

CONSERVING OUR OCEANS TOGETHER



2022-2023

WHITE SHARK PROJECTS

VOLUNTEER BROCHURE

PLEASE EMAIL VOLUNTEER@WHITESHARKPROJECTS.CO.ZA

READY FOR



AN ADVENTURE?

If you are reading this, then it probably means that you are ready to embark on an adventure of a lifetime. An adventure which will nudge you out of your comfort zone a little and maybe even change your perspective on the world around you. It also probably means that you are searching for the ultimate experience in travel; authentic, local experiences and a deep personal connection with people.

Combine the above with a passion for the ocean, a fascination for sharks, an urge to give something back, and you end up with 'The White Shark Projects' Volunteer Programme. Not only will you have multiple **bucket-list** experiences and memories to last you a lifetime, but you will also be able to make a difference and ultimately inspire others to become **Shark Ambassadors & Ocean Defenders!**



WHITE SHARK PROJECTS



White Shark Projects was established in Gansbaai, South Africa back in 1989. We were the first cage-diving operator to open a research centre and international volunteer programme. We are dedicated to the exploration and conservation of sharks and their environment. We have the pleasure of working with the Great White Shark, Bronze Whaler Shark and the marine big five dependant on the season and other environmental factors.



Our project works with tourists, volunteers, local and international enthusiasts, and scientists to gather data on sharks around the Southern African coastline. We aim to correct negative misconceptions about sharks and assist in stopping the needless slaughter of over 100 million sharks annually. Current programmes involve eco-tourism, public education, environmental advocacy as well as various social upliftment projects.



Our boat trips run from Kleinbaai, which is a small bay on the coastline of Gansbaai, South Africa. We are a seaside village located approximately two hours southeast of Cape Town on the Atlantic Ocean coast. 'Shark Team' is the name of our shark cage diving vessel. She is a 36ft catamaran custom built for shark cage-diving and viewing. We launch from Kleinbaai Harbour, and it takes around 20 minutes to reach our anchor site. Dependant on time of year and shark activity you may also get the opportunity to experience a boat trip to the world-famous Shark Alley which lies between Dyer Island and Geyser Rock which are home to 85,000 Cape fur seals and the endangered South African penguin.





WELCOME TO GANSBAAI

South Africa has long been known for its abundance of sharks, making it a prime area to observe these magnificent creatures. Owing to massive negative media publicity over the years, sharks have become one of the most maligned, misunderstood, even hated animals on our fragile planet. They have been pursued, hunted, and indiscriminately slaughtered, to the point where many species are endangered.

Dyer Island is a breeding ground for the endangered African Penguins, Cape Cormorants, Gannets, and many other species, while Geyser Rock is a breeding ground for approximately 85,000 Cape Fur Seals. The bay is a magnet for Great White Sharks due to this breeding colony of seals, their favourite prey. The location of where we dive is subject to change depending on the weather conditions and recent shark sightings.

Finding sharks is a skill, involving years of practice - the water temperature, depth, visibility, swell height, current and wind direction are all major factors. Divers will get to experience sharks from the safety of a cage, while non-divers have a great opportunity to view the sharks from the safety of the boat. Photographic and video footage may be captured at close range from inside the cage and on the deck.

There may be an opportunity to catch a glimpse of dolphins as well as magnificent Southern Right Whales coming up from Antarctica to breed from June to November. These expeditions are more than just thrill-seeking adventures, they are educational experiences. We are partnered with a whale watching company where we get 50% discount on boat trips in whale season which is a very popular activity with our volunteer groups.

Shark species you may observe from the boat include the Great White Shark, Bronze Whaler Shark, and the Sevengill Cow Shark. However, the ocean has no fences, and we can never guarantee any specific sighting. Sightings in general vary throughout the year and can be unpredictable, please check with us prior to booking to avoid any disappointment. We have had situations in the past where orcas have preyed on our Great White Sharks which causes them to leave the area. We never know if this might happen, but we still run the full program and our shark diving trips as we have other shark species that we have the pleasure of diving with. Please be prepared for anything as we cannot predict what is happening out there in the unknown but it does make it even more exciting.





VOLUNTEER LIFE



Please note that your duties may change from day to day and you will always be working with a qualified White Shark Projects crew member. Below is a list of some of the daily duties expected of you:

- Ensure cleanliness of boat
- Boat check before trip
- Make sure equipment for diving, chumming, food etc. are on the boat
- Assist with anchoring
- Assist with securing the cage
- Education of clients and general interaction with them
- Assist clients as needed
- Preparing and distributing wet-suits for clients
- Data recording
- Data capturing
- Writing for our blog
- Constant and vigilant shark spotting
- Point out sharks to crew, clients and fellow volunteers
- Clean boat post-trip
- Clean and put wet-suits away
- Chumming
- Tuesdays assist at our recycle Swop Shop

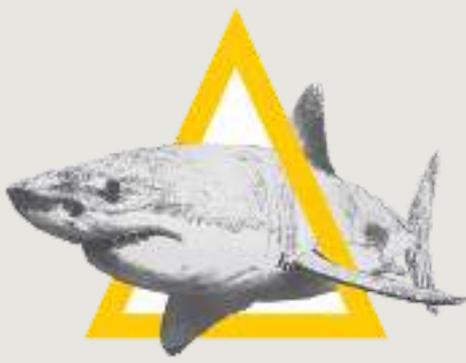
TRAINING & QUALIFICATIONS

Training will be given on how to work on the shark cage diving vessel and how to collect observational data on sharks. Students may be able to obtain university credit for their experience, depending on your university.

ACCOMMODATION

Volunteers stay in a cosy brick house situated five minutes from the harbour, which bustles with action and boats as people head out to sea. The house is very comfortable with dorm rooms, a nice open plan kitchen dining area, a lounge with DSTV television and DVD player, board games, WiFi and an outside braai area for those hot evenings. All bedding is provided in the house and there are self-catering facilities. The house is located in a very safe and beautiful area, where you can freely walk around during the day. There is a small shop nearby where volunteers usually buy basics and provisions. You will be taken into town on allocated shopping days to the main supermarket so you can stock up on food.

Couples, families or friends volunteering together who would like private accommodation, have the choice of reserving a double room for an additional cost per month.



NO SEA DAYS!



On the days where we are not able to go to sea due to no trips or weather conditions, alternative activities or excursions may be arranged.

Volunteers will alternate between staying around the local area, receiving a lecture and watching an appropriate documentary linked to the lecture or data entry. Or going on a local excursion to see some of what the Western Cape has to offer.

Local activities include:

- Rock pool walks where we will take photos and identify the different species found in and around the rock pools.
- Coastal walks to Danger Point lighthouse or Franskraal beach where we can collect shark egg cases.
- Beach clean-ups at various locations
- De Kelders Drip cave which has stalagmites, stalactites, and the only fresh water cave pool in the area. Journey back in time and explore this wonder of time and nature.
- Visit to Die Plaat (the most beautiful beach) to watch the sunset

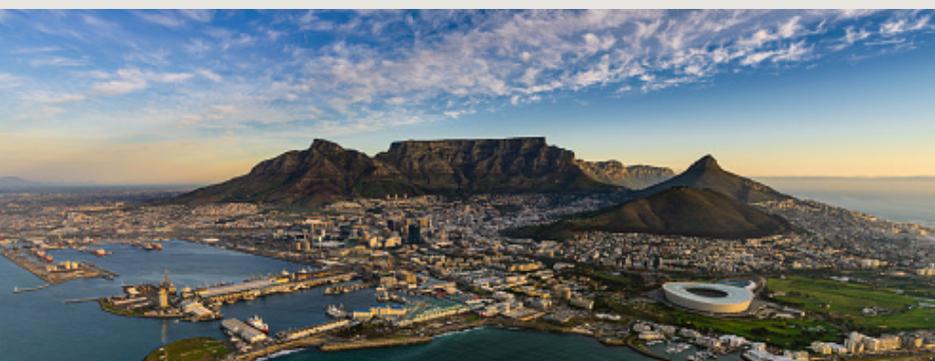
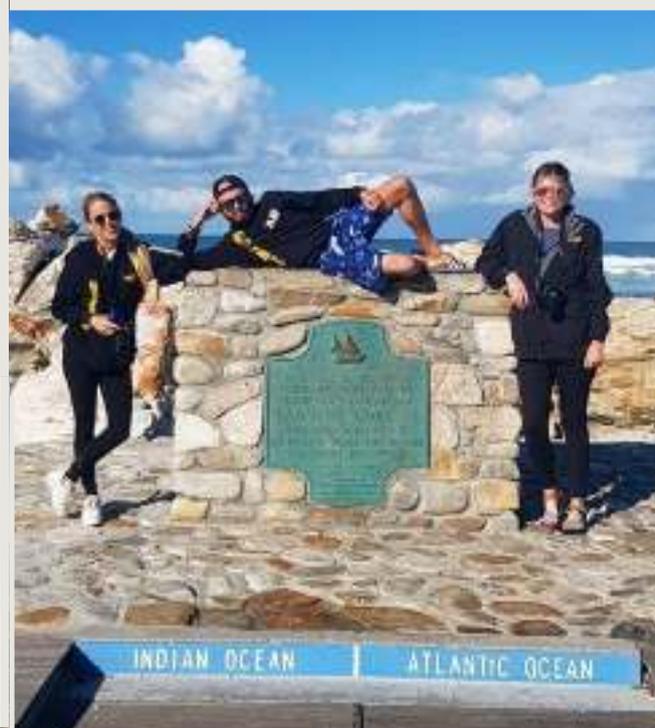
- Snorkelling in the Kelp Forest at De Kelders is a peaceful and stunning way to spend your day. Enjoying the beautiful scenery of this unique ecosystem and maybe meeting a harmless shy sharks (species of cat sharks found in and around the kelp) along the way.
- Catch and release shark tagging trips
- Visits to BARC, which is a local dog shelter. We walk the dogs and spend some quality time with them, giving (and receiving) much needed love and affection.
- Quad biking through the indigenous forest and up the mountain, which offers the most amazing views over Walker Bay.
- Horse Riding can be enjoyed too, either mountain trails or a splendid ride along the pristine white beach, which stretches for miles..
- Visit to the local farm to see the animals
- Local hikes - coastal and through the mountains
- Fat-biking across sand dunes
- A visit to the local cat Sanctuary - Panthera
- Whale watching or eco-tour marine trip





