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Botswana Grasslands Conservation Mature Program (40+)

There's a different kind of adventure that comes with age — one built on curiosity rather than proving anything, on presence rather than rush. Grasslands was made for that. Set on private land bordering Botswana's Central Kalahari Game Reserve, this program pairs genuine, purposeful conservation work with deep cultural immersion alongside the San Bushmen — at a pace, and with a level of comfort, designed for volunteers who want substance without being run ragged. The lodge has been in the same family for eight generations, and you'll feel that steady, grounded hospitality throughout your stay.

Arrival Day

Introductions, Safety, Cultural Awareness

Your journey begins at Maun International Airport, followed by a scenic road transfer to Grasslands Safari Lodge (around five hours, including 16 farm gates) — a comfortable, unhurried introduction to Botswana's landscapes and people.

Arrival Day - Monday

Time - Your flight can land anytime

Airport - Maun International Airport, Botswana

Departure Day - Monday (Day 8, or Day 15 for 2 weeks program)

Departure time - You can depart anytime

Min Duration - 1 week (2-week or longer durations recommended)

Min Age: 16

Max Age: N/A - Medium Level of fitness required

Optional Upgrade: A 50-minute light aircraft transfer is available for an extra thrill, at an additional cost.

On Arrival:

Settle in at your own pace, attend a safety briefing and cultural introduction, and enjoy a welcome dinner at the lodge.

Your first encounter with the San community is one of the most memorable parts of the whole trip.

Day 2 – Orientation & Introductions

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A gentle, thorough introduction to life at Grasslands — no rushing, no overwhelm. You'll get a detailed safety and cultural briefing, then a relaxed guided tour of the reserve's key areas: fence lines, waterholes, predator camps, horse facilities.

There's an open Q&A to answer anything on your mind, followed by easy-paced hands-on introductions to horse care, predator conservation with the African wild dogs, rhino conservation work, and the camera trap systems that track wildlife across the reserve.

By the end of the day, you'll have a genuine sense of how this place runs — and how you fit into it.

Day 3 – Cultural & Conservation Activities

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Mornings begin with hands-on horse and rhino care — feeding routines, supplementary rhino feed, releasing horses into their grazing camps.

Then comes one of the true highlights of the program: time with the San Bushmen, learning tracking, fire-making, and survival skills passed down through generations — knowledge that lands differently when you've lived enough life to appreciate it.

You'll support the wild dog program, help record wildlife data at the waterholes, and assist with fence inspections. In the afternoon, join horse training and Western Mounted Games activities at whatever level suits you — arena prep, handling, and riding where you're comfortable.

The day closes gently, with time to reflect and, if you'd like, a chance to lend a hand with guest hospitality over dinner.

Day 4 – Firewood Collection & Horse Riding

Firewood Collection & Horse Riding

A day of practical, satisfying work at a manageable pace.

Morning horse care comes first, then you'll help gather, cut, and stack firewood — genuinely useful, hands-on contribution to daily camp life.

A guided horse outride through the surrounding landscape follows, riding at your own comfort level while soaking in scenery few people ever get to see.

Round out the day with fence patrols, waterhole monitoring, and quiet time reviewing the morning's observations — a rhythm that balances activity with real rest.

Day 5 – Rhino Tracking & Waterhole Monitoring

Rhino Tracking & Waterhole Monitoring

Join the conservation team for meaningful fieldwork: rhino patrols, fence inspections, and basic maintenance that directly protects this reserve.

Spend time monitoring wildlife activity at the waterholes, then choose your own afternoon pace — a mounted patrol through the reserve, or a quiet, contemplative sit at the water's edge watching the Kalahari unfold.

Help set up night cameras as the sun goes down, then take some dedicated time to process the week's observations — no pressure, just presence.

Day 6 – Camera Monitoring & Predator Camp Work

Camera Monitoring & Predator Camp Work

After horse care, spend the morning on the quieter, detail-oriented side of conservation — retrieving and reviewing camera trap footage, logging sightings, and helping tidy the predator camps.

Fence inspections continue at an easy pace, followed by more waterhole monitoring in the afternoon. It's a day that rewards patience and attention over physical exertion — well suited to volunteers who enjoy the thoughtful side of this work.

Day 7 – Free Day / Optional Activities

Free Day / Optional Activities

The day is entirely yours.

Take a game drive, go for a relaxed ride, watch wildlife from camp, or simply put your feet up and enjoy the Kalahari's stillness.

Light, optional support activities continue in the background if you feel like staying involved, alongside time set aside for the week's data review — as much or as little as you'd like to be part of.

Day 8 – Departure

Departure Day

A relaxed road transfer back to Maun, or an optional charter flight if arranged.

Before you go, take real time to reflect on the skills you've picked up, the conservation contribution you've made, and what this experience with the San Bushmen has meant to you.

Many volunteers say this is the part that stays with them longest.

Information & Documents

Accommodation

Your home for this program is a room at the main lodge itself — comfortable, en-suite, and just steps from the heart of camp life.

It's the kind of accommodation that lets you fully enjoy the Kalahari by day and properly relax by night, with proper bedding, a private bathroom, and none of the compromises of camping.

The lodge's communal spaces — the lounge, dining area, and fireside seating — are all close at hand, so evenings unwind easily into shared stories and a sky full of stars without much walking required. It's comfort with the wilderness still right on your doorstep.

