



podvolunteer
INSPIRING • ETHICAL • NON-PROFIT

PLANNING YOUR TRIP GUIDE



Desert Elephant Conservation - Namibia

Join an award winning elephant conservation team to help protect and research desert elephants. Construct walls to protect farmers' water infrastructure and build drinking points for the elephants to help reduce human-elephant conflict. Camp out under the stars in the beautiful Namibian desert whilst immersing yourself in pioneering conservation work

PROUTY STRETCH EXPEDITION 2023



Welcome to the Pod Volunteer community



Hi, I am Alex, co-founder of Pod Volunteer. My team and I will be here to support you throughout your volunteering journey.

The Pod Volunteer team have all travelled extensively and volunteered overseas. With our first-hand knowledge of volunteering, we are always happy to help!

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View more photos here – <https://goo.gl/photos/pj3zh2PzRgr7gLg98>

View video here – www.podvolunteer.org/projects/elephant-conservation-namibia/video

DATES, ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE, FLIGHTS

Dates

Sunday 16 April to Saturday 29 April 2023

Flights

Fly into	Walvis Bay Airport (WVB) or Windhoek Hosea Kutako International Airport (WDH) You will then travel to Swakopmund which is a 20 minute drive from Walvis Bay or a 4 hour drive from Windhoek
Travel to Swakopmund	We can arrange a transfer from Walvis Bay Airport or Windhoek Airport to Swakopmund
Arrival day and time	Sunday 16 April 2023 Walvis Bay Airport – your flight should arrive by 4pm Windhoek Airport – your flight should arrive by 11.30am
Departure day and time	Saturday 29 April 2023 Walvis Bay Airport – your flight can depart anytime Windhoek Airport – your flight should depart after 3pm

Please don't book flights until we have confirmed your placement dates.

Flights advice:

- If booking through a travel agent (which we recommend), check they have scheduled airline failure insurance (SAFI)
- If booking directly with an airline, pay by credit card for added financial protection
- Check luggage allowance, especially if taking multiple flights as it may vary
- If taking multiple flights, leave at least 2.5 hours between connections and at least 4 hours if you have to collect your bags and/or clear immigration in between connections
- Read our tips and policy on reducing carbon [here](#)

Arrival and departure arrangements

Getting to Swakopmund	<p>From Walvis Bay Airport - we can arrange a transfer to Swakopmund which takes around 20 minutes. The cost of this transfer is \$300 Namibian dollars per person which you pay directly to the driver.</p> <p>From Windhoek Airport - we can arrange a transfer to Swakopmund which takes around 4 hours. The cost of this transfer is \$580 Namibian dollars per person which you pay directly to the driver and includes the cost of a taxi from the airport to a hotel in Windhoek and then a connecting shuttle bus to Swakopmund.</p>
Arrival arrangements	<p>You will need to book accommodation in Swakopmund for the Sunday arrival night – see below for accommodation options. This is not included in the cost of your placement.</p> <p>You will meet the project team on the Sunday evening in Swakopmund for a briefing and travel to Base Camp with the team on Monday morning. The journey to Base Camp is approximately 4 hours' drive into the desert.</p>
Departure arrangements	<p>You will travel back from the desert to Swakopmund on the final Friday, arriving in Swakopmund around 2pm.</p> <p>You will need to book accommodation in Swakopmund for the Friday night – see below for accommodation options. This is not included in the cost of your placement.</p> <p>You should book your international flight to depart the next day (Saturday).</p> <p>You can arrange a transfer to Walvis Bay / Windhoek through your hotel.</p>

Staying overnight in Windhoek

If you need to stay overnight in Windhoek, two recommended options are:

- Chameleon Backpackers - www.chameleonbackpackers.com
- Roof of Africa - www.booking.com/hotel/na/roof-of-africa

We can arrange a transfer from your hotel in Windhoek to Swakopmund.

