

African Marine Encounter Programme



Volunteering
Factsheet



About

The programme offers individuals from all over the world, and all walks of life, the opportunity to experience unique, marine-related projects in the biodiversity-rich environment of the Greater Dyer Island area, in Gansbaai, South Africa.

Volunteering aboard the vessels of our tourism partners offers the chance to gain exposure to several marine species, including, but not limited to, Great White Sharks, Bronze whalers, southern right whales (seasonal), dolphins and many marine bird species, such as the endangered African Penguin. Every trip has a dedicated marine biologist guide on board who educates volunteers and clients, increasing their knowledge of the target species and ecology of the area.

Our conservation partner, the Dyer Island Conservation Trust (DICT), is a leader in marine conservation, featuring marine biologists studying Great White Sharks and other marine life.

A major project of the DICT is the African Penguin and Seabird Sanctuary, where injured, oiled and under-nourished seabirds are rehabilitated, with the aim to halt the decline to extinction of the endangered African Penguin.

This programme will suit anyone who loves the ocean and marine wildlife, shark fanatics, whale enthusiasts and people who want to assist with and learn more about responsible tourism and how eco-tourism benefits conservation.





What will you do?

Volunteers take part in data capturing for these studies aboard *Slashfin*, the shark cage diving vessel, and *Dream Catcher*, the eco-tour and whale watching vessel. These boats serve as data capturing platforms for our biologists and volunteers on every trip out to sea. In addition to this, the DICT research vessel, *Lwazi*, launches from time-to-time, affording long-term volunteers the opportunity to be more involved in research activities.

Daily

African Penguin and Seabird Sanctuary: 1 to 3 hours daily, depending on the number of penguins. You will be involved with assisting in the preparation of food and feeding of the penguins; cleaning the birds' pens, crates and living areas; recording data and informing visitors about what we do.

Daily (weather dependent)

Shark cage-diving: 1 to 3 boat trips daily, and boat-based whale watching/eco-tours

Some duties on the vessels, *Slashfin* and *Dream Catcher*, include:

- Assisting clients on land with their life jackets
- Recording of shark, whale and seabird data
- Assisting with collecting environmental data
- Helping clients with their wetsuits
- Assisting with seasick clients where necessary
- Preparation of and cleaning the boats
- Washing of wetsuits / assisting crew with duties
- Taking photographs

Weekly

Beach clean ups; making fishing line bins; presentations on biology, conservation and safety; and assisting with the environmental education group.

Social evenings (weekly)

Welcome barbeque; eating at a restaurant; out to a pub for social evenings; pizza & movie evenings; making dinner together at home.

What to wear?

Supplied by the project: mask, wetsuits, gumboots, two working T-shirts, cap, light wind breaker

Accommodation

- There are 4 cottages consisting of 2 rooms each, with 2 single beds in each room. There is also a communal area in each cottage with two single beds. Each cottage consists of a kitchenette and a bathroom with a shower, basin and toilet.
- There is also the Volunteer Centre, with a big main kitchen where volunteers normally prefer to cook together, with stoves, a microwave and fridges. There are barbeque facilities, a pool table, lounge area, foosball table, table tennis, swimming pool, satellite TV, toilets and an activity hall.

Meals

- **Breakfast** – Bacon, eggs, bread, butter, juice, tea, coffee, sugar, milk and a variety of cereals. This is a self-help breakfast.
- **Lunch** – You will need to make your own sandwiches to take out on the boat if you are not going to be at the lodge during lunch time. Fruit juice and seasonal fruit is also available.
- **Dinner** – This is for your own account. Visits to local restaurants can be arranged on some nights. You can also order take-aways or cook together with the other volunteers.

What you need to know

This is a conservation-based project focused on eco-tourism, conservation, education and research in Gansbaai, South Africa.

Working at sea always comes with its risks, but everything is done to minimize these risks, from safety briefings and the use of life jackets, to fully competent skippers, liability insurance, excellently maintained vessels and equipment, experienced staff, etc.

Minimum age

- 18

Minimum level of English required

- INTERMEDIATE to UPPER INTERMEDIATE:
a strong understanding of English at a conversational level is required

Skills/personality traits required

Volunteers need to be dedicated, hard working, mature and motivated. If you have a positive and adaptable personality and a willingness to learn more about nature, then this is the project for you!

Application

- Complete the application form.
- There are some legal documents that will need to be signed on the day of arrival, which you will need to read and familiarise yourself with.

Which transfers are included?

- Return transfers from Cape Town to Gansbaai.
- The project's shuttle will collect volunteers from their accommodation in Cape Town on a Monday morning for transfer to Gansbaai. The pick-up could be as early as 04h00.
- Volunteers can be dropped off free of charge at the Cape Town International Airport (flights must leave later than 19h00) or at any other accommodation in the City Centre at the end of their volunteering programme on a Monday.
- Minibuses and bicycles to reach the project daily.





What to bring?

- Seasickness tablets or patches
- Polarised sunglasses
- Sun block
- Warm jacket, clothes and beanie, especially in winter time – South African buildings are not heated inside!
- Older clothes and non-slip shoes for the boat
- Medication
- Regular clothes and shoes - sneakers recommended
- Personal belongings
- Driver's license if you are planning to rent a car while in South Africa
- Any personal items you would take on a normal trip
- Own toiletries, towel and clothes

Vaccinations

- Consult your local doctor/travel clinic.

Where is the project based?

- **Country:** South Africa
- **Region:** Gansbaai in the Western Cape (approximately 2½ hours' drive from Cape Town)

Working days and hours?

- **Minimum duration:** 1 week but this is discouraged as it's too short a time to be of benefit to you or the project
- **Maximum duration:** No maximum length of stay
- **Daily hours:** Sea days – weather and tide dependent. Working time is 5 to 8 hours per day
- Open all year around. There are no sea trips on Christmas Day (25th Dec) and New Year's Day (1 Jan)



Costs?

- Placement fee: **€400** (non-refundable)
- First week: **€890** | 2-4 weeks: **€730** per week | extra week: **€665**

Probation?

- All volunteers are subject to a two-week probation period.

Sick days?

- The project must be notified by 08h00 if you are going to be absent due to illness.

What is included?

- Project placement
- Arrival & departure transfer at the project, if booked according to requirements
- Arrival orientation
- Accommodation and basic bedding at the project
- Self-help breakfast and a light lunch (on sea days)
- Wi-fi
- Support services from both the project and EC Cape Town
- 24/7 assistance on EC Cape Town's emergency phone for the duration of your stay

What is excluded?

- Visa application fees
- Travel insurance (available at €20 per week if booked with EC)
- Flights
- Dinner and no-sea-day lunches
- Towels
- Sunday night accommodation prior to Monday pick up in the City Centre
- Spending money
- All other local transport requirements
- Excursions
- Laundry at an extra cost





Terms and conditions?

- Standard EC Terms and Conditions apply.
- In addition, please note the following Project Booking and Cancellation Policy:
- 0% cancellation fee if cancelled more than 30 days prior to arrival
- 50% cancellation fee if cancelled 15 to 30 days prior to arrival
- 100% cancellation fee if cancelled 14 days prior to arrival
- 50% payment on confirmation of booking and balance payable 30 days prior to arrival