



SAMARA

PRIVATE GAME RESERVE - THE GREAT KAROO - EASTERN CAPE - SOUTH AFRICA

WILDLIFE VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME



Samara Private Game Reserve in South Africa is a hub of conservation and animal re-introduction efforts in the Great Karoo basin. As a volunteer you will work on ongoing wildlife research and management projects as well as assist with community development and environmental education programmes. Come get your hands dirty in a unique South African bush experience!

Samara is located in the Great Karoo, a landscape of immense plains and dramatic mountains. Prior to European settlement 200 years ago, great migrations of springbuck, black wildebeest and eland passed through this area. Fenced farming relegated these migrations to the story books, and denuded the land. Samara is now pulling up the fences, rehabilitating the land and reintroducing the game, in an attempt to return this land to its former glory. The volunteer programme offers you the opportunity to contribute to this ambitious and worthy cause and experience the incredible and unique landscape of the Great Karoo. As a volunteer you will be directly involved in our reserve rehabilitation and research, including monitoring our two most charismatic creatures: cheetah and aardvark. Our research is in collaboration with various conservation organizations and universities and we teach volunteers to be competent in all required field techniques, meaning the data collected can be used by management and affiliated organizations. Samara is also home to the SACT tracking academy run by one of only two Master trackers in South Africa. As a volunteer you will have the opportunity to join the tracker students for a day in the field, seeing how they follow animals and interpret their behavior by the signs they leave behind.

You will leave Samara with a deeper understanding of the bush, as well as useful skills and techniques used in current scientific research, conservation and wildlife management. We also hope you will leave energized by the experience of living so closely with nature.

PROJECTS

The projects you will be involved with at Samara include management and rehabilitation efforts, which involve hands-on reserve work, as well as research projects requiring data collection and analysis. Samara is currently working on several projects in collaboration with The Centre for African Conservation Ecology (ACE) at The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth (www.nmmu.ac.za) and The University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg (www.wits.ac.za).

Cheetah predator-prey research

Cheetahs are the world's fastest land animals! The cheetahs introduced at Samara were the first wild cheetahs in this area in 125 years. There are less than 900 cheetah left in the wild in South Africa and Samara has made Cheetah conservation a priority. We are currently investigating the prey preferences of cheetah at Samara, which we will then use to determine how many cheetah the reserve can sustainably support. This information will also be useful to other reserves wanting to introduce cheetah. This research requires tracking radio collared cheetahs from a vehicle and on foot by using telemetry set.

We are also interested in the behavioural response of prey (such as kudu and hartebeest) to the presence/absence of predators such as cheetah. We spend afternoon's observing such animals, out of sight, to see how long they spend looking out for predators instead of eating.

Tracking academy

Samara is home to the SACT tracking academy run by one of only two Master trackers in South Africa. The volunteer programme allows you to accompany the tracker students for a day in the bush. Learning about the bush from one of the most knowledgeable men in South Africa is a once in a lifetime opportunity (see www.trackeracademy.co.za).

Reserve management

This forms a large component of your daily activities as a volunteer and you will really get to know your way around all 27 000 hectares of the reserve. Bear in mind that being in reasonable physical shape will make some of these activities a lot easier, but if you're not in good shape at the beginning of your stay, you will be by the end! Some of the activities you may be involved in during your stay are:

- Animal movement and population demography research – We are developing a database with information on the sex and age ratios of certain animals such as springbuck, as well as initiating a project to map the habitat utilization and movement patterns of various species on the reserve (using GPS).
- Land rehabilitation - Poor farming practices in the past, such as over-stocking livestock, have left severe erosion gulleys on some parts of the reserve. These areas need to be rehabilitated by means of soil erosion control methods e.g. stone and brush packing and tree planting projects. Volunteers also assist in removing old farm materials such as fence wires from the reserve, these materials can act as snares so their removal is of utmost importance.
- Invasive alien vegetation control.
- Game captures and introductions are periodically scheduled to ensure that the correct sex ratios are maintained and the game stocking level is sustainable in the long-term. Witnessing the suspense and intensity of a large game capture is an amazing experience and a great opportunity to see these beautiful animals up close and personal.

Vervet monkey research

These small primates belong to a group of monkeys more commonly associated with the forests of tropical Africa. Yet, not only do they survive in the harsh Karoo environment, they positively thrive! This has drawn scientists from around the world to Samara to investigate the key adaptations these monkeys have made to survive in an environment not commonly associated with them. As a volunteer you will have the opportunity to help collect behavioural data on these intriguing little monkeys which will help researchers understand how they utilize their environment and the resources available to them to survive in this harsh environment.

