks, seabirds and turtles. When whales and dolphins are encountered we take dorsal fin photographs for photo-identification. Sightings of injured and entangled seals at the Robberg colony are also recorded to tie in with ongoing seal-shark and seafisheries interaction research. All data is intended for use in collaborative research and citizen science projects, and will provide us with information on aspects such as the spatial distribution of various species within the bay, individual movement patterns, changes in group sizes and population health.

Plettenberg Bay Humpback Dolphin Project

The Indian Ocean humpback dolphin was recently listed as endangered in South African waters and faces a number of anthropogenic threats due to its preference for shallow coastal waters. With an estimated population size of 500 individuals, it is considered to be South Africa’s most endangered resident marine mammal. Dedicated boat-based surveys are conducted each month to collect sighting and photo-identification data. The project is run in collaboration with Nelson Mandela University and data will contribute towards collaborative research projects which aim to increase our knowledge of the species, assess trends in population numbers and inform conservation and management decisions.



Marine Mammal Stranding Response and Necropsy

In collaboration with the Port Elizabeth Museum, our researchers regularly attend to dead whales, dolphins and seals ashore to collect entire carcasses or parts thereof, perform necropsies (dissections) and temporarily store samples for research purposes of the museum. Samples are used in various ongoing studies on marine mammal morphology, taxonomy, population structure, diet, health, fisheries interactions and predator-prey interactions. They also attend to live seals ashore to capture, hold in temporary confinement, tag, move and/or release them.

Seal Diet Monitoring

Our researchers collect monthly scats samples to update the current diet of Cape fur seals that haul out on Robberg Peninsula. Scats are routinely processed and prey remains identified for future analyses at the Port Elizabeth Museum. Data will be used to aid in studies on seal-fisheries operational interactions, biological competition between seals and fisheries, and trophic ecology to examine the role of seals in the Agulhas Current. This is especially important in light of recent changes that have taken place in this ecosystem.

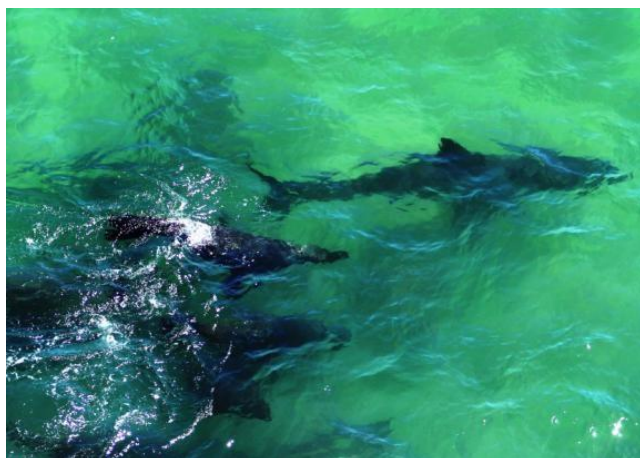


Seal-Shark Interactions

The presence of great white sharks and their interactions with seals are recorded during opportunistic boat-based surveys and dedicated land-based observations in Robberg MPA. This consists of monitoring seal movements (and group size), recording direct sightings of sharks and shark predation attempts on seals, as well as examining shark-inflicted wounds on dead seals washed ashore and those photographed on live seals that haul out at the colony. Data will be used to examine the seasonal presence of white sharks and its impact on seal behaviour. We will also use data in an attempt to estimate shark predation rates to assess its significance as a mortality factor on the Robberg seal colony. Continued monitoring of white shark presence and the percentage of seals exhibiting bite wounds could provide a useful indicator to any changes in the abundance and behaviour of sharks in the area, especially in relation to continued local seal population growth, potential environmental changes, fluctuations in prey availability and possible shark cage diving activities in future.

Seal-Fisheries Interactions

We distribute questionnaires and conduct opportunistic interviews with fishermen to obtain their opinion on the impact of Cape fur seals on local fish stocks and recreational angling in the Robberg Marine Protected Area (MPA). Circulation of questionnaires was recommended by Cape Nature and the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) after negative feedback received from fishermen at the recent MPA rezonation meeting held in August 2017. Although independent of the rezonation process, questionnaire surveys will form part of our seal biologists broader PhD study in collaboration with the Port Elizabeth Museum. This study aims to update the current nature and extent of seal-fisheries interactions in the Agulhas Current to inform management with scientific advice. For the recreational rock & surf angling component, questionnaire results will be compared to independent observations made from cliff-top vantage points, as well as results from seal diet analysis. This will allow critical evaluation of the current perceptions of recreational anglers that fish in the MPA.



Monitoring the Presence of Seals in Estuaries

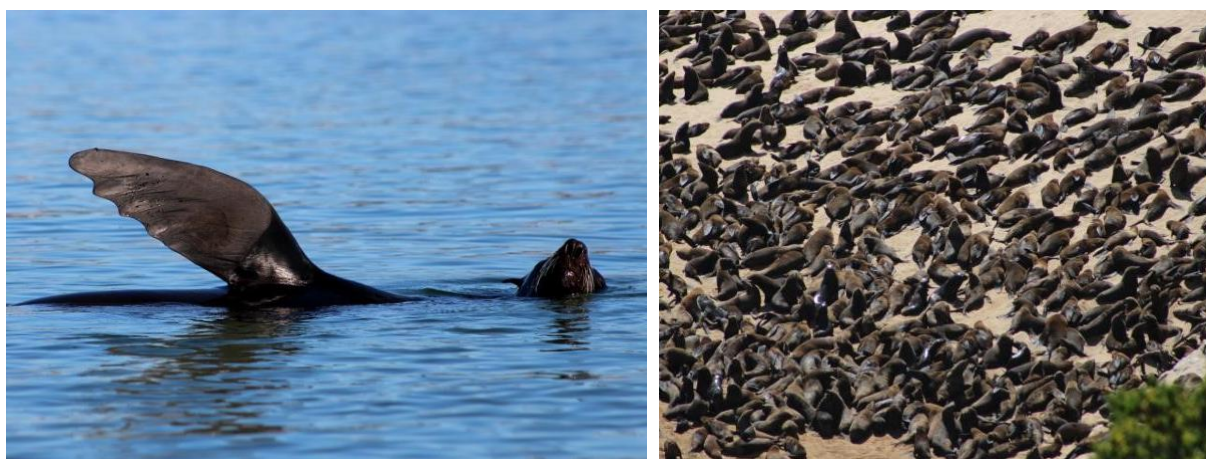
Fishermen have encountered Cape fur seals in the Keurbooms River estuary for many years and there are numerous anecdotal reports of them preying on important recreational fish species that are also of conservation concern. In the past, due to public pressure, this has led to the issuing of exemption permits for the selective removal of 'rogue' seals by river management authorities. However, the existence of river-specialists, whether such individuals have a greater impact on estuarine fish species than individuals in the general population, and the potential effect of their removal, has not been examined. In collaboration with the Port Elizabeth Museum and DEA, our researchers have set up a project to track the movement of Cape fur seals that frequent the estuary.

We conduct dedicated boat-based surveys to record the presence, identity, behaviour and habitat preference of these seals. Using photo-ID techniques we have identified a number of individuals with unique flipper scars. Prey species are identified from photos taken during predation events. With this

we aim to determine whether individual seals specialize in feeding on estuarine fish species, and whether their behaviour is seasonal, tidal, sex or age specific. The study further aims to place the impact of river seals into context with current recreational fishing pressure. Results will have important implications for management as it will provide new data on the existence of river specialists, which may be important for the development of future conflict mitigation measures, should they be needed.

Seal Population Growth Monitoring

As part of ongoing collaboration with the Port Elizabeth Museum, our researchers perform dedicated boat-based surveys to Robberg Peninsula to monitor the number of seals that haul out, and, from November-February the number of new-born pups. This long-term monitoring project will allow further examination of local seal population growth. It will also allow new research on the impact of easterly storms on pup survival at this colony. Reliable pup counts over the next few breeding seasons will inform managing authorities of the possible change of the status of the colony from a former haul out site to a full-on breeding colony.



Seal Tag Re-sights

During the end of January each year our researchers intend to tag, weigh, sample and release ~100 pups at the Robberg Peninsula seal colony. Subsequent tag re-sights will be recorded during routine boatbased surveys to assess the effectiveness of different types of flipper tags in terms of tag retention. Tagging pups will also allow long-term research on specialist seal behaviour via re-sights of tagged seals in estuaries, those incidentally captured in trawl nets and deliberately killed during other fishing operations. Stranded new-born pups that are rescued, treated and released back at the colony during the breeding season are fitted with flipper tags as part of an existing research project of the Port Elizabeth Museum, which aims to assess the success of rehabilitation efforts.

Tag and Release Fishing

When there is an opportunity, you will join the boat tour manager and experienced angler on fish tagging trips in the Keurbooms River estuary. As it is tag and release, the information of the species of fish caught is recorded along with the tag number before the fish is released. These fish are eventually re-caught somewhere further along the coastline and the information from their tags is sent in to a national database at the Oceanographic Research Institute (ORI) in Kwazulu Natal. The information that is gathered shows the distance that each fish has travelled from the time of its release to the time of its capture, along with the size increase that has occurred during its release period. Some amazing information has already been captured since the start of this long-term monitoring project.

Bird Ringing with Natures Valley Trust

Twice a month we assist Natures Valley Trust at one of their bird ringing sites where they capture birds in order to ring them with a uniquely numbered metal band and to record any recaptures of previously ringed birds. This work is done as part of a longterm study assessing aspects such as survival, residency and body condition of the birds in this area.



2.3 Conservation

Marine Debris Clean-Ups and Beach Surveys

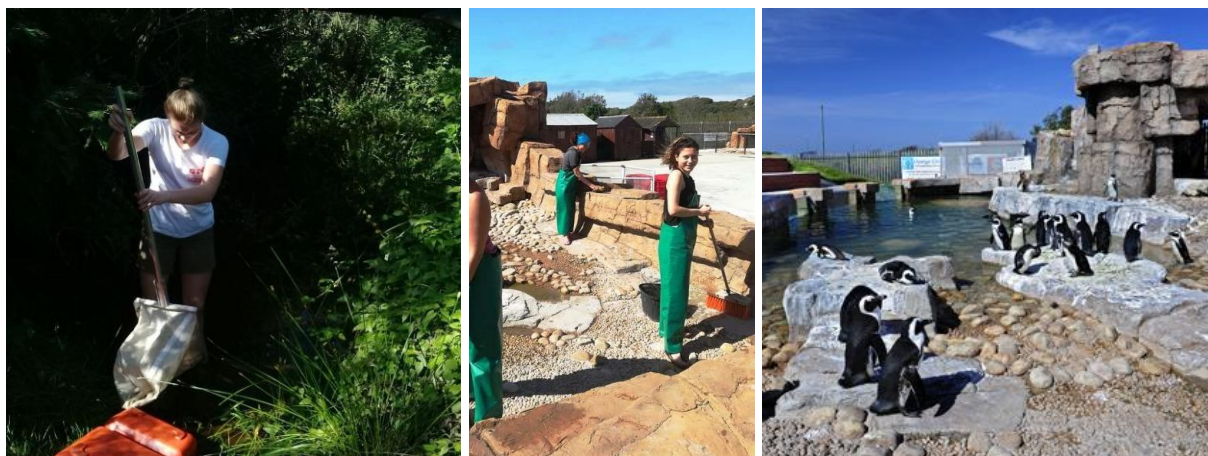
We regularly hike along Plettenberg Bay's beaches to clean up marine debris. Unfortunately we live in a world where people still dump rubbish from vessels, in rivers or on beaches. This often causes entanglement in marine animals. Tiny plastic particles (micro-plastics) are known to end up in the ocean foodchain. This project not only keeps our beaches clean and healthy, but also sets a good example for the community. We also use the opportunity to record our findings, which gives us indications of where the garbage is coming from and where it appears most frequently. In addition, when Plett experiences bad weather conditions, the project sets out to survey local beaches for marine animal carcasses washed ashore.

River Health Evaluation

As part of a citizen science project we perform miniSASS river health assessments at various sites along the Bitou River. In order to complete an evaluation the river needs to be sampled for microinvertebrates. Species are identified and scored on a matrix according to their sensitivity to disturbance. Results will allow management authorities to identify early warning signs of decreasing river health due to various potential sources of pollution.

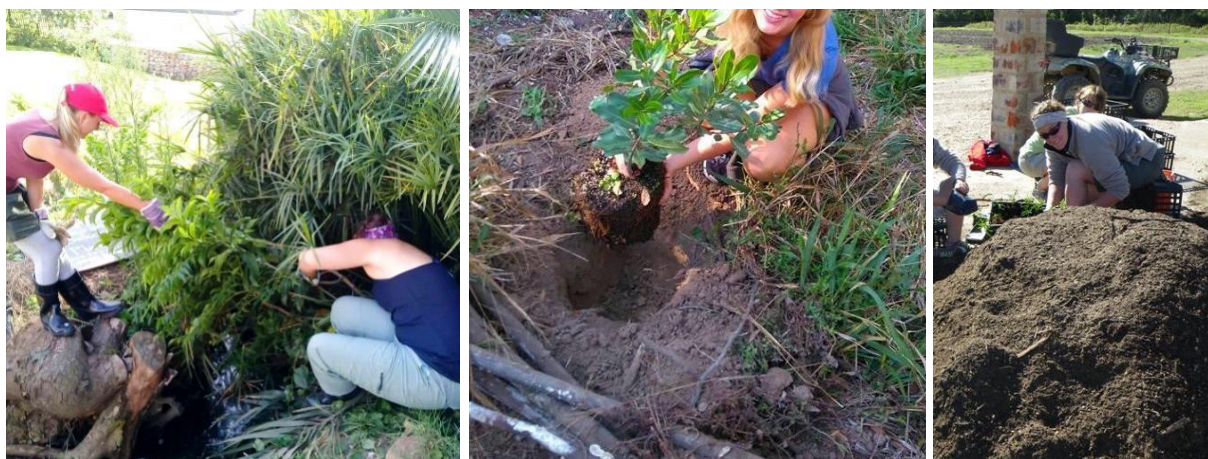
Seabird rehabilitation centre

Once a month we visit the centre to assist with general maintenance of the facility and the rehabilitation of various seabirds, such as the endangered African penguin. Due to the fact that the centre is in Port Elizabeth, this requires an early start to the day, often leaving the volunteer house at 05h30 in the morning.



Alien plant clearing

One of the project's goals is to remove as many alien plant species as possible from the Plettenberg Bay area. These species are not compatible with our forests and are known to use a lot more water resources than our indigenous plants. South Africa is short of rainfall and this inevitably leads to rivers drying out and biodiversity declining. In conjunction with other local organizations we often head out into the surrounding areas to help remove these species – sometimes removing as many as 300 trees in a day.



2.4 Environmental education and community outreach

Pre-School Education

Once a week, volunteers visit young children at the local crèche to give a lesson on basic English words involving marine conservation. All teaching is done in English (translated by the teachers into their mother tongue of isiXhosa) so that kids can learn a second language. It has been proven that getting the information to people at an early age will enhance their chances of making a concrete difference in the bettering of our environment. Volunteers also train children through reading stories and playing games. They further assist the crèche by serving children lunchtime meals and washing up.