Booking accommodation in Swakopmund

You will need to book accommodation in Swakopmund for your:

- Arrival night (Sunday 16 April 2023)
- Last night (Friday 28 April 2023)

There are many choices in Swakopmund which you can see on www.booking.com. Here are also a few options that volunteers have used and recommended:

- Beach Hotel - <https://www.beach-hotel-swakopmund.com/>
- Strand Hotel - <https://www.strandhotelswakopmund.com/>
- Salty Jackal - <https://www.saltyjackal.com/>

- Desert Sky - <http://www.desertskylooding.com/namibia/>
- Amanpuri - <https://amanpurinamibia.com/>

Volunteering schedule

Week 1	
Sunday start date	Meet your team and receive an introduction to the project. You will need to book and stay overnight in Swakopmund at a hotel (see options above).
Monday	Travel by project vehicle to Base Camp.
Tuesday – Friday	Participate in the building project – volunteers stay at the building camp site with the local team.
Saturday – Sunday	Relax over weekend at Base Camp.
Week 2	
Monday – Thursday	Work with the elephant tracking and research team, staying at the elephant tracking camp.
Friday	On Friday, you will finish the elephant tracking work before travelling with the team back to Swakopmund. You will need to book and stay overnight at a hotel in Swakopmund (see options above) before departing on the Saturday.

Pod Volunteer Travel Document

Before you depart, you will be emailed our Pod volunteer Travel Document which includes:

- Arrival information including meeting arrangements
- Contact numbers for the local team and emergency 24/7 contact details

PASSPORT, VISA, INSURANCE, COVID REQUIREMENTS

Passport

You should make sure:

- It is in good condition
- There are at least six months left on it (before it runs out) from your return travel date
- There are a few unused pages for the visas and stamps you may get
- You write full details of your next of kin inside

Take a photo / scan of your passport photo page (and visa page if applicable) and save it so you have access to it in case of loss.

Visa

For most nationalities (including UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, France, Germany, Spain, Switzerland and New Zealand), a stay of less than 90 days does not require a visa in advance. Please see whether you are eligible for the visa exemption scheme here:

www.namibiahc.org.uk/fees-and-requirements.php

- A form will be given to you on to complete the plane and on arrival you will receive a stamp in your passport which permits you to stay in Namibia
- Before leaving the immigration desk, check you have been given permission to stay for the duration of your intended visit (up to 90 days) and a correctly dated entry stamp

If your nationality is not included in the visa exemption scheme (e.g. Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic and Slovenia), you will need to apply for a Tourist/Holiday Visa through your closest Namibian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate.

Visa advice

- If asked the purpose of your trip, avoid using the word 'work' because officials may assume you need an employment permit. You should state you are a tourist, including on any immigration documentation
- Check visa requirements for any countries you are travelling via / through
- Do not overstay your visa

COVID-19 Requirements

Travelling via South Africa

There are no COVID entry requirements.

Entering Namibia

There are no COVID entry requirements.

Returning to your home country

Please check if there are any requirements when returning to your home country:

- For the USA, you can see Embassy information [here](#)

If you need a COVID test before your return, the local team can help you to arrange this and it can be done in Swakopmund. If your home country accepts online supervised Rapid Antigen tests, an

alternative option is to purchase a testing package from home which you take with you and then complete an online supervised testing appointment while away.

Travel Insurance

We require you to take out personal travel insurance to provide cover in the unlikely event of something going wrong while you are away.

- Arrange it once your placement has been confirmed / you book your flights (so that you have cancellation cover)
- Check how much is covered - see our minimum recommended cover levels below
- Check what COVID-19 cover it provides - it must provide medical cover and it should also have cancellation / curtailment cover
- Make sure it covers volunteering and any other activities you may want to do
- If you have pre-existing medical conditions, declare them and check if they are covered

MEDICAL AND VACCINATIONS

This section gives some guidelines but you should take specific advice from medical professionals.