WESTERN CAPE ACTIVITIES!

- Cape Agulhas, the most southerly point of Africa, where the Indian Ocean and Atlantic Ocean officially meet. Here there is also the opportunity, if lucky, of feeding stingrays down at Struisbaai harbour.
- Wine tasting in Hermanus: Hermanus has its own wine route of boutique wineries in the aptly named, Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, which directly translates to "Heaven-and-Earth" Valley.
- Beer tasting at some of the local breweries. Craft beer breweries offers you a variety of ale and stout to taste.
- A visit to the Mother City of Cape Town, where a Smorgasbord of activities awaits you! Some of which include hiking Table Mountain/ Lions Head, visiting the Aquarium and V&A Waterfront, diving with seals, and much more.
- One of our sister towns, Bettys Bay, is home to a colony of African Penguins and the Harold Porter Botanical Gardens.
- If there are multiple no sea days in a row, volunteers can be taken along the Garden Route to the Garden Route Game Lodge where we will spend the night and do a game drive.
- Zip-lining through the mountains or through the tree-tops.
- Sky-diving in Cape Town, coming down with the view of table mountain and the ocean!
- Paragliding or abseiling off table mountain or signal hill.
- Safari at the Garden Route Game Lodge to see the Big 5!



WHAT TO PACK

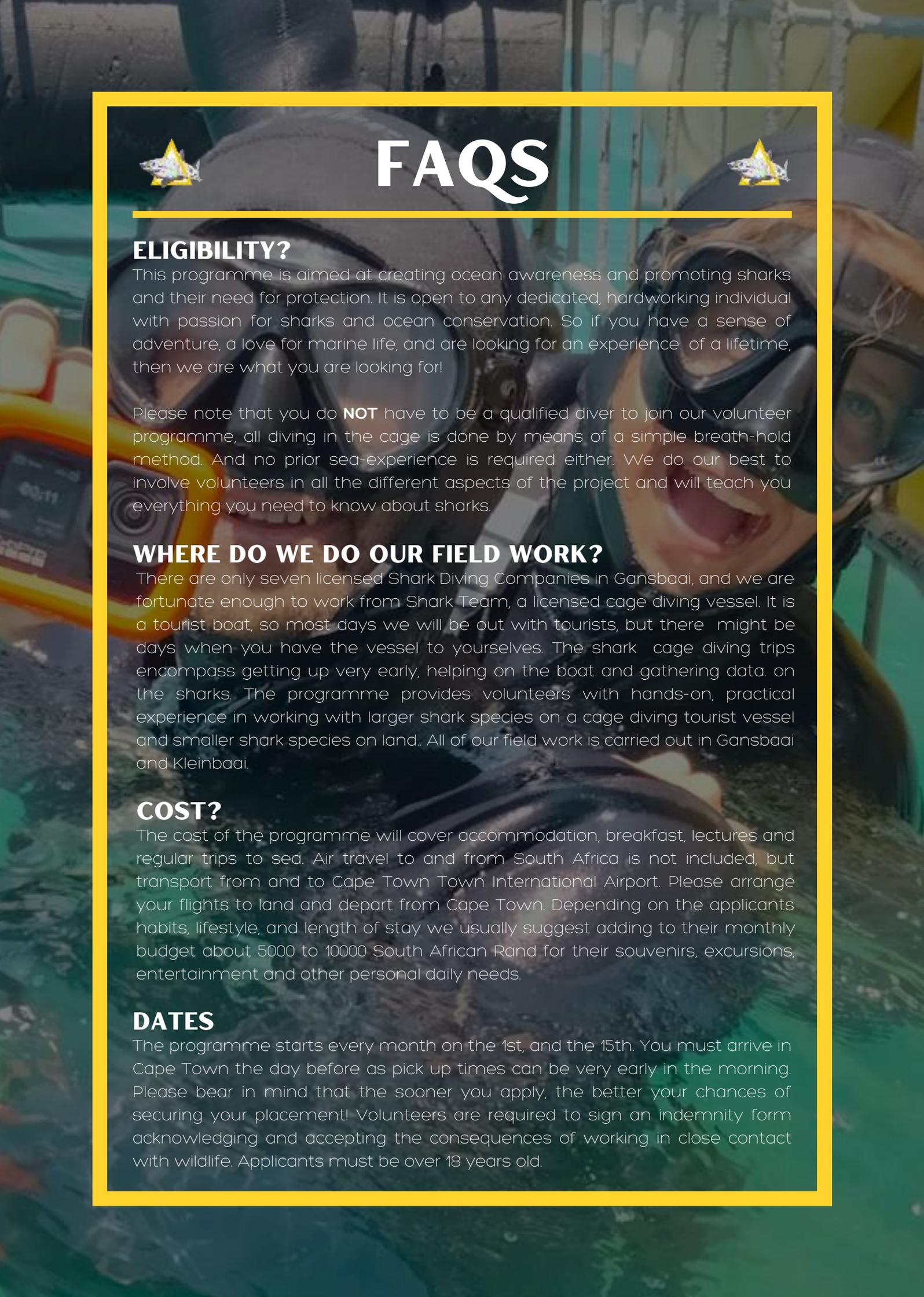
On arrival at the programme you will receive 2 volunteer T-shirts and a baseball cap and a bag to store your belongings. You also do not need to bring any dive equipment with you (unless you want to), we will provide masks, wet-suits, booties and weights for the cage.

The weather can be quite variable so we recommend you bring a range of clothes and layers for those cooler days. A set of waterproofs can also be recommended to help keep you dry. We do have jackets for you to rent whilst you are here to help keep you warm, please note that they are not 100% waterproof. We charge a R200.00 deposit for the jackets and laundry bag. When you return the jacket and laundry bag, we will re-reimburse your full R200.00.

