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SAVE Volunteering
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Botswana Grasslands Conservation Program

Welcome to Grasslands — where the Kalahari's raw wilderness and one of Africa's oldest living cultures meet. Set on private land bordering Botswana's Central Kalahari Game Reserve, this program blends genuine, hands-on conservation work with real cultural immersion alongside the San Bushmen, the Kalahari's original inhabitants. The lodge has been family-run for eight generations, and that legacy of care shapes everything you'll do here.

Arrival Day

Introductions, Safety, Cultural Awareness

Touch down at Maun International Airport, gateway to Northern Botswana. From there, settle in for the road transfer to Grasslands Safari Lodge (around five hours, crossing 16 farm gates) — a journey that doubles as your first real introduction to Botswana's landscapes, wildlife, and way of life.

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 into your rustic-yet-comfortable tented camp accommodation a short distance from the lodge, attend a safety briefing and a San Bushmen/Naro cultural briefing, and enjoy a welcome dinner at the lodge.

Day 2 – Orientation & Introductions

Day 2 – Orientation & Introductions

Objectives

- Safety awareness
- Cultural preservation
- Skill development
- Conservation awareness

Program Overview

Your first day is designed to introduce you to life at Grasslands, helping you settle in, understand your surroundings, and prepare for the rewarding work ahead.

What to Expect

Safety & Cultural Briefing

Detailed introductions covering:

- General lodge safety procedures
- Wildlife awareness and safe behavior around animals
- Cultural etiquette and respectful engagement with the San community

Guided Lodge Tour

Explore the key areas of the property, including:

- Fence lines

- Waterholes
- Predator camps
- Horse camps

This provides an introduction to both Conservation Efforts and Safari Farm Operations.

Volunteer Q&A Session

An open discussion where volunteers can ask questions, clarify responsibilities, and learn more about daily life on the program.

Horse Care Tasks

Learn the basics of:

- Feeding
- Moving horses safely
- Basic grooming

Predator Conservation Tasks

Introduction to:

- African wild dogs
- Safety procedures
- Observation techniques

Rhino Conservation Tasks

Learn about:

- Rhino safety protocols
- Practical handling tasks
- Monitoring procedures

Camera Traps & Wildlife Monitoring

Introduction to:

- Camera trap setup
- Reviewing footage
- Wildlife tracking and monitoring techniques

Day 3 – Cultural & Conservation Activities

Day 3 – Cultural & Conservation Activities
Objectives

- Cultural Preservation
- Conservation Efforts
- Safari Farm Operations
- Skill Development

Morning Activities

Horse & Rhino Care

Start the day by assisting with:

- Feeding horses

- Providing supplemental feed for rhinos
- Releasing horses into the larger camps for the day

Bush Skills with the San Bushmen

Join the San Bushmen and learn traditional skills such as:

- Animal tracking
- Fire making
- Survival techniques
- Understanding the Kalahari environment

Predator Conservation

Assist with the African wild dog program by:

- Feeding the dogs
- Learning about conservation goals
- Understanding predator management practices

Wildlife Monitoring

Visit waterholes and record important wildlife data, including:

- Species observed
- Numbers seen
- Male / female ratios
- Presence of young animals

Fence Patrol

Inspect and monitor fences in key predator and wildlife zones to ensure safety and effective land management.

Afternoon Activities

Horse Training & Mounted Games

Take part in horse training for Western Mounted Horse Games by helping with:

- Arena setup
- Handling horses
- Riding opportunities where appropriate

Time for Volunteers

Use dedicated time to review and discuss:

- Previous day’s waterhole observations
- Camera trap footage and data
- Wildlife movement patterns

Day 4 – Horse Care



Horse Care

Objectives

- Conservation Efforts
- Skill Development

Horse Care

- Feeding horses
- Moving horses into the larger camps for grazing and exercise

Horse Outrides

Join horse outrides through the surrounding landscape, assisting where needed and gaining riding experience where appropriate.

Alternative Duties

Volunteers may also assist with:

- Predator feeding and care support

Fence Patrol

Inspect fence lines to ensure safety and security, with special focus on:

- Predator zones
- Rhino areas
- High wildlife movement sections

Wildlife Monitoring

Conduct waterhole checks to observe and record wildlife activity throughout the day.

Time for Volunteers

Use time in the late afternoon to review and discuss:

- Morning wildlife observations
- Species diversity recorded
- Camera trap notes and findings

Day 5 – Rhino Tracking & Waterhole Monitoring



Objectives

- Conservation Efforts
- Skill Development

Horse Care

- Feeding horses
- Moving horses into the larger camps for grazing and exercise

Rhino Patrols & Fence Maintenance

Join the conservation team for important fieldwork, including:

- Rhino patrols and monitoring
- Fence inspections
- Basic fence repairs where needed

These activities help ensure the safety of wildlife and the security of protected areas.

Wildlife Monitoring Session

Monitor animal movement and activity at key waterholes and surrounding areas.

Waterhole Observation or Mounted Patrols

Spend the afternoon either:

- Riding patrol routes through the reserve
- Sitting quietly at waterholes to observe wildlife behavior

Night Camera Setup

Assist with preparing and positioning night cameras to capture after-dark wildlife activity.