Special Needs PreSchool

Volunteers spend time assisting carers at a local crèche during daily activities involving children with moderate to severe cognitive and physical disabilities. Volunteers may also participate in an Early Intervention Programme for children between 1 and 3 years old or shadow Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists who work at the centre. Volunteers are more than welcome to help out at the school whenever they prefer, but this must please be prearranged with the project manager.

Theatre

We currently sponsor the theatre, an educational theatrical company which cast tours around the Garden Route to perform The Whale Show. A piece on whale conservation, children quickly become excited and engaged due to the overwhelming passion and commitment to its message.



Aquarium Maintenance

Volunteers maintain a small aquarium, which holds a collection of fish that represent the near shore species found in the bay. You are responsible for collecting natural food for the fish (mostly prawns collected in the estuary), cleaning the aquarium, facilitating water changes and collecting specimens. This will allow you to learn more about the coastal marine and estuarine environment.

Animal Welfare Services

Once every two weeks volunteers visit the Knysna Animal Welfare Services centre to assist with general maintenance of the facility and interact with cats and dogs.

3. Volunteers

By being a volunteer on this project you will support this project's work in two ways:

1. Volunteer donations contribute to the day-to-day costs of running the project.
2. Volunteer participation in the work of the project is essential, as each volunteer brings unique skills and perspectives to the organization.

3.1 Period / duration

Volunteers are welcome all year round (excluding 25 November - January).

You are free to choose your own arrival date, but it is recommended to start on a Monday.

The duration of your stay must be 2 weeks or longer.

3.2 Requirements

No previous experience is required to participate in any of our program activities.

It is however recommended that you have the following qualities in order to make a valuable contribution:

- General interest in conservation, marine biology and research
- Enthusiastic, positive, mature and independent attitude
- Willingness to learn and work well within our small team
- Reliable, adaptable and patient due to the weather dependent nature of fieldwork
- Ability to work long-hours on small vessels
- Moderate fitness level to hike long distances in the field
- Attention to detail
- Willingness to perform tedious behavioral observations in sometimes challenging weather conditions
- Willingness to perform tedious data entry duties
- Ability to communicate in English (both written and oral)
- A minimum age of 18 years old (16/17 years in consultation), unless accompanied by a parent/guardian.

3.3 Costs (including and not including)

The costs per person to participate at this project are as specified in the Global Spirits' website.

These costs include:

- Accommodation
- 3 meals a day and non alcoholic beverages
- Activities that form part of the program
- A donation to the project
- Training and supervision
- Administration costs

These costs not include:

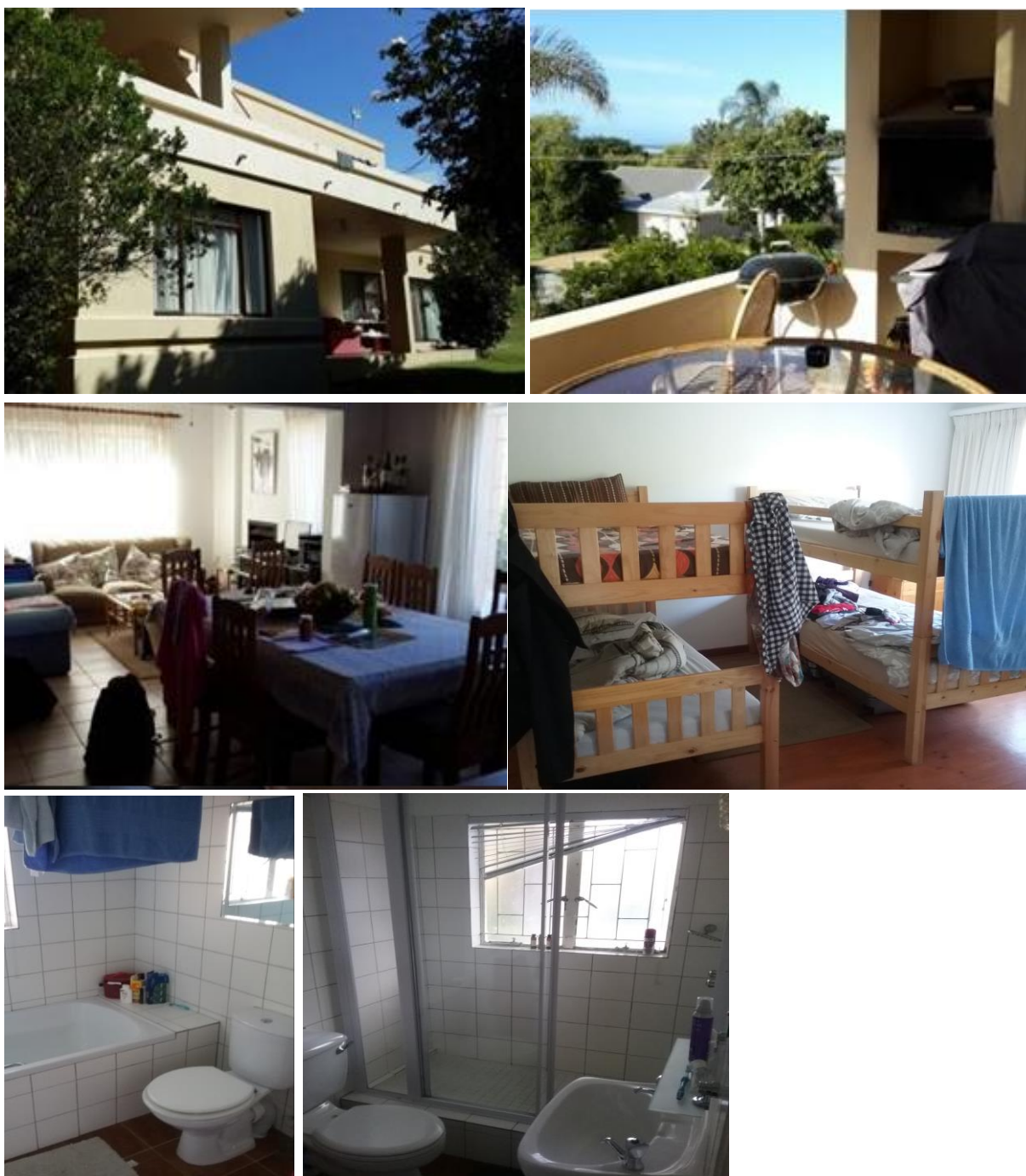
- Flights to South Africa and return
- Travel to and from Plettenberg Bay in South Africa
- Passport / visa
- Travel insurance, which is compulsory for all participants and a cancellation insurance
- Personal expenses such as alcohol, cigarettes, telephone bills, internet, souvenirs, etc.
- Any excursions undertaken by the volunteer
- Excess baggage amounts