Community outreach

Conservation also means acknowledging the people that have lived in this area for generations. The volunteer programme has developed a good relationship with the Vuyani Safe Haven (www.vuyanisafehaven.co.za) located in the nearby town of Graaff-Reinet. We occasionally arrange environmental education and fun days at Samara for the children of the Haven. Volunteers also have the option of spending a few days at Vuyani, helping the surrogate mothers with the daily care of the children at the Haven. Interacting with these special children is a truly eye-opening experience to the lives of people less fortunate than us.

Other activities

- Hiking and camping. The mountainous landscape of Samara is ideal for hiking and camping! Spending time disconnected from society and without our everyday luxuries is a very liberating experience and one of the best ways to get to know the bush.
- Educational talks by the reserve manager, rangers and researchers.
- Creating a nursery of plants important for the rehabilitation of the land, which can later be planted on the reserve.
- It is possible to see a bit of the surrounding area on weekends, and through a local tour guide you can take a trip to the ocean, Addo Elephant National Park, river rafting or a cultural tour.

ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES

During your stay you will be living in our volunteer camp. The rooms are comfortable and may be single or shared with one other volunteer; depending on numbers (we have facilities for a maximum of eight students). We happily cater for couples or friends traveling together. There is a fully equipped communal kitchen and meals are cooked by volunteers and coordinators in teams. We have a homely relaxing area with couches and TV, as well as an outside braai (BBQ) and fire pit overlooking the mountains, where we spend many evenings relaxing and socializing after a day in the field. In summer volunteers are able to swim in the nearby dams and river pools.

Monday to Friday are working days at Samara. The activity times differ in summer and winter but usually consist of a morning and afternoon activity. Weekends are free time where volunteers can relax and recuperate, visit the local town or organize trips to our beautiful east coast (approx. 2½ hours from Samara), where there are endless beaches and fun coastal towns.

The volunteer project is run by Alwyn and Hayley, a young South African couple who are passionate about nature and love to share this passion with others. They both have Honours degrees in Zoology and Environmental Science from the University of Cape Town and are always open to new research ideas. The coordinators live at the volunteer camp and are there to make your stay comfortable, interesting and fun.

PRICES AND PROGRAMME DATES

This programme is open to people from all walks of life, the only requirements being passion, enthusiasm and a willingness to work hard and learn.

We offer a 2, 4, 8 and 12 week programme (longer stays can be arranged). Because the majority of our projects are research based, we like to keep a group together for a minimum of 2 weeks. This gives us enough time to provide all volunteers with relevant training. Longer stays will be more beneficial to both us and you as a volunteer, because the longer you stay the more competent you become as a researcher. You may also find that it takes a while to adjust to the bush and find your feet. We want you to really make a connection with the bush and animals and by the end of your stay feel that this was a significant and rewarding experience in your life. You also receive an accredited certificate acknowledging the skills you have acquired and your contribution to conservation at Samara.

2 weeks – R10 000

4 weeks – R15 000

8 weeks – R29 000

12 weeks – R43 000

The price **includes** accommodation, food, transport on the reserve **and** transport to Samara from Port Elizabeth airport and back at the end of your stay. Flights and medical insurance are NOT included. Additional spending money will only be required for personal items (alcoholic drinks, sodas, sweets, toiletries and curios) and excursions away from Samara (meals at restaurants in town or weekend excursions).

Programme dates

The volunteer centre is open for eight weeks at a time after which it closes for two weeks. This break gives volunteers on longer programmes an opportunity to explore our beautiful country. Depending on when the eight week programme is started, it will either run for a continuous eight weeks or include a two week break, while the twelve week programme will always include a two week break.

Pick-ups and drop-offs from/to Port Elizabeth airport are on a Friday. Airport drop-offs are at 1pm and pick-ups are at 2pm (please refer to travel document on our website for further details). Your first weekend at Samara will include an introduction talk, orientation around the reserve and time to settle in.

A special 10% discount on rack rates at Samara's award-winning Karoo Lodge is offered to family and friends visiting volunteers during their stay here!

We only have eight places available on our programme. To apply please contact us at volunteer@samara.co.za. Visit our website at www.samara.co.za/volunteer.htm

Below is a calendar listing all programme dates for 2011 and 2012. If you are eager to join us but the dates are not suitable for you, please contact us and we'll see what we can do.

SAMARA WILDLIFE VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME - OPEN DATES 2011

January							February							March							
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
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31																					
April							May							June							
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July							August							September							
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October							November							December							
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30					26	27	28	29	30	31		
31																					

Colour Key

- Programme open
- Airport pick up and drop off
- Airport pick up only
- Airport drop off only



