

# Elephant Conservation



## Overview

<b>Location</b>	North-west region of Namibia
<b>Duration</b>	From 2 to 12 weeks
<b>Dates</b>	January to mid-December
<b>Capacity</b>	Max. 14 team members at one time
<b>Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Minimum age: 18.</li><li>• You must have an Upper Intermediate level of English.</li></ul> Special skills: You should be passionate about elephants and conservation. You must be physically fit, willing to work and to get your hands dirty.
<b>Your impact</b>	♥♥♥♥♥
<b>Documents required</b>	Enrolment form, curriculum vitae, letter of motivation, passport copy, medical form, proof of medical insurance
<b>Day of arrival</b>	Sunday (fixed start dates)
<b>Day of departure</b>	Saturday



## Highlights

- Fight the eradication of the free-roaming desert elephant population in Namibia.
- Provide immediate and practical solutions to combat elephant-human conflict that exists due to a battle for resources.
- Participate in hands-on conservation by building walls and structures designed to allow elephants to access waterpoints without damaging them.
- Take part in tracking, monitoring, and documenting important updates to the elephants' behavioural and movement patterns.
- Create a difference in the lives of local communities and Namibia's free-roaming desert elephants.

## Project information

The Elephant Conservation project exists solely to conserve Namibia's free-roaming desert elephants and to ensure the safety and security of the communities who live alongside the local elephant herds. These incredible creatures can, however, be destructive in their search for water and, due to the devastating succession of droughts in Namibia and in particularly this region of Namibia, they often compete for the same resources as other animals and humans. Desert elephants can drink up to 160 litres of water per day and will travel far in their quest for water. Elephants have an incredible sense of smell - they can smell water from miles away! Out of desperation, they frequently destroy water pipes or spear their tusks through water tanks to provide water for their herd. This behaviour can leave communities without a local water source for years.

The project tackles these issues directly by working with the local communities, providing the construction of protective walls, which still give access to water to the wildlife and livestock in the area but keep their windmills, water storage tanks and pumps safe from destruction. Since the project started in 2003, over 220 protection walls have been successfully constructed with the help of over 3,500 volunteers.

In addition to providing a valuable workforce to help with the construction of these protective walls, the volunteer project also provides funding for the essential vehicle-based patrols, where the group assesses the status of previously built walls and identifies new areas where construction may be needed. In addition, volunteers will monitor and record the movements of different herds of elephants, taking information on identification, general well-being, and GPS positions. This is all valuable information which allows the NGO to map elephant movements and locate conflict hot spots. Volunteers can experience hands-on conservation and have a direct impact on fostering a peaceful relationship between elephants and humans, thereby securing their continued existence.

Volunteers will also be given a unique opportunity to see some amazing wildlife. Damaraland is vast, scarcely populated communal trust land. As it is a transitional zone between the high rainfall area in the east and the Skeleton coast in the west, it is regarded as un-farmable on a commercial basis. Therefore, it has become a natural, unfenced refuge for desert-adapted animals such as the black rhino, desert-adapted lion, oryx antelope, kudu, Namaqua chameleon, desert giraffe, brown and spotted hyena, ostrich, springbok, steenbok, black-backed jackal, cheetah, leopard and many more!

The program enables Volunteers to experience true wilderness.



## Programme details

The Elephant Conservation project requires a minimum of two weeks' commitment and the project is split into two parts, namely, 'Build Week' and 'Patrol Week':

### Week One: Build Week

In your first week, you will spend your time with the construction of protective walls around farmers' and communities' water pumps, tanks and windmills. This will allow the elephants as well as other animals to safely access water without damaging the infrastructure. It's a labour-intensive week and can be physically challenging, but nobody is ever expected to do more than they are able. Working is done in a team and the tasks will be split up between everyone there. Tasks can include things like the 'rock run' to collect rocks and sand, collecting water from a nearby water source, mixing cement and the actual construction of walls.

