



## Shark Conservation Project



### Overview

This exciting project is situated in Gansbaai – the shark cage diving capital of the world – and is about a 2 hour drive from Cape Town. The coast around Gansbaai is home to multiple marine species. There are shark sightings all year, peaking in the Southern Hemisphere in winter (May – September). Southern Right Whales including their calves return every year in July and stay around until December, when they return back to Antarctic waters. Other species including seals and penguins are resident all year and we sometimes have sightings of bottlenose, humpback and common dolphins.

The volunteer programs here offer a limited number of places each year which allow participants to gain the maximum from their time working closely with biologists from the project's research team on the shark cage diving vessel.

### Project Details

**Arrival Day** - Saturday

**Time** - Arriving between 6Am and 10PM

**Airport** - Cape Town International Airport (CPT)

**Orientation** - Saturday - Sunday

**Project Starts** - Monday

**Departure Day/Project ends** - Monday

**Departure time** - You MUST take a late flight (After 19h00) out of CPT. This is due to the project being a long drive away from the airport and the scheduled departure time of the transport from the project site.

**Min Duration** - 2 weeks (incl 2 day Orientation)

**Min Age:** 18

**Max Age:** N/A – Good physical and mental health

NOTE: You can also be collected at any hotel or place of accommodation on your arrival day, should it be within close radius of the city center or airport

## **Project Highlights**

- You will work with professionals and clients in a world-class ecotourism environment, learning all about how responsible ecotourism and conservation work hand-in-hand
- You will learn about the behaviours and biology of great white sharks, whales and other species in our seas
- Every volunteer chooses day-to-day whether they would like to join in on eco-tourism (cage diving) or whale watching, and other conservation work throughout their stay
- Everyone spends the majority of time at sea aboard Slashfin – The cage diving vessel – or the newly commissioned research boat Lwazi (“seeking knowledge”).
- 2-3 presentations on conservation, research or marine safety every week
- The opportunity to help out at the African Penguin and Seabird Sanctuary which is a world-class centre for the rehabilitation of seabirds in distress, with a particular emphasis on conserving the African penguin

## **2 Day Welcome Orientation**

Your project starts with a 2-day orientation in Cape Town at Saltycrax Backpackers.

### **DAY 1:**

You are collected from the airport and taken to the 5-star Saltycrax Backpackers. You will be shown around and given a map of the area. You have the day at your own leisure so

you can explore the beach, shops, bars and restaurants. In the evening you are served a Welcoming meal at the hostel.

### **DAY 2:**

Start the day with breakfast at Saltycrax Backpackers. Your friendly Saltycrax staff member will teach you about the bus system before you head out to Cape Town City Center.

In the evening head back on the local bus to Table View where you can join the staff, guests and the locals at one of the restaurants or bars along the beachfront in Table View – all within rolling distance from the hostel where you will be staying the night.

### **DAY 3:**

After breakfast you will be transported to your project or dropped off at your bus station to be transported to your project.

## **Volunteer Tasks**

- Assisting the crew in the dive operations
- Helping clients
- Data recording
- Observation
- Getting the boat ready before launch
- Help operations when boat returns to land

You will have the opportunity to gain first hand experience of working on an eco-tourism boat and the rare opportunity to work closely with the Great White Shark. The main objective is to ensure you receive adequate sea-going time during your stay. You will have the opportunity to shark cage dive but will be expected to assist guests during their trip and duties will be assigned to you while on board. You will ensure that every guest has a once-in-a-lifetime experience and be able to share your knowledge as a host.

You can expect presentations by the marine biologists and expert crew on:

- Shark biology and behaviour
- Basic seamanship and safety at sea
- Shark tagging and tracking
- Whale research and biology
- Ocean conservation
- Data collection
- Dyer Island Conservation Trust projects

Marine Evenings are hosted from time-to-time, meaning that you will also get to hear other conservation and biology experts share their knowledge. Those volunteers who show an excellent work ethic, and those who are studying in a related field, may have the opportunity to go on research surveys and assist the marine biologists in data collection and shark tracking among other experiences, such as environmental surveys. These trips

do not happen regularly and should be considered a rare opportunity. You will also experience working within the community. Beach clean-ups are done frequently and you may even work with the local schools, providing a great opportunity to actively make a difference and possibly interact with local children.

## Example Itinerary

Your day starts early in the morning +-6am. you will work a full day with your lunch breaks Monday to Friday. Weekends are

generally off time, but this can change for any unexpected occurrences.

## On The Sea

### The Fleet:

**Slashfin:** Slashfin is the pride of Gansbaai. It is a premier cage diving vessel designed by company owner, Wilfred Chivell. It was purpose built for the rough seas which are often encountered and is a fantastic ride on the water. It has an aluminium hull and four 300 hp engines which propel it to a top speed of up to 45 knots. Trips run daily (weather permitting) going out 1 to 2 times a day on average and volunteers are allocated to each trip. Although your first trip is as a client, thereafter you will be tasked with duties.

**Some of the duties for Slashfin:** Assisting clients on land with their life jackets, Helping clients into wetsuits, Assisting with seasick clients where necessary, Recording of shark data, Preparation and cleaning of boat, Washing of wetsuits /

Assisting crew with duties, photographs, recording of Seabird data, assisting with temperature data

**Dream Catcher:** Dream Catcher is a whale watching and eco-trip vessel and is the latest addition to the fleet. She is a 14m catamaran with an aluminium hull and is purpose-built for eco-marine and whale-watching trips. During whale season the boat runs several trips a day in search of the iconic Southern Right Whale. Out of season, eco-trips are run on demand.