Wildlife Monitoring Session

Continue observations and record sightings.

Time for Volunteers

Use dedicated time to process and review:

- Previous day's waterhole observations
- Camera trap footage
- Wildlife logs and conservation records

Day 6 – Camera Monitoring & Predator Camp Work

Camera Monitoring & Predator Camp Work

Objectives

- Conservation Efforts
- Skill Development

Horse Care

- Feeding horses
- Moving horses into larger camps for grazing and exercise

Wildlife Camera Retrieval & Review

Collect and process overnight data by:

- Retrieving night camera traps
- Reviewing captured footage
- Recording and logging wildlife sightings

Predator Camp Maintenance

Assist with essential camp preparation tasks, including:

- Cleaning predator enclosures

Fence Patrol

Conduct inspections and maintenance of fences, with focus on:

- Predator enclosures
- Key wildlife movement zones

Wildlife Monitoring

Carry out scheduled waterhole checks to monitor animal activity and behavior.

Day 7 – Free Day / Optional Activities

Free Day / Optional Activities

Flexible Activities (Optional)

- Game drives
- Horse riding
- Wildlife viewing
- Relaxation time at the lodge

Daily Support Activities

Predator Care

Assist with:

- Feeding predators

Wildlife Monitoring

During these sessions, volunteers assist with tracking, observing, and recording wildlife activity.

Weekly Review & Analysis

Data Processing & Reporting

Dedicated time to:

- Review all weekly wildlife observations
- Analyse camera trap footage
- Summarise key findings
- Update official lodge conservation records

Day 8 – Departure

Departure Day

Travel Day

- Return to Maun by vehicle
  or
- Optional charter flight (where arranged)

Reflection & Program Closure

Personal Review

(Skill Development & Cultural Preservation)

Take time to reflect on your overall experience, including:

- Skills developed during the program
- Conservation impact and contributions made
- Cultural exchange and learning with the San Bushmen
- Personal growth and key takeaways from your time in the Kalahari

Information & Documents

Accommodation

Volunteers stay in a rustic yet comfortable tented camp, a short distance from the lodge, a safe, welcoming space in the heart of the Kalahari, the camp consorts of:

- Comfortable tents with stretcher beds.
- Shared flush toilets and showers nearby.
- Basic solar electricity for device charging.
- Hot water via a rustic boiler.
- The camp is not fenced.
- The tented camp offers a cozy, rustic lounge area where volunteers and staff come together to relax and share experiences. Set on a simple concrete slab with an iron-sheet roof, this open-air space blends effortlessly with the surrounding Kalahari wilderness. Rustic tables and camp chairs provide a comfortable, unpretentious place to connect, while the adjacent fire pit adds warmth and a focal point for conversation as the sun sets. Open to nature on all sides, the camp invites you to unwind under a star-filled desert sky, soaking in the sights, sounds, and serenity of the Kalahari.

For those seeking extra comfort, lodge chalets with en-suite bathrooms are available at an additional cost.

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?

By joining the Save Grasslands Volunteer Program, you become part of this living story:

- Contribute to meaningful wildlife conservation
- Support cultural preservation
- Experience life in one of Africa’s most remarkable wilderness regions
- Gain valuable hands-on skills
- Create memories that leave a lasting imprint on your soul

Volunteer Program Objectives

1. Cultural Preservation

- Work alongside the San Bushmen
- Learn survival, tracking, and traditional bush skills

- Support the preservation of Naro culture

2. Conservation Efforts

- Rhino tracking and monitoring
- Predator conservation, including African wild dogs
- Daily wildlife monitoring at lodge waterholes
- Fence patrols
- Camera trap setup and review

3. Safari Farm Operations

- Horse care: feeding, exercising, and training
- Maintaining predator and horse camps
- Firewood collection
- Waterhole cleaning
- General lodge support

4. Marketing & Guest Engagement

- Assist with social media content
- Promote lodge activities
- Help encourage sustainable tourism

5. Skill Development & Personal Growth

- Wildlife conservation
- Cultural heritage projects
- Immerse yourself fully in the Kalahari environment

A Journey Unlike Any Other

This is more than a volunteer program — it is an opportunity to connect with nature, culture, and purpose in one of Africa's last great wildernesses.

2026/2027 start dates

Program Dates 2026

1-Week Program

- 15 June – 22 June
- 20 July – 27 July
- 17 August – 24 August
- 21 September – 28 September
- 19 October – 26 October
- 16 November – 23 November

2-Week Program

- 15 June – 29 June
- 20 July – 3 August
- 17 August – 31 August
- 21 September – 5 October
- 5 October – 19 October
- 16 November – 30 November

Program Dates 2027

1-Week Program:

- 4 January – 11 January

- 1 February – 8 February
- 1 March – 8 March
- 29 March – 5 April
- 26 April – 3 May
- 24 May – 31 May
- 21 June – 28 June
- 19 July – 26 July
- 16 August – 23 August
- 13 September – 20 September
- 11 October – 18 October
- 8 November – 15 November
- 6 December – 13 December

2-Week Program:

- 4 January – 18 January
- 1 February – 15 February
- 29 March – 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 – 20 December

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