Footwear on the boat is recommended - we have a selection of boots that volunteers have left that you are welcome to borrow or alternatively you can bring your own or purchase a pair here on arrival. Crocs and other waterproof shoes with a good grip are also an option.

The following is a guide of what you should bring with you:

- **Warm clothing - fleeces or warm jerseys - for the boat and those cooler evenings (especially important April-October)**
- **Windbreaker/waterproof jacket (if you don't want to rent ours)**
- **Trousers for the boat**
- **Short sleeved t-shirts and vests**
- **Base layers and thermal (April-October)**
- **Casual clothes for evenings and days off**
- **Sunglasses (polarised for being able to spot sharks)**
- **Sun cream is a must even on those overcast days out at sea**
- **Cap (all year round)**
- **Hat or beanie and scarf and gloves for May to October**
- **Swimsuit**
- **Towels**
- **Non-slip shoes**
- **Camera and/or GoPro**
- **Headtorch (for night field work and if you like to read at night!)**
- **Phone and charger**
- **Daily toiletries**
- **Insect repellent**
- **We work with 2 and 3 pin round plugs and do have a selection of adapters in the house, however we recommend that if you bring a variety of electronics to bring a suitable adapter for your country of origin**



FAQS

ELIGIBILITY?

This programme is aimed at creating ocean awareness and promoting sharks and their need for protection. It is open to any dedicated, hardworking individual with passion for sharks and ocean conservation. So if you have a sense of adventure, a love for marine life, and are looking for an experience of a lifetime, then we are what you are looking for!