- Arrange to see your doctor / nurse or travel clinic as soon as possible – let them know where you will be travelling to and the type of volunteering you are doing
- If you do not have recommended vaccinations or medication it may invalidate your travel insurance
- Get a record of your vaccinations / tests to take with you (including a printed copy)
- If there is any change to your health before your placement you must inform Pod Volunteer

Vaccinations and other medical requirements

We follow UK National Health Service guidelines

Vaccinations - recommended

- Diphtheria
- Hepatitis A
- Tetanus

Vaccinations - to be considered

- Hepatitis B
- Rabies
- Typhoid

Malaria is not considered a risk at the project location, but many parts of Namibia have malaria and antimalarials are usually advised so please inform your doctor / travel clinic

Yellow fever is not currently a risk but if you are travelling from or through risk areas (some countries in Africa or South America) you are required to have the yellow fever vaccination and carry a certificate to be allowed into the country

Avoidance of mosquito bites should be the first line of defence against mosquito-borne infections - www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice/general-travel-health-advice/mosquito-bite-avoidance.aspx

Medical information - www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations/africa/namibia

SUPPORT, ACCOMMODATION AND LOCAL INFO

The local team and support

You will be supported on your placement by:

- The local team from our partner organisation, based at the project site and volunteer accommodation
- Pod Volunteer office UK – available to support you by email or telephone and contactable 24/7 in case of emergency

Accommodation

Arrival and departure nights

You will need to book your own accommodation in Swakopmund for your first night (Sunday) and last night (Friday). See [Arrival & Departure](#) for some recommendations.

At the project

During the volunteer placement the camping accommodation is very basic and you will be based at the following sites:

Base Camp

Base Camp is located around a 4 hour drive from Swakopmund, in the heart of the desert which the elephants call home. It's a unique setting, camping on a tree platform, with stunning sunsets and even the occasional elephant passing by.

The first and last night of each two week rotation is spent at Base Camp. You will also return to Base Camp between Building and Elephant Tracking weeks for your free time.

Building / Elephant Tracking Camps

You will experience wild camping in the desert, campfires and maybe even shooting stars! During Build weeks, you will be camping at one location, close to the build site. On Elephant Tracking weeks (Monday morning – Thursday afternoon), you will sleep in a different place each night as you track the elephants through the desert.

Facility	Details
Bedrooms	Base Camp All volunteers sleep on a raised, open air platform in a tree Building / Elephant Tracking Camps You will sleep out in the wild under the stars. During cold nights shared tents are provided
Bathrooms	Base Camp There are long drop composting toilets and limited hot water showers Building Camps There are long drop toilets, no showers and no running water. Volunteers use biodegradable wet wipes (or flannels) to wash during the Building week Elephant Tracking Camps There are no pre-dug toilets, no showers and no running water. Volunteers use biodegradable wet wipes (or flannels) to wash during the Elephant Tracking week

Bedding	✘ You will need to bring bedding, see Packing List for details. A roll mattress is provided
Mosquito nets	✘ Not provided, and are recommended between December – May, so you may wish to consider bringing a ‘pop up’ net with you (optional)
Safe	✘ Valuables are stored in a secure location at Base Camp
WIFI	✘ Available during weekend visits to the town and city
Phone signal	✘ Limited / no mobile phone network coverage at Base Camp and Building Camps. No phones are permitted on the Elephant Tracking week as there are rare black rhinos in the region whose location must be kept secret from potential poachers
Other facilities	There is a covered open air kitchen and communal seating area at Base Camp

Additional information:

- There is very limited / no electricity at Base Camp and no electricity on Building and Elephant Tracking weeks
- Due to the desert location insects and wildlife are common



Sleeping area on elephant patrol



Base camp kitchen and dining area

View more photos here - <https://goo.gl/photos/pj3zh2PzRgr7gLg98>

Laundry

At base camp you can arrange for your laundry to be washed at the end of the first week for around \$3 USD per bag.

Meals and drinking water

Volunteers take turns to prepare meals over the camp fire, using ingredients provided by the team. Recipes are provided and there has even been an apple crumble cooked on the fire!

Here are typical examples of the food you will have:

- Breakfast – porridge, toast, tea and coffee
- Lunch – sandwiches, pasta, salad
- Dinner – spaghetti, curry, roast chicken, fried rice, stew

Vegetarians and vegans are welcomed and can be catered for. If you have any allergies or specific dietary requirements please let us know in advance and we will check if these can be catered for.

Filtered drinking water is provided.

In Swakopmund, there are many choices of restaurants and cafes.

Using your mobile phone and internet access (without Wifi)

There is limited / no mobile phone network coverage at the project. You are not permitted to take your phone on the elephant tracking week as there are rare black rhinos in the region whose location must be kept secret from potential poachers, therefore no personal phones are allowed.