### Week Two: Patrol Week

The second week is then spent on patrol. You will track the different elephant herds to build up a database of their movements. This allows the project team to effectively plan where to focus the attention of the waterpoint protection work, based on the likely locations of the herds. Visits to the affected farmers will also be made to assess the risk of elephant-human conflict which may arise.

And, of course, in this time it is also essential to record the health of the herd, recording new births, deaths, and injuries and capturing photos for the database.

### Your role

You will help us to build the sturdy protection wall around rural water-storage facilities. With a large group of volunteers, we can complete one wall in two trips. You will also help us to monitor the elephants and collect important data. We provide the government with accurate information on the desert elephants and keep track of population trends. You will learn about conservation, make new friends, sleep under the stars and enjoy the natural surroundings.

### Detailed itinerary

- Day 1 – Swakopmund: you need to arrive in the coastal town of Swakopmund before 5pm on your project start day, which is a Sunday, as there is a mandatory briefing at 6:30pm. You will spend your first night in Swakopmund.
- Day 2 – Swakopmund to Base Camp: you depart Swakopmund at around 12 noon on Monday, to be driven to the Base Camp in Damaraland, which is about a 4-hour drive away. Once at camp, you can unpack and the group all help with the preparation of dinner.
- Day 3-6 – Build Week: Tuesday morning is spent packing up what you need for the Build Week. Anything you do not wish to take will be safely locked away at Base Camp until you return at the weekend. You head to the build site and set up camp. The construction work starts: the days begin early, with long lunch breaks to avoid the hottest part of the day, and work continues in the afternoon until dinner time.
- Day 7 – Base Camp: Saturday morning, you all pack up camp, leaving no trace behind, and head back to Base Camp.
- Day 8 – Uis: On Sunday, everyone heads to a desert town called Uis where the project team stock up on provisions for the Patrol Week, and you get to spend the day relaxing at lovely lodge where you can enjoy their amenities, including a restaurant, pool and Wi-Fi! You return that evening to Base Camp where you will be briefed on the Patrol Week ahead.
- Day 9-12 – Elephant Patrol Week: On Monday morning, you again pack up only what you need for the week ahead. This week is spent with the project trackers in search of the elephants. You will be



involved with recording data on the herd, tracking GPS positions, and may even help collect elephant dung to assist with the data collection on breeding bulls in the area. Each evening is spent sleeping under the stars at a different spot along the way. On Thursday afternoon, you head back to the Base Camp to spend your final night in the desert (unless you are spending longer than 2 weeks).

- Day 13 – Return to Swakopmund: On Friday, on bidding farewell to Base Camp, you head back to Swakopmund for your final night. Those who volunteer for subsequent 2-week blocks will also return to Swakopmund for the weekend and return to Base Camp the following Monday with the new group.

**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 year and the work that needs to be done. The final job description can therefore vary from the above.**

## Project location



The project is situated in the North-West region of Namibia, known as the Southern Kunene region.

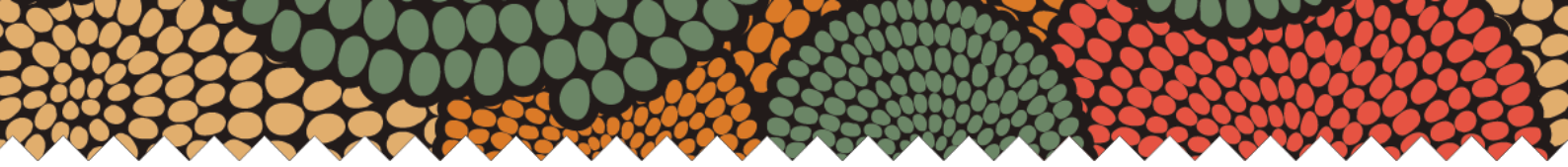
## Arriving and departing for your project experience

You have the choice of two airports to fly into.

1. **Windhoek International Airport** in Namibia's capital city.

Windhoek is a five-hour drive from Swakopmund, so please land by 10:00 am at the latest on Sunday, so that you can catch the scheduled shuttle service through to Swakopmund on the same day.