Please note that you do **NOT** have to be a qualified diver to join our volunteer programme, all diving in the cage is done by means of a simple breath-hold method. And no prior sea-experience is required either. We do our best to involve volunteers in all the different aspects of the project and will teach you everything you need to know about sharks.

WHERE DO WE DO OUR FIELD WORK?

There are only seven licensed Shark Diving Companies in Gansbaai, and we are fortunate enough to work from Shark Team, a licensed cage diving vessel. It is a tourist boat, so most days we will be out with tourists, but there might be days when you have the vessel to yourselves. The shark cage diving trips encompass getting up very early, helping on the boat and gathering data on the sharks. The programme provides volunteers with hands-on, practical experience in working with larger shark species on a cage diving tourist vessel and smaller shark species on land. All of our field work is carried out in Gansbaai and Kleinbaai.

COST?

The cost of the programme will cover accommodation, breakfast, lectures and regular trips to sea. Air travel to and from South Africa is not included, but transport from and to Cape Town International Airport. Please arrange your flights to land and depart from Cape Town. Depending on the applicants habits, lifestyle, and length of stay we usually suggest adding to their monthly budget about 5000 to 10000 South African Rand for their souvenirs, excursions, entertainment and other personal daily needs.

DATES

The programme starts every month on the 1st, and the 15th. You must arrive in Cape Town the day before as pick up times can be very early in the morning. Please bear in mind that the sooner you apply, the better your chances of securing your placement! Volunteers are required to sign an indemnity form acknowledging and accepting the consequences of working in close contact with wildlife. Applicants must be over 18 years old.



FAQS



DO I NEED A VISA?

No. You will not be employed by us, nor paid. South Africa allows most travellers to receive a 3-month / 90 day Tourist / Visitor VISA upon entry. However, we do recommend that you contact the South African Embassy or Consulate and confirm that this is applicable to you. Do not leave this enquiry too late as if you need to apply for a visa, it can take some time. If your application period is for a period longer than three months, or if you plan to travel in South Africa prior or after your internship for a period extending 90 days, you will have to apply for a Tourist / Visitor VISA application.

DO I NEED INSURANCE?

Yes. When you are accepted onto this programme, you will have to sign liability, copyright documents, as well an agreement that you are knowingly partaking in a dangerous activity. You will not be covered for accidents or illnesses, so please organise your own medical and health insurances. You may apply for a normal travel insurance policy. Chances that you will be injured by a marine predator are non-existent if you follow the safety guidelines and do not try anything foolish which we would not approve anyway. However, you will be working on a boat in conditions which can, at times, be less than comfortable. Accidents on a boat may occur, so it is important to be covered in case of an emergency or accident. Be sure to have an insurance cover for your entire stay in South Africa.

DO I NEED ANY VACCINATIONS?

No, we are far from areas that suffer from malaria and there are no strange African diseases which you could pick up (that is if you respect the same safety rules as anywhere else in the world).

DO WE HAVE WEEKENDS OFF?

The weather along the Western Cape of South Africa is not stable, and the sea does not allow field work every day, your days off will therefore be 'no sea days'. On some of these days we do community work, on others we do lectures or data, and then some days we give you time off or a chance to do an excursion or another activity. If you wish to have a day off or take some time off if you are with us for a long stay, you are more than welcome and just need to co-ordinate with your supervisor at the project.

Bear in mind that Gansbaai is renowned for its sharks - NOT its night life!



R E S E A R C H

GREAT WHITE SHARK & BRONZE WHALER SHARK **MONITORING**

White Shark Projects was originally setup as a research organisation and therefore can boast a great white shark data set that goes back over three decades. As a volunteer onboard our boat, you will have the exciting yet important role of capturing size, sex, and behavioural data of our sharks. Throughout the years our dataset has been consistent and insightful into how different individual sharks behave, where they are seen and how many sightings occur throughout the years.

As well as capturing observational data on free-roaming great white sharks and bronze whaler sharks, we are also running a dorsal fin identification project. The dorsal fin of each great white shark is unique due to the notches on the trailing edge of the fin. We can therefore use this like a fingerprint and build a database of all the sharks we see.

On the boat you will assist our on-board marine biologist with capturing dorsal fin ID photographs. These photographs will be input in to our database of previously captured photographs, and compared using a software called IDENTIFIN. You will be taught how to take these photographs, how to edit them and how to match the photographs using IDENTIFIN. This allows us to see what sharks we have seen on our trips, how often they visit, whether we are seeing 'new' individuals and whether we are 'losing' individuals from the population. We are currently testing whether the same method can be used for bronze whaler sharks. This method also provides information which can assist with the estimation of South Africa's populations of both bronze whaler and great white sharks.