For use on arrival and in Swakopmund, it's a good idea to check if you have a data package on your phone that can be used overseas at your destination or if it's something that can be added on. Alternatively, you can buy a local network SIM card at the airport. Phones need to be 'unlocked' to use with a local SIM card.

Local amenities and medical facilities

At the Base Camp, there is a small local shop a short drive away that sells limited basic snacks and drinks that the team may take volunteers to. At the building and elephant tracking camp sites there are no local shops.

In Swakopmund there are cash machines, several supermarkets, clothes shops, bars and restaurants.

There is a hospital in Swakopmund (up to 10 hours away, depending on where you are working).

Climate

The desert location of the project can mean it gets quite hot, with average temperatures between 20-35°C. At the project base, there two main seasons. The summer season runs from November to April with January to March having occasional rain. The winter season runs from May to October, where it can get down to between 5-15°C at night.

Swakopmund city has a mild desert climate with temperatures between 10-25°C. On average in Swakopmund, the warmest month is February and the coolest month is August.

PACKING LIST

Essentials (carry in hand luggage)

- Passport
- Travel itinerary / e-tickets
- Travel insurance details
- Record of vaccinations
- Medication (if required) - if this includes prescribed medication, check if you need a letter from your doctor and take a copy of your prescription. Make sure you have enough
- Pod Volunteer Travel Document (will be emailed to you before you depart)
- Money – cash and cards
- Another means of identification (preferably photo ID)
- Face masks - a minimum of 3 (more recommended if staying longer than 2 weeks) following [WHO guidance](#)
- Alcohol based hand sanitiser - pack 1 in hand luggage (up to 100ml) and any others in main bag

Equipment

- Main bag – any type of bag is fine
- Daypack (rucksack) for use on Building and Elephant Tracking weeks as well as day to day use
- Padlocks – for your bags and can then be used for other things (combination locks avoid losing keys)
- Water bottles (3 x 1 litre) – pack one in hand luggage as it may be possible to fill at the airport
- Head-torch
- If you wear glasses or contact lenses, it is advisable to bring spare / back up options
- Plug adaptor if required – plugs are usually three thick round pins
- Power bank charger
- Bathroom towel
- Sleeping bag (suitable for three seasons) – can also be rented there for 500 NAD for 2 weeks
- Sleeping bag liner for warmer nights
- Camping pillow (optional)
- Eye mask (for nights with a full moon, optional)
- Stand-alone mosquito net (recommended between December – May)
- Gardening / working gloves
- Pocketknife (optional)
- Hat with mosquito net (optional)
- Camera (as mobile phones are not allowed on the elephant tracking patrol)
- Note book and pen
- Binoculars (optional but recommended)
- Biodegradable wet wipes / flannel (to use for washing on Build week and Elephant Tracking week)
- Basic toiletries – we recommend shampoo and deodorant bars to reduce plastic
- Books, laptop / phone etc. – entertainment for free time
- Reusable shopping bag, coffee cup, straw

Clothing

- 2 sets of neutral coloured (khaki, grey, beige, green) lightweight trousers and tops for elephant tracking, so when close to elephants and other animals the team can blend in with the surroundings. You should not wear camouflage design as this is associated with the army
- T-shirts (x3) for the building week, can be any colour other than camouflage
- Shorts (x2)
- Fleece / warm top for the potential cold temperatures experienced during desert patrols
- A light waterproof jacket is recommended
- Sun hat and sunglasses
- Swimming costume (there is a pool in the town near to base camp)

You can wear relaxed clothes when you are in Swakopmund, it tends to be cooler at the coast.

Footwear

- Walking shoes / boots / tough trainers
- Sandals / flip flops for camp

Healthcare

We recommend having a basic first aid kit, including items such as:

- Insect repellent
- Antihistamine cream / tablets & afterbite sting relief
- Sun cream – factor 50
- Lip salve
- Eye drops
- Painkillers
- Anti-diarrhoea tablets
- Alcohol based hand sanitiser
- Antiseptic cream or spray
- Oral rehydration sachets
- Plasters
- Tampons (not easily available)

Money

- The currency in Namibia is the Namibian Dollar (NAD) however South African Rand (ZAR) is also accepted, both are used interchangeably
- You should always make sure you have some back up funds
- To cover things you may buy in Swakopmund and meals there we would budget around \$130 USD per person. You will also need to pay for transfers and accommodation in Swakopmund

Cash and cards

You can't normally buy this currency before entering the country so it's best to use a cash machine on arrival (or bring a limited amount of cash to exchange). There are cash machines at the airport and in Swakopmund.