When booking a return flight from Windhoek, please ensure that you are not flying any earlier than 14:00 pm on the Saturday following the end of your volunteer project. The daily shuttle leaves



Swakopmund at 07:00 am, arriving at around midday. This will allow you time to catch your flight in the afternoon.

**Airport transfers are not included and will need to be paid in cash to the driver.**  
Transfer costs Windhoek International Airport to Swakopmund: N\$580 one way.

## 2. Walvis Bay Airport on the coast.

Walvis Bay is just a 30-minute transfer to Swakopmund. This is a much easier journey although flights are often cheaper into Windhoek.

**Airport transfers are not included and will need to be paid in cash to the driver.**  
Transfer costs Walvis Bay Airport to Swakopmund: N\$300 one way.

On your first Sunday, you need to arrive in Swakopmund before 17:00 pm, as there is a mandatory briefing at 18:30 pm. You will spend your first and final nights in Swakopmund, which are included in your project cost; however, no meals are included while in Swakopmund and will need to be paid for onsite.

After arriving in Swakopmund on the final Friday, you spend your final night at the same accommodation, so you are able to plan your onward or return travel plans for any time on the following Saturday. We recommend booking flights for the following day.

Once you have booked your flight, please send us the details and we can assist with arranging your airport transfers. For both airports, you will be met in arrivals by the projects transfer service and driven to the accommodation in Swakopmund.

## Accommodation

Your first and final night in Swakopmund are spent in a comfortable dormitory room in a laid-back hostel. For a single-room upgrade, please contact us.

At the Project Base Camp everyone sleeps in a large tree platform! There are also showers and long-drop toilets there.

You will leave base camp and be camping in the African wilderness for the duration of your time on each project. There are no washing facilities on either build or patrol weeks, but you can enjoy a shower at the base camp when we return for the weekend in between the two weeks. Often, if there is enough water available at the build site, we may set up a basic shower at the build project camp.

Tents can be provided; alternatively, we all sleep on bedrolls/mattresses on a large tarpaulin under the stars. As the camp on build week is in the same spot for the duration of the build project, we can set up a private long drop style toilet. However, the camp locations change every night on patrol week - a true wild camping experience using the bush toilet! Your helpful project staff will ensure you are comfortable and will explain how to do this safely and in an eco-friendly way.

### Meals

Except for meals in Swakopmund, three daily meals are provided. All cooking is done over the fire and you will work in groups taking turns to be on kitchen duty, which includes providing 'coffee-in-bed' in the mornings, breakfast, lunch and dinner.



## Free time

During your Build Week and Patrol Weeks, you will spend your evenings relaxing around the campfire and enjoying the wilds of the Namib desert. The scenery is utterly breath-taking.

You may wish to consider spending more time in Swakopmund, either before the project starts or after you finish, as there is quite a lot to do. Of course, if you are spending longer than 2 weeks at the project, then you will have more opportunity to experience this interesting town.

Swakopmund is a quaint, safe town on the coast, surrounded by large sand dunes, and is a great place to spend a few days. There are lots of activities for you to do including dolphin watching, sky diving, sand boarding and kayaking. There are lots of cafes, interesting shops, restaurants, a few bars and even a cinema!

## Local transportation

All project related transportation is included.

## Climate

Namibia has a desert climate, with summer falling between October to April and their winter from May to September.

During the summer months, it is also the rainy season, which is mostly between January to May; however, don't let this put you off as the rain can be quite spectacular. Daytime temperatures will range between 20-34°C/68-94°F. Night-time temperatures will drop somewhat and allow for camping out under the stars.

The Namibian winters usually have daytime temperatures between 19-25°C/66-77°F, but please note that their night-time temperatures can drop to as low as freezing.

Remember, as Swakopmund is at the coast, the temperatures are usually a little lower than elsewhere in Namibia.

## What to bring

There are a few essential items which you will need to bring with you, listed below. Please note that your clothes will likely get dirty and during Build Week and Patrol Week you will not be able to wash your clothes. Your laundry can be cleaned for you for a small fee at Base Camp after your first week. If you don't wish to carry bulky items with you when you fly to Namibia, you are also able to purchase most things in Swakopmund. You should also be aware of the climate in Namibia.