If you are interested in completing a research placement with White Shark Projects please email us to discuss your requirements at: volunteer@whitesharkprojects.co.za





R E S E A R C H

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE BIG GUYS!



There are over 100 species of shark around the South African coastline and many of them are endemic to South Africa, meaning they are only found here! Many of these species are small shyshark or catshark species that live in our in-shore kelp beds. The small sharks are just as important as the big sharks and many of these species are threatened or data deficient.

The National Plan of Action for South African sharks outlined the massive gaps currently present in baseline data of many of these smaller shark species. At White Shark Projects we currently run a tag and release programme to learn more about these species through capturing data on their size, sex, and taking photographs for identification purposes. We sometimes tag the sharks if they are appropriate size using traditional 'spaghetti' tags provided by the Oceanographic Research Institute (ORI). Our data also contributes to a national database compiled by ORI.

To collect the data, sharks are caught by hand whilst snorkelling in shallow kelp forests or using handlines from shore. Whilst here you will take part in our tagging programme and you will learn how to capture, handle, measure, tag, photograph and safely return the sharks. Don't worry, no prior experience is needed as you'll receive in-depth training from our team. ,





COMMUNITY

RECYCLE SWOP SHOP

In 2007 White Shark Projects set up a Recycle Swop Shop in the Masakhane neighbourhood of Gansbaai. Every Tuesday after school, at 2pm, our children bring their recyclable materials to us including paper, glass, and plastic items. When the children arrive, we weigh and check the items. In exchange we give them points which they can 'swop' for vital school supplies inside our shop. Other items that are available to them are clothes, games, basic food items, toys, toiletries, and various other donations that we receive. Once the children have chosen their items, they are given a cup of homemade soup before they leave as a reward for their hard work and dedication to keeping their environment clean.

This project not only promotes recycling but environmental awareness and trading and fostering habits of working for a benefit. The project installs self-pride and preservation and healthy and essential behaviours that make our children ambassadors to live cleaner and healthier lives. The volunteers and staff involved find it an enriching experience that helps bridge the gap between different cultures and communities. If you would like to bring a donation of books or games or whatever you like, it will be much appreciated.





COMMUNITY

BIRKENHEAD ANIMAL WELFARE CENTRE (BARC)

Birkenhead Animal Rehabilitation Centre is at the heart of the community in Gansbaai and is the only location where abandoned dogs and cats can be looked after. During your time as a White Shark Projects volunteer you will have the opportunity to assist at the shelter by walking the dogs and providing them (and the puppies and cats!) with some extra well-need TLC. Our voluntary visits to the shelter, which we try to do on a weekly basis, are often the only chance the dogs get to have a walk beyond the confines of the shelter.

White Shark Projects also sometimes hosts fundraising events throughout the year and regularly donate well needed supplies to the shelter. If you would like to bring any treats or useful things for animals with you to donate, you are more than welcome to do so.



CONSERVATION



PLASTIC FREE SEAS

At White Shark Projects we are passionate about creating a cleaner future for our seas. We are a zero waste, almost entirely plastic-free operation and proudly certified by Fair Trade Tourism.

As part of our volunteer programme you will assist us with regular beach cleans in Kleinbaai and the wider Gansbaai area. Sometimes we do these on our own, sometimes with children from our outreach projects and sometimes with the community. Through our outreach projects like the Butterfly Kids Children's Home, Ocean Defenders and Recycle Swap Shop you may also have the opportunity to get involved with outreach and education on ocean plastics. We also take part in locally organised upcycling and clean-up events with the wider community.





OCEAN DEFENDERS

Ocean Defenders Youth Club launched in 2019, and it gives local children from the Gansbaai community, the opportunity and support to learn about our planet and oceans through a variety of educational but fun activities. We are very excited that at last the Ocean Defenders Youth Club has been registered as a non-profit organisation in August 2021.

The students from the youth club have the opportunity to work hands on with our marine biologists and crew to learn directly the results of what marine and land pollution has on the environment. We do a variety of activities with them from beach clean ups, to presentations to arts and crafts. They are ambassadors in our community and aspiring biologists that want to learn and want to help in our struggle and fight for conservation and protection of our planet.

During your time with White Shark Projects you may have the chance to have the opportunity to get hands on experience in outreach and educations through our Ocean Defenders project.



Be an
OCEAN
DEFENDER

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INSTAGRAM

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