**Some duties for Dream Catcher:** Assisting with life jackets for clients, guiding, data capture, helping with any sea sick passengers (not as common on Dream Catcher as the boat does not anchor and is on the move a lot), Preparation and cleaning of boat

**Lwazi:** Lwazi is a dedicated shark research vessel. She has featured in numerous documentaries and ironically was the vessel used to tag the legendary shark Slashfin (from which the cage diving vessel Slashfin gets its name) in February 2012.

**Some of the duties for Lwazi:** Assisting with tracking activities, Water sampling, Chum trips, Preparation and cleaning of boat, data capture / baitline & decoy handling, Assisting with BRUV (baited remote underwater video) deployments and recovery

## **Trips to sea**

You will be able to go out to sea every other day. For example, a 30 day stay enables you to go to sea at least 15 times.

Please note that this will be the minimum (depending on no-sea days and weather), but could be more, and we do our best to accommodate you as often as possible.

## **No sea days**

If the weather does not allow the boat to go out to sea we will start the day with breakfast and then you will be taken on one of the following excursions:

Hermanus, Stanford – shopping, wine tours

Betty's Bay – penguin colony

Cape Agulhas – meeting of the two oceans

## **What's Included**

- Airport pick up
- 2 nights in Cape Town
- Accommodation on project
- Cape Town orientation
- Transfer Gansbaai & back to Cape Town, providing you travel back on a Monday
- Breakfast and lunch on working days
- 24 hour support and supervision on project from two full-time volunteer coordinators and administrator and an on-site manager
- Donation to the NPO to assist with projects, for all bookings of 4 weeks or more
- Certificate of appreciation

## **Key things about the centre:**

- Expect to share

- Fully furnished
- Satellite TV – a whole lot of channels
- DVD player
- Free WiFi (remember to bring your laptop or smartphone)
- Emergency numbers are in the house
- Bedding is provided and washed on a weekly basis
- Bicycles for personal use
- Keep your personal belongings safe (each cottage has a safe)
- The water is safe to drink

## **Accommodation**

Accommodation is at the International Marine Volunteer Centre. There are 4 cottages that accommodate up to 6 people per cottage. Each cottage has a bathroom, kitchenette and living area as well as daily living essentials. The main building has a beautiful kitchen, equipped with induction plates, a microwave and oven for cooking and a fully functional recycling system in place. There is also a very spacious living area with satellite TV, DVD player, board games, pool table and football.

There is an activity hall with some weights and a table tennis table. The facility has a large, safe swimming pool and garden. Emergency numbers are in the house. Bedding is provided and washed on a weekly basis. There are bicycles available for personal use. Remember to keep your personal belongings safe (each cottage has a safe).

## **Extra information**

### **Location:**

The project is based in Gansbaai, the Great White shark capital of the world. This is roughly 200km or 3 hours drive from Cape Town.

- Shops/Grocery Stores: You will receive weekly transport into town so that you can purchase essentials and food items for dinner
- ATMS: There are plenty of ATMS in Cape Town where you will have your orientation. Once on project you will have the opportunity to withdraw money on your weekly shopping trip.

### **Supervision/Co- Ordination:**

As the nature of the work varies, volunteers are placed under the supervision of various staff members. One member of the team is assigned as “team leader” to facilitate the smooth operation of the volunteers stay and provide guidance where necessary.

PLEASE NOTE THAT BECAUSE OF COVID-19 AND SUDDEN CHANGES IN REGULATIONS YOUR ITINERARY MAY NEED TO BE ADJUSTED OR CHANGED UNEXPECTEDLY AND WITHOUT NOTICE.

## **Activities**

### **Free time:**

There may be occasional no-sea days due to bad weather, in which case a conservation or recreational activity will be arranged to do as a group. Other recreational activities are also arranged. Please note that entrance fees and food and beverage costs involved in these excursions are for your personal account.

The Two Oceans Aquarium is not visited, but after your trip, a dive in their ragged tooth shark tank can be arranged at an excellent discount for you!

Note that personal excursions up the Garden Route or to other tourist attractions are at your own cost but don't hesitate to ask the project to assist with your planning.

- A trip to Cape Agulhas – the southernmost point of Africa
- Visit Danger Point Lighthouse
- A visit to the local heritage site Klipgat Cave
- Hikes in the local area
- A visit to Stony Point penguin colony in Betty's Bay
- Visit to Strandveld Museum
- Kelp diving at Stanford Cove
- Visit the Birkenhead micro brewery and the Klein River Cheese factory
- Horse Riding
- River boat cruises along Stanford River
- Visit to Panthera Africa, a captive bred big cat sanctuary
- Quad biking
- Shopping excursions and wine tasting in Hermanus or other nearby areas

## **Packing list**

- Towel
- Polarised sunglasses
- Camera, laptop, smartphone, adaptors & chargers as needed
- Swimming costume
- Suitable clothing for being at sea depending on season, layers work well
- Comfortable, non-slip shoes to wear on boat (we provide waterproof boots)
- Warm clothes and a beanie for the winter months
- Clothing that is easy to wash, dry and doesn't need ironing
- A smart set of clothes (for evenings out, dinner in a restaurant etc.)
- Driver's license, if you are planning on renting a car while in South Africa

- Sunblock/sunscreen, lip balm
- Insect repellent
- Seasickness tablets, patches
- Medical kit (pain killers, antihistamine pills and cream, anti-diarrhoea meds, band aids/plasters, antiseptic cream, sunscreen, personal medication etc.)
- Toiletries (travel-size shampoo, conditioner, body wash, toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, deodorant)
- ZAR 200 cash deposit