### Essentials:

- Working gloves
- sun hat/cap
- comfortable lightweight trekking boots/trainers
- sandals for camp
- sunglasses
- fleece type pullover
- warm jacket for winter months

- neutral coloured lightweight bush wear for Patrol Week (khaki, grey, beige, green, NOT camouflage design)
- t-shirts and shorts for Build Week (can be any colour but please no hot pants).

You should consider having 2x changes of clothes for each of these weeks. Furthermore, please bring:

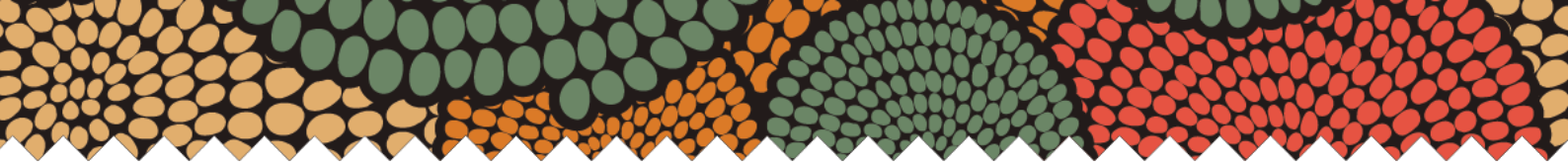
- long trousers
- beanies
- gloves
- warm sleeping wear for winter months (Jun-Sep)
- a mosquito net is often required throughout the year and we suggest the self-standing nets.
- passport
- insurance certificates & personal documents (including some certified copies stored separately)
- N\$ or SA Rand – small denomination notes (can change at airport),
- sunscreen & lip salve
- head torch and batteries
- water bottles: 3 x 1 litre
- sleeping bag (sleeping bags can also be rented from the project for a small fee).
- personal medical first aid & hygiene kit (items such as paracetamol, ibuprofen, antihistamine tablets and cream for insect bites, eye drops, anti-diarrhoea tablets, rehydration sachets, antiseptic cream/spray, burn cream, plasters, bandages etc, sterile water, cough medicine, any prescription medication you may need).

#### Nice to haves:

- Pocketknife
- camera and film/storage
- waterproof jacket (if you come during Jan-May)
- notebook & pen
- baby wipes/wash cloth (there are no washing facilities whilst on patrol week – please consider biodegradable items)
- pillow
- swimwear (as there's a lovely pool in Uis that you will visit)
- towel
- mosquito & insect repellent
- binoculars for game viewing
- daypack (large enough for: fleece, personal medical kit, binoculars, sunscreen, lunch and water bottles)
- eco shopping bags if you wish to buy groceries
- power bank charger and, finally,
- a positive attitude.

Luggage: Due to limited space, volunteers will need to divide their luggage into two parts, namely one bag for Build Week and another for Patrol Week. Your spare luggage will be safely stored at our Base Camp while we are in the field. We recommend taking a smaller bag along so that you can easily store your items for the week. Please consider using a large soft kit bag as a suitcase instead of a hard wheely suitcase for your main packing.

The local currency is the Namibian Dollar (N\$), which is linked to the South African Rand (ZAR), which is also legal currency in the country. The following website will give you up to date exchange rates:



[www.xe.com/ucc](http://www.xe.com/ucc). During your stay at Base Camp, you won't need money for anything other than luxuries such as alcohol, cigarettes and snacks. You should purchase these in Swakopmund before we leave for Damaraland as supplies are limited there.

## Your commitment

Please be aware that in applying for a volunteer project, you are making a firm commitment to the project. Our projects depend on the volunteers. It is necessary that you take this commitment seriously.

Some projects will appoint specific responsibilities to you; others are less structured and require the volunteers to use their initiative. If you prefer the one type over the other, please ask us for the most appropriate project for your preference.