- Check you will be able to use your cards in Namibia, the fees / limits and what to do if blocked / lost / stolen – prepaid cards can be a good option
- Leave details with someone at home so they can help if needed

REQUIREMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Requirements and expectations

Volunteers should:

- Be in good physical and mental health
- Have an appropriate level of fitness, physical capability and mobility for the project location and volunteer role
- Be able to communicate in English
- Have a positive attitude, including towards living and working with others
- Be open minded and adaptable
- Be willing to embrace the challenges of the project

You are also expected to:

- Follow our [Code of Conduct](#)

We have done our best to provide an accurate brief and create a picture of the project, but please bear in mind that, due to the nature of the projects and life in the countries we work in, things are constantly changing and evolving!

Challenges

Physical and Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working on a building site is a physically demanding role as it can include heavy lifting and working in areas exposed to direct sunlight, which is more challenging due to the heat• Due to the climate, insects and wildlife are common• Attitudes towards time-keeping and plans can be relaxed in Namibia• Long hours of repetitive data collection are sometimes required• Remote location with limited communications and transport• Very basic open-air camping facilities• Basic toilet facilities (long drop at base camp and building camp) and no pre-dug toilets available during elephant tracking safari week• Limited shower facilities (only available at base camp and in Swakopmund)
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You may experience culture shock and homesickness, this is most common in your first few days• Adjusting to living and working with others of different ages, backgrounds and nationalities

Reverse culture shock

Coming home can be one of the hardest aspects of volunteering abroad. In our experience, people are mentally prepared going out on their travels but underestimate the effects of being back at home. Little has usually changed, although you may have!

SAFETY

While there are undoubted risks in travelling abroad it is important to recognise that these can generally be minimised by simple and sensible behaviours. The majority of people travelling in the countries in which we work have a healthy, enjoyable and trouble-free stay.

Steps to reduce risks

- Read and use our [Risk Assessment](#)
- Read FCDO advice
- Recognise that health and safety standards may be significantly lower
- Take responsibility for your own health and safety and be prepared to make your own call on every situation
- Follow advice and guidance from local staff - always check if unsure
- Carry contact details for local staff with you at all times
- Carry identification with you when out and about (electronic copy of passport on phone)
- Inform local staff if there are any problems or issues, as early as possible
- Seek early professional medical treatment if there are any health issues

Travel advice

Health & Safety advice	https://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk/	 gov.uk/travelaware
FCDO advice - Namibia	www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/namibia	

FEEDBACK, ISSUES AND COMPLAINTS

We can't wait to hear how you get on and welcome feedback at any time.

If you have any problems during your placement please bring them to the attention of the local team as soon as possible. If you are not able to resolve any issues locally please contact us in the Pod Volunteer UK office and we will be very happy to help. If you would like to make a complaint, please see the complaints procedure in our Terms & Conditions.

THANK YOU

Without our volunteers, the projects we support would not be able to progress and develop in such a positive way, so we would like to say a special thank you from all of us at Pod Volunteer!



View more photos here – <https://goo.gl/photos/pj3zh2PzRgr7gLg98>

View video here – www.podvolunteer.org/projects/elephant-conservation-namibia/video

BEFORE YOU GO CHECKLIST

When your placement is confirmed	
Arrange your travel insurance	
Book your flights	
Book accommodation in Swakopmund	
Ensure your passport will be valid for your travel period	
Visit doctor or travel clinic to arrange vaccinations and any medication required	
2-4 weeks before departure	
Money – prepare money and check your cards will work abroad	
Pod Volunteer Travel Document (this will be emailed to you before you travel) – put contact numbers for the local team into your phone	
Familiarise yourself with FCDO health & safety advice and our risk assessment	
Pack – see our recommended packing list	