Meals

Meals

- **Breakfast:** Freshly baked bread from the lodge kitchen, cereals, yogurt, fresh fruit, and assorted spreads.
- **Lunch:** Light meals such as macaroni cheese, vegetable pizza, pasta dishes, fresh salads, and bread.
- **Dinner:** Three-course meals with starter, main (meat, starch, vegetables), and dessert - enjoyed at the Lodge with guests (subject to space limitations) otherwise back at the camp
- **Afternoon tea:** Daily

Drinks are available at the lodge bar, or volunteers may bring their own supplies from Maun.

Laundry

Limited laundry services are available during your stay.

For volunteers participating in the 1-week program, personal laundry can be arranged through the lodge for an additional fee.

Volunteers staying for the 2-week program will receive one complimentary laundry service, during which select clothing of your choice will be washed free of charge.

Please note that undergarments are not washed by lodge staff. For personal items such as these, hand-washing powder is provided, along with a small drying line at the volunteer camp for your convenience.

Medical and Emergency Evacuation

The lodge maintains a comprehensive first aid kit to address minor injuries such as cuts, bumps, and bruises, as well as a small selection of over-the-counter medications. Use of these medications is entirely at the volunteer's discretion. Please note that lodge staff have basic first aid training, but they are not trained medical practitioners.

Due to the lodge's remote Kalahari location, it is essential that all volunteers have comprehensive medical insurance, including coverage for medical evacuation to Maun and onward transfer to South Africa if required. The lodge has a registered landing strip, operational during daylight hours.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the lodge's volunteer program provides comprehensive evacuation options, including:

- Fixed-wing aircraft
- Helicopter evacuation to the closest medical facility in Maun

It is important to understand that any further medical care beyond Maun, such as transfer to Johannesburg, South Africa, must be covered by your personal insurance.

Volunteers are strongly advised to ensure their insurance policy includes full emergency medical coverage and repatriation. Being prepared allows for safe, timely care in the unlikely event of a serious medical incident, while the lodge continues to maintain its strong safety and first aid protocols.

Wifi

Wifi is available at the main lodge to use but not at the volunteer accommodation

What to Bring – Preparing for the Kalahari

Life in the Kalahari is both rewarding and physically engaging. Volunteers will spend time outdoors in a semi-arid desert environment where temperatures can vary greatly throughout the day. It is therefore important to pack practical, comfortable clothing and a few essential personal items.

Clothing

- Lightweight long-sleeved shirts for sun protection
- Comfortable long trousers suitable for bush work
- Warm fleece or jacket for early mornings and evenings
- Layered clothing – the Kalahari can be very cold at night and very hot during the day, sometimes within the same 24-hour period
- Wide-brim hat or cap for sun protection
- Light gloves (useful for fence work, firewood collection, and general tasks)
- Comfortable walking shoes or light boots suitable for bush terrain
- Sandals or casual shoes for relaxing at camp
- Swimwear (optional depending on lodge facilities)

Essential Personal Items

- Flashlight or headlamp (very important for moving around camp at night)
- Sunglasses
- High SPF sunscreen
- Personal toiletries
- Small backpack or daypack for daily activities
- Reusable water bottle
- Insect repellent

Optional but Recommended

- Binoculars for wildlife viewing
- Camera with spare batteries or charging equipment
- Notebook or field journal for recording wildlife observations
- Personal medication and a small basic first aid kit

Why join?

This is a chance to do something that matters — real conservation work and real cultural connection, in one of Africa's last great wildernesses, at a pace that lets you actually take it in. Build genuine skills, share the experience with like-minded travellers in the same season of life, and come away with something that stays with you.

Volunteer Program Objectives

1. **Cultural Preservation** — work alongside the San Bushmen, learn survival and tracking skills, support the continuation of Naro culture
2. **Conservation Efforts** — rhino tracking and monitoring, predator conservation, daily waterhole monitoring, fence patrols, camera trap setup and review
3. **Safari Farm Operations** — horse care, camp maintenance, firewood collection, waterhole cleaning, general lodge support
4. **Marketing & Guest Engagement** — social media content, promoting lodge activities, sustainable tourism
5. **Skill Development & Personal Growth** — conservation know-how, cultural heritage exposure, full immersion in the Kalahari at your own pace

A Journey Unlike Any Other — more than a volunteer program, this is an opportunity to connect with nature, culture, and purpose, exactly the way you want to experience it.

2026/2027 start dates

2026 Dates:

1-Week:

- 29 June – 6 July
- 3 August – 10 August
- 31 August – 7 September
- 26 October – 2 November
- 30 November – 7 December

2-Week:

- 29 June – 13 July
- 3 August – 17 August
- 31 August – 14 September
- 26 October – 9 November
- 30 November – 14 December

2027 Dates:

1-Week:

- 18 January – 25 January
- 15 February – 22 February
- 8 March – 15 March
- 12 April – 19 April
- 10 May – 17 May
- 7 June – 14 June
- 5 July – 12 July
- 2 August – 9 August
- 30 August – 6 September
- 27 September – 4 October
- 25 October – 1 November
- 22 November – 29 November

2-Weeks:

- 18 January – 1 February
- 15 February – 1 March
- 8 March – 29 March ⭐ Special 3-Week Date
- 12 April – 26 April
- 10 May – 24 May
- 7 June – 21 June
- 5 July – 19 July
- 2 August – 16 August
- 30 August – 13 September
- 27 September – 11 October
- 25 October – 8 November
- 22 November – 6 December

*Please note that activities, schedules, and course details may be subject to change due to operational requirements, weather conditions, or conservation priorities.