Your daily presence is required and working hours are to be followed strictly. Not fulfilling your obligation can result in your dismissal from the project.

## Cell phone use during working hours

Please note that cell phones are NOT PERMITTED on Patrol Week as these can interfere with ongoing anti-poaching efforts in the areas you will be visiting. Volunteers who would like to take photographs of their projects are free to communicate this directly to their project supervisors for guidance and instruction. Please always be particularly careful when taking photos of endangered species such as elephants and rhinos and always listen to the advice and instructions from the project team, particularly during Patrol Week.

## What to wear

You are asked to wear sensible clothing and to be culturally sensitive of the communities you are working with. You are expected to wear modest clothing, which includes jeans, leggings, long shorts, and long skirts. Closed shoes are advisable, especially when working outdoors. Underwear is not to be seen under any circumstances.

Not acceptable are low cut tops, short shorts/shirts, bikinis and swimwear, belly tops, shirts/t-shirts with no sleeves for male volunteers as well as flip flops or no shoes.

Please also do not wear any camouflage patterned clothing.





## Insurance

### Travel insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out full personal insurance cover.

This should include protection against theft and against loss of fees, should the whole or part of a programme or activity or accommodation not be attended. Please also ensure that your policy stipulates that you are covered for volunteering work of a manual nature (without power tools), and for being a passenger in a game-drive-style vehicle (without doors).

### Medical insurance

You are required to take out medical insurance before travelling.

You must ensure that you are covered from the day of departure in your home country to the day of arrival back in your home country. The minimum coverage must be US\$ 100.000 and you must also be covered for all contingencies, including emergency air evacuation.

As part of the enrolment process, you will need to email us a copy of your insurance policy documentation.

## Safety

The expert project staff will provide briefings before you leave for the desert and offer you guidance throughout your experience to keep you safe. It is essential that you listen to their advice at all times to ensure you have a safe and enjoyable experience.

## Health

**Malaria:** The project site is regarded as malaria free, but many parts of Namibia are not, so if you are traveling on, please consult your GP for guidance.

**Tetanus:** A recent tetanus jab is highly recommended.

**Polio:** Recommended

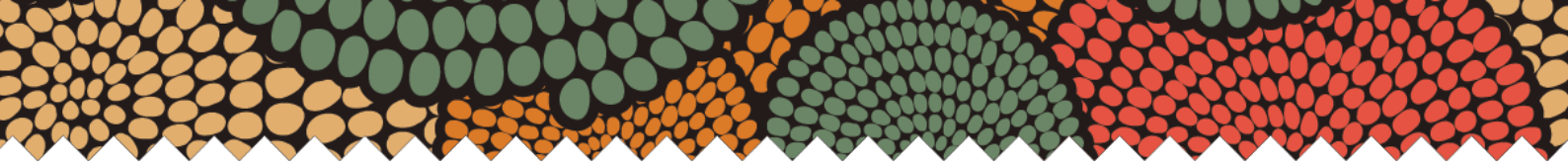
**Hepatitis A&B:** Recommended

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

**Africa:** Angola, Burundi, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda.

**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 Namibia.



## What's included / not included

### Included:

- Project placement
- Accommodation in Swakopmund on first/final nights (dorm rooms)
- Tents/bedrolls for nights on the project
- 3 meals a day during the project (except while in Swakopmund)
- Daily transport during the project
- An orientation at the beginning of your volunteering
- Electronic certificate (printed copy on request)
- Local support, including a 24-hour emergency number

### Not included:

- Meals in Swakopmund
- Airport transfer on arrival and departure
- Sleeping bag and pillow
- Laundry
- Excursions for leisure & pleasure
- Meals and refreshments on outings
- Personal toiletries and towels
- Wi-Fi

## Visa

You will need to have a passport which is still valid for 6 months after your date of arrival in the country. Your passport will also need at least two blank pages for visa stamps.

You can volunteer in Namibia on a tourist visa for up to 90 days.

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

If you come to Namibia on a tourist visa, you can extend this once by another 90 days.

For the latest information, contact the Namibian Embassy.