3.4 Accommodation

Volunteers will be accommodated in a house especially for volunteers. The accommodation has shared bedroom, bathroom and kitchen facilities. There is a house keeper that comes in daily to go general cleaning, laundry and prepare supper. There is a wireless connection available free of charge in the house.

The volunteer house is within walking distance from the Market Square and shopping centers, which includes a variety of shops and restaurants.

Upon arrival at the volunteer house you will receive a hard copy of the house rules. You are expected to read through the document and follow the rules during your stay. If the rules are not followed there will be consequences and you may be asked to leave the program.



3.5 The work

It's all hands-on! You will play a major role in all our projects where you will be expected to perform a large portion of the work. Your participation in conservation, education and outreach activities will involve regular hikes and surveys on local beaches to perform marine debris clean-ups and record marine animal strandings; indigenous tree planting and alien plant eradication as part of private nature reserve and municipal programs; river health assessments in the Bitou River; assistance at the Seabird Rehabilitation Centre; assistance at the Knysna Animal Welfare Service ; and environmental education of children at the Pre-School Crèche and Special Needs Pre-School.

You will also gain valuable exposure to scientific research by assisting our experienced marine biologists in the field or at sea. This will involve performing routine fieldwork, data collection, sample processing and data capture for various monitoring projects focussing on some of Plett's charismatic marine top predator species (eg. Indian Ocean humpback dolphin, great white shark and Cape fur seal). Current research projects include boat-based surveys with the foundation's mother company, to record data on cetaceans and other marine life such as seals, seabirds and sharks, as well as fishing and marine tourism activities; land-based behavioural observations to record data on whales, dolphins, seals, sharks and fishing activity in the Robberg Peninsula Marine Protected Area; seal scat processing and preliminary 5 identification of prey remains; and marine mammal stranding response and necropsies with members of the Plett Stranding Network and the Port Elizabeth Museum.

Depending on the length of your stay and level of experience, we may ask you to take on more responsibility where you will perform a larger portion of the work and even train new volunteers.

Once you have arrived and settled into the volunteer house, the Volunteer Coordinator will give you a short orientation of our programme. No previous experience is required to participate in our activities and the details of each project will be explained during in-field training

Below is a breakdown of all our program activities. It is important to remember that each activity depends on season, weather, and need, and as such may be subject to change throughout the year. As a result all volunteer placements are different, and you may or may not be involved with all our activities during your stay. Bad weather days can delay outdoor activities which may necessitate last minute changes in the work program to include indoor activities such as data entry.



Research:

- Opportunistic and dedicated boat-based surveys to record marine animal sightings, marine mammal photo-identification and fisheries data
- Land-based behavioural observations to record data on whales, dolphins, seals, sharks and fishing activity
- Marine mammal necropsies (dissections) and scientific sample collection
- Seal scat processing and preliminary identification of prey remains
- Bird ringing with Natures Valley Trust
- Data entry

Conservation:

- Beach surveys and clean-ups
- Aquarium maintenance
- Live marine animal stranding response and rescue
- General assistance at seabird rehabilitation centres
- River health assessments
- Alien plant eradication and control
- Indigenous tree planting

Environmental education and community outreach:

- Pre-school education
- General assistance at animal welfare centres

You will work 5 days a week (Monday to Friday) about 8 hours a day (08.30 – 16.30). Evenings and weekends are free time and there is a large variety of activities that can be organised for you. Some days involve more work and assistance, while others move at a leisurely pace. Daily activities can change on a moment's notice, if something exciting comes along. Be prepared to go with the flow.

Please note all placements vary and you may or may not be involved with the above activities. (Regardless of how long you choose to stay, you will leave the project with a deeper understanding of marine and coastal conservation, and the skills to educate others).



Volunteer Training Programs

There are two additional training opportunities for volunteers that wish to expand their skills in the marine tourism sector:

1. Marine guiding program:

We are happy to assist you with your registration on the South African Boat-Based Whale-Watching Association course, which will provide you with a local marine guide qualification.

2. SCUBA diving courses:

PADI accredited courses can be organised for volunteers at an additional fee through the local dive school.

Please ensure that you inform the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible if you are interested in completing either of these two courses.

3.6 The Work schedule

Be ready at 08h00, when we collect you for the day's activities, which can range from general duties at assisting researchers out on the ocean or in the field. The standard volunteer working week at the project is Monday to Friday, from 08h00 to 16h00. However, some days involve more work and longer hours, while others move at a more leisurely pace. Evenings and weekends are your leisure times. The relaxed atmosphere of the village and the project will help you to settle in quickly.

Planned activities can change on a moment's notice, especially if the weather turns or something exciting, like a marine mammal stranding, comes along. Planned trips to collect opportunistic data on whale and dolphin watching vessels may be cancelled or delayed on short-notice depending on the availability of space and last-minute bookings. Be patient and prepared to go with the flow...Unpredictable days are common.

During periods when we have large volunteer groups (>5) our conservation, education and outreach activities may run in parallel with certain research activities. This allows us to split you up into groups (where practical) to assist with different activities simultaneously while ensuring small enough group sizes so that all participants can be involved. The particular interests of each volunteer will be taken into account when assigning volunteers to specific activities. If there is too much interest in any specific activity the Volunteer Coordinator will improvise so that all volunteers receive equal opportunity during their stay.

Table 1. Example of a typical 2-week program

<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
08h00-12h00 Alien plant clearing	06h00-11h00 Land-based Observations	06h00-11h00 Bird ringing	08h00-12h00 Boat-based estuary survey/Data entry	06h00-13h00 Boat-based observations; Aquarium maintenance
14h00-19h00 Land-based Observations	14h00-17h00 Beach cleanup/Boat-based estuary survey	11h30-16h00 Boat-based observations; Aquarium maintenance	13h30-19h00 Land-based Observations	
08h00-13h00 Boat-based observations/Aquarium maintenance	05h30-19h00 Penguin rehabilitation centre; seal/dolphin necropsy	08h00-13h00 Estuary survey/Data entry	09h30-13h00 Siyakula Preschool	08h00-13h00 Knysna Animal Welfare Society
14h00-19h00 Land-based Observations		14h00-17h00 River health assessment/ beach clean-up	14h00-17h00 Seal scat processing and prey identification	

Saturday and Sunday: Free

There may be the odd occasion when a project activity will occur on a weekend but the volunteers will be informed of this ASAP.

3.7 The project staff

The staff are enthusiastic, friendly and enjoys training and working with volunteers from different countries.

The language spoken at this project is English.

4. South Africa

4.1 Geography

South Africa occupies the southern tip of Africa, its long coastline stretching more than 2500 km from the desert border with Namibia on the Atlantic coast southwards around the tip of Africa and then north to the border with subtropical Mozambique on the Indian Ocean.

To the north of South Africa lies Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Swaziland, while the Kingdom of Lesotho is an independent enclave surrounded by South African territory.

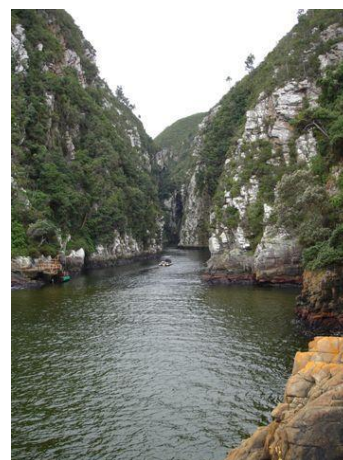
South Africa is made up of nine provinces; Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Free State, North West, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu Natal.

There are three capital cities in South Africa; Cape Town, which is the parliamentary capital in the Western Cape, Pretoria in Gauteng, which is the administrative capital and Bloemfontein which is the judicial capital. Johannesburg in Gauteng is the largest city.

4.2 Project Location

The project is situated along South Africa's famous Garden route in the lively town of Plettenberg Bay. It is characterised by sweeping, unspoilt golden beaches, a dramatic rocky peninsula, intriguing lagoons and estuaries, towering indigenous forests and unpolluted rivers and sea. Also haven for migrating whales and the largest number of resident bottlenose dolphins in South Africa.

During your stay here, one of the most breathtaking and serene outdoor classrooms in Southern Africa, you will be lucky enough to regularly experience the power and grace of whales, the exuberance of dolphins and killer whales, the playfulness of seals and the majesty of mountains and forests.



4.3 Climate

The time of the year to join the project is mainly dependant on what kind of weather you prefer, as the research, community upliftment, and education programs vary throughout the year.

January to March tend to be the warmest months.

Sun cream and hats are strongly recommended.

Temperatures range from lows of 15oC to highs of 30oC.

You tend to see a variety of dolphin species and the occasional Bryde's Whale on the whale watching tours at this time of year.

From **April to June** the days are still warm, but the evenings cool off nicely.

Temperatures range from 8oC to 25oC.

You see various species of dolphins and the occasional humpback whale on its migration north at this time of year.

July to September are the winter months.

The days start off quite cool and warm up to about 20oC, but the nights can get quite chilly, down to around 5oC.

Warm clothes are recommended for this time of year.

Please note that there is no central heating in South Africa.

This is the beginning of the whale-watching season, and have Southern Right Whales in the bay on a regular basis.

The **October to December** weather conditions are similar to those from April to June.

The animal sightings are now mostly Humpback Whales and dolphins.

The water warms up considerably, so diving and snorkeling can be done comfortably.



5. Travel information

5.1 Flight arrangements

Volunteers have to make their own flight arrangements. We advise you not to reserve your flight before we have confirmed your participation at the project, unless you will plan your participation at the project as a part of a bigger journey.

If you are unable to arrange your flight yourself for any reason, Global Spirit will be able to help. If you would like us to help you, please note this on the booking sheet.

5.2 Passport and visa

To visit South Africa you will need a valid passport, which must be officially valid, for at least 30 days, beyond the period of intended stay. Passport also must have at least two blank pages for entry stamp. This cannot include the 'endorsement' page at the back.

To visit South Africa, for most countries, no visa is needed for stays of up to 90 days.

If you will visit South Africa longer than 90 days, you will need a tourist visa (this is advised by the project staff, you should see your participation as a holiday).

Passport and visa requirements are liable to change at short notice. All volunteers are advised to check their entry requirements with their own embassy or consulate!

5.3 Insurances

Every volunteer is required to have a travel insurance policy (which covers extra medical costs, accidents and repatriation costs), and cancellation insurance is highly recommended. Without this travel insurance you will not be permitted to work at this project.

Global Spirit can help you arrange travel insurance (for volunteers who live in The Netherlands, Belgium and Germany) and cancellation insurance (for all volunteers). If you would like assistance, please indicate this on the booking sheet. If you already have insurances (or if you are a volunteer living outside The Netherlands, Belgium or Germany) please send a copy of the policy to Global Spirit.

5.4 Arrival in South Africa

You will be responsible for arranging your own transport to Plettenberg Bay, South Africa

Your best bet would be to fly into the country at either Cape Town or Johannesburg. From there you would take a domestic flight to George where the project can organize a transfer for you directly to the project. The cost for the transfer will be approx R600.00 / \$ 50, depending on the company that is available to collect you. It is approx 1 hour 25 minutes drive from the George Airport to Plettenberg Bay.

A bus transfer, and cheaper way, can also be done from Cape Town or Port Elizabeth. The price is between R100 and R400 depending on the location you are travelling from and the bus company you are travelling with. See for example Intercaple bus company (<http://www.intercape.co.za/home/>). From the bus depot someone of the project staff will collect you and transfer you to the volunteer house.

6. Medical advice

6.1 Advise

As Global Spirit is not a professional medical service, we advise you to go to a local clinic or medical authority in your own country for the appropriate medical advice.

This document is provided for information purposes only.

Do not visit your local clinic or medical authority later than six weeks before departure.

As a participant in this project, you are responsible for yourself. Global Spirit is not held responsible/liable for any unexpected casualties. Our advice is to behave responsibly and always listen to the project staff.

6.2 Required vaccinations

There are no vaccinations required at this project, although Yellow Fever vaccination is required for travellers arriving from a yellow-fever-infected area in Africa or the Americas.

6.3 Recommended vaccinations

You are really recommended to be vaccinated against:

- D(K)TP
- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid

These vaccinations are not required, but are still very important to have. If you don't take them it's on your own responsibility. Global Spirit is not held responsible/liable for any unexpected casualties.

6.4 Medical service

There are good medical public and private hospitals situated in the area, offering excellent service.

However, clients must have adequate health insurance to cover the fees private hospitals charge.

There is an ambulance service, sea rescue and helicopter transport if necessary for any serious injuries. Fortunately the project has not used it as yet with the volunteers, but it's nice to know that it's there. The staff also has First Aid training.



7. Personal equipment

Some items are provided at the project, such as:

- Pillow
- Bedding/Linen/Towels

7.1 Essential items

Here are some essential items, which you should bring with you:

- Valid passport
- camera
- Clothes for work – (shorts / t-shirts)
- Wet weather clothes- rainproof jacket
- Clothes for evenings- casual wear
- Nightwear
- Strong work shoes / hiking boots
- Sandals / Flip flops
- A Hat or cap
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen (it's recommended to use for at least SPF 15)
- Insect repellent
- A torch and spare batteries
- A portion of your placement will be spent at sea. If you suffer from motion sickness please ensure to bring appropriate medication. Kwell is the best but hard to find in South Africa.
- First-aid kit with for example plasters, disinfectant, painkillers, etc.
- A camera (and photographic materials)
- Bathing/swimming suit (mask and snorkel)
- A towel
- Toiletries and medications
- A water bottle
- A day pack- small back pack

7.2 Optional items

Here are some optional items, which you may choose to bring with you:

- Binoculars
- A lighter
- A watch
- A pocket knife
- An alarm clock
- A notebook and address book journal/diary
- A compass
- Vitamin B (it will be anti mosquito)
- Mosquito net
- Something against dehydration like ORS (we advise you to drink a lot of water)
- Imodium or other ant-diarrhoea medication
- Leisure clothes (volunteers can go out, so keep this point in mind)?
- Books or magazines
- Snacks
- Etc.

Most items are readily available for purchase in Plettenberg Bay.

8. General information

8.1 Food and drinks

Breakfast, lunch and evening meals as well as non alcoholic beverages are included in the participation fee.

Breakfast and lunch are self catering and dinner is made by 'house mom' Tilly (Teliswa) 5 days per week (Mon-Fri) and 2 days per week dinner is self catering.

Packed lunch may be required for some activities but you will be informed of that ahead of time.

If you have special dietary requirements or if you are a vegetarian, please indicate this on the booking form.

It is also possible to have a braai (bbq) or go out for dinner. There is a wide array of dining experiences in the in the area. If you wish to go out for dinner you can (at your own expense), but please notify this to the project staff in time.

All drinking water in the volunteer house is safe to drink. Should you prefer, there is mineral water available at the local supermarket.

8.2 Supermarkets / markets / shops

Shops/supermarkets:

Pick n Pay, Spar, shops (a mall) are located approx 600 m from the volunteer house

Markets:

Harkerville, Midtown market and Sedgefield

Shops:

The volunteer house is within close proximity to a nearby shopping centre which has various shops, cinemas, restaurants and bars.

8.3 Laundry services

Laundry facilities are available and your 'House Mom', Tilly, does communal washing several times a week to conserve energy and water.

8.4 Telephone and Internet access

We suggest acquiring a local mobile from one of SA's "pre-paid" options (Vodacom, MTN, Cell C, Telkom and Virgin), which are inexpensive, to be used to communicate with our Volunteer Coordinator.

There is Broadband internet access at the volunteer house, with Skype available. You are welcome to use your own laptop computer or tablet, as the house is equipped with wireless internet.

Communication is key and you need to be aware of the day to day planned activities. The volunteer coordinator will communicate the weekly schedule at the end of each week by listing planned activities on the activity board in the dining room. You will be added to the volunteer WhatsApp group where you will receive final confirmation of each day's planned activities the evening before. Bear in mind, planned activities often change due to the weather dependent nature of fieldwork and unpredictable nature of marine mammal strandings. If you are still unsure of any plans for the next day, please ask other volunteers or the volunteer coordinator at supper.

8.5 Electricity

South Africa has an electricity voltage of 220 - 230 Volts. A 3-legged round plug can be used. It would be handy if you bring an international adaptor with you, but you can check this in a specialised shop in your own country.

8.6 Transport during your stay

We will transport you to program activities in the project combi, which seats a maximum of 10 people.

Rental cars and taxis are available for your evening and weekend activities (at your own expense), ranging from economy to premium class.

If renting a car, full driving license and credit card is required when hiring or driving vehicles. Minimum age of 21 required to hire vehicles. Driving in South Africa is on the left side of the road.

There are also excellent intercity bus services between many destinations in the province and to Cape Town.

8.7 Beaches

The closest beach to the volunteer house is approx 50 m away. It is part of the river that runs past the house and there is also a possibility for snorkelling there.

8.8 Excursion arrangements

Weekends are your own leisure time and any activities that you take on will be at your own expense (and risk). There is a file in the volunteer house lounge which contains brochures of some amazing outdoor activities available in the Plettenberg Bay region.

Please do not make bookings for any weekend activities on your own accord. Contact the Program Manager by no later than Wednesday of that week to make the necessary bookings on your behalf, except for transport.

Some ideas:

- Walk with Elephants
- Ride with the Elephants
- Horse Back Safaris
- Plettenberg Bay Game Reserve
- Bridge Walking
- Bungee Jumping

- Tree Top Canopy Tours
- Monkeyland
- Birds of Eden
- Tenikwa Wildlife Reserve
- Adventure land water park
- Swimming with seals
- Dive Courses
- Scenic Flights around the bay
- Surfing Lessons/per lesson
- Yacht Cruises/Sailing
- Deep Sea Fishing
- Lawnwood (snake park)
- Skydiving
- Etc.



8.9 Currency

The monetary unit of South Africa is the South African Rand.

Foreign currency can be exchanged in most banks. Most major international credit cards such as American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard, Visa and their affiliates are widely accepted.

There is a bank close by the volunteer house? The banks are open on Monday – Friday from 09.00 am until 15.30 pm and Saturdays 09.00 am until 11.30 am.

There are cash machines and a foreign exchange at the shopping centre.

All cash machines have instructions in English.

