

# AFRICAN INSIGHT

EXPERIENCES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE



## AFRICAN INSIGHT ACADEMY BLACK RHINO CONSERVATION



# BLACK RHINO CONSERVATION

## Overview

Black rhino populations are under threat throughout Africa with the total number having plummeted from approximately 65,000 to 2400. In recent years successful conservation efforts have resulted in numbers rising again to a current population of approximately 3000. South Africa is home to the largest number of black rhino and certain key populations have reached their optimum biological carrying capacity. Overpopulation negatively impacts on the population growth potential, due to social pressures with the population. Therefore, in a bold strategy to optimise black rhino population growth, breeding populations have been established in other game reserves (state-owned, private as well as community owned) that have suitable black rhino habitat.

One such game reserve is the 12,000ha Somkhanda Community Game Reserve in Zululand which is owned by the Gumbi tribe. Somkhanda is home to both white and black rhino as well as the critically endangered African wild dog, Cape buffalo, leopard, elephant and well as the full spectrum of common game species such as giraffe, zebra, impala, nyala kudu, wildebeest warthogs and many more.

This project is in 2 week blocks and is for a maximum of 10 participants. The first week is dedicated to black rhino habitat restoration the eradication of *Chromolaena odorata*, which is conducted according to a scientifically managed methodology. Due to the remote location of the infestation you will camp onsite in tents enjoying a true African bush experience, cooking on the fire, showering under the stars and possibly hearing the distant call of a leopard or hyena whilst you drift off to sleep. There is no doubt that this week is hard physical work for up to 8 hours per day.

For the second week you will move to a another tented safari camp from which you will do daily foot or vehicle patrols in search rhino, elephant, wild dog and signs of poaching activity. This is a great week of working together as a team with experienced local guides who will impart a vast amount of local knowledge on bushskills, local customs and culture. You will learn to identify different birds, plants, animals, animal tracks and tracking techniques and experience sleeping out under the stars as well as the skills of fire making and cooking on the open fire. This is an amazing grassroots wildlife conservation experience and you know that you have made a difference on many different levels.

Somkhanda is perfect habitat for black rhino however the presence of the alien vegetation species *Chromolaena odorata* and the ideal climatic conditions have created the perfect conditions for its proliferation. The result is an incredible amount of black rhino habitat loss. Hundreds of hectares of black rhino habitat are completely lost which requires a concerted effort to reclaim. Other areas, which have been reclaimed, require persistent monitoring and follow up treatment to prevent recolonization.



# BLACK RHINO CONSERVATION

## Structure of the 2 week programme:

You will need to arrive in Durban on Sunday night (accommodation not included) or by 10h00 on Monday morning. It is a 4 hour transfer to Somkhanda Game Reserve where, on arrival, you will have a full orientation on the reserve, the project and safety. You will overnight in Kudu Lodge for one night.

The following day (Tuesday), after breakfast you will load up your supply vehicle with everything for the "work week" and head off into the reserve to "Chromoleana camp" situated at the work site. The safety equipment and tools will be issued and the methodology demonstrated. During this week you will take it in turns to do cooking, camp duties and washing up, whilst the others are working. On Saturday afternoon you will return to Kudu Lodge. On Sunday you have an opportunity to rest and relax and do laundry. On Monday morning a trip to the nearby town to pick up supplies for the next week and any personal luxuries. Returning to Somkhanda you will move into your new base camp for "patrol week".

Monday through to Saturday you will undertake different patrols and monitoring activities on foot or by vehicle throughout the 12 000ha reserve returning to camp each night. Once again cooking and camp duties will be shared by the group. On one of the days you will take a half day trip to a nearby lake and wildlife reserve where you will enjoy a boat trip that usually offers excellent viewings of elephant, rhino, buffalo, hippo crocs and a huge variety of birds.

Sunday morning you will leave for Durban after breakfast. Drop off at Durban's King Shaka International airport will be at approximate 14h00.



# BLACK RHINO CONSERVATION

## Monitoring and Patrol Activities:

### Rhino Tracking

All rhino on Somkhanda are known and their movements are monitored on a regular basis using various physical and remote methods. However, physically monitoring on a regular basis is essential. In addition to locational information, which shows movement patterns, other important information about their physical condition and associations with other rhino and births etc. are recorded. Although there is a permanent team to do this you will get to experience this.

### Wilddog Tracking

This is the most endangered carnivore in Africa requiring a vast area of land to sustain a pack. Somkhanda is surrounded on three sides by tribal communities whose livelihoods are dependent on cattle and goat farming. Prior to the introduction of wilddog to Somkhanda an agreement was made with the community that the reserve would monitor this pack of dogs twice daily. Although there is a permanent team to do this you will get to experience this.

### Poaching Activity Patrols

Bushmeat hunting is a reality throughout Africa and requires persistent patrolling and other anti-poaching interventions. You will assist the reserve rangers by doing fence patrols checking for wire snares, fence breaches (where poachers may have cut the fence) and closing holes made by burrowing animals. To a ranger the full moon is called a "poacher's moon" as this is when poachers are most active. If your trip happens to coincide with a poacher's moon you may set up an 'observation post' on a strategic hill to watch and listen for any signs of poachers.

### Leopard Monitoring

Due to the importance of cattle to the economy of the rural community outside of Somkhanda and our commitment to fostering good relations an ongoing monitoring of the leopard population is very important. You will get to learn how to set camera traps identify individual leopards and record their movements.

### Community Cattle Dipping

As a free service to the community Somkhanda Game Reserve, with the backing of the state veterinary department, undertakes community cattle dipping to eradicate ticks. This programme takes place every week in the summer months and every second week in the winter months. The aim is to control tick loads and thereby reducing incidence of tick-borne diseases, improves the health of the animals which in turn increases milk production and decreases inter-calving interval. A great opportunity to get a peek into contemporary traditional Zulu life.

### Cost for the course

- USD1110.00
- EUR990.00
- GBP835.00
- ZAR12980

### Additional 2 week blocks

- USD790.00
- EUR710.00
- GBP595.00

### 2017 Dates

- 09 January – 22 January
- 06 February – 19 February
- 06 March – 19 March
- 03 April – 16 April
- 01 May – 14 May
- 29 May – 11 June
- 26 June – 09 July
- 24 July – 08 August
- 21 August – 03 September
- 18 September – 01 October
- 16 October – 29 October
- 13 November – 26 November
- 11 December – 24 December



### Inclusions

- Pick up and transfer from Durban
- Field Camp, Tents with bucket showers and long drop toilets
- Mobile Camp, Tents with outdoor showers & flush toilets
- Full Board (Group Participation)

### Exclusions

- Flights
- Visas
- Other personal expenses
- Lunch on the first and last day

