Conservation Internship Program

4-10 WEEK PROGRAM
Overview

This internship offers a rare opportunity to gain experience in three integral areas of wildlife conservation. The intern will become part of our expedition management team; we host adventure-conservation expeditions that make up the business branch of the Oana Nature Reserve and funds the reserve management. The intern will also join the reserve management team and gain first-hand experience in reserve management and re-wilding. Lastly, when possible, the intern will join the Oana Community Trust management team, this is our non-profit branch that engages with the local Nama community and the community-owned conservancies of the Namibian Deep South. You will also get involved in permaculture and sustainability-based projects on the reserve.
As an intern you will get to...

- Assist in carrying out wildlife research projects involving camera trapping, small mammal trapping, horned adder VHF tracking, brown hyena and leopard research, game counts, endemic Hartmann’s mountain zebra, mist netting for birds, burrowing ecosystem engineers, apex predators.

- Rewilding – when possible assist in reintroductions of ostrich, meerkat, grey rhebok, cheetah, giraffe, red hartebeest and blue wildebeest.

- Biodiversity surveying – assist in building knowledge on insects, reptiles, small mammals, birds and riverine wildlife in a highly understudied part of Africa with potential for new species.

- Reserve management & re-wilding – assist in removing invasive trees, interior fences, human infrastructure and scrap.

- Construction of sand dams and wildlife hides.

- Learn how to manage an expedition team and how to plan 3-day foot expeditions.

- Learn how to manage a tented base camp.

- Learn how to develop sustainable permaculture projects at the camps.

- Learn how to cook traditional Nama food and other traditional ecological skills.

- Dive into the arts box at base camp and paint or draw the endless landscapes.

- Beach volleyball, baseball, football all at base camp.

- 3-day foot expedition exploring 110,000 acres of African mountains and plains.

- 3-day river rafting expedition down the Orange River.

- Go fishing on the Orange River.

- Mountain bike along our purpose-built single tracks.

- Assist managing the expedition’s community-based projects in the village of Warmbad.

- Learn how to manage and maintain waterholes, tracks and fences – a crucial part of reserve management.

- Work alongside our Nama employees and learn their unique click language.

- Learn about car mechanics and, if possible, how to drive 4x4 off road.

- Meet the communities in the community-owned conservancies and become involved in the planning and implementation of wildlife and humanitarian-based projects.

- Meet and make many friends and enjoy the occasional party at base camp.

- Have exclusive access to an entire African wildlife reserve.
The Oana Nature Reserve is one of the most spectacular areas in the Namibian Deep South, a region of semi-desert broken up by the idyllic Orange River. Extending over 110,000 acres that includes 50km of Orange River frontage, the reserve was established by Ian Craig of Lewa Conservancy in Kenya and Pete Morkel, renowned wildlife vet, to provide a safe sanctuary for the critically endangered black rhino and to conserve a unique and specialised ecosystem in an area threatened by commercial farming heartland. The land is an ecotone that hosts both the Nama Karoo and Succulent Karoo biomes and the Namib Desert biome. Only 1% of the Nama Karoo is protected and the Succulent Karoo is one of the 25 biodiversity hotspots on earth. The terrain itself is a chaotic geological fusion of metamorphic and igneous mountain ranges, sandy and gravel plains, seasonal riverbeds and the Orange River that provides a kaleidoscopic landscape of colour and shapes.

Depending on the schedule for the week the intern will be staying in either our tented base camp or at our headquarters accommodation. Base camp has a Bedouin style with flushing loos, hot showers, a chef and is set at the base of our mountains with stunning views over the plains. Headquarters accommodation is a lovely house with flushing loos, hot showers and a self-catering kitchen. There is also a swimming pool and this accommodation makes a nice contrast with the more wild base camp.
Re-Wilding: The re-wilding program is split into two main concepts, land management and baseline research. Since the area was extensively farmed and trophy hunted the first phase of management is to gradually transition the land into its natural ecosystem. Efforts are being concentrated on eliminating all human infrastructure detrimental to wildlife, clearing scrap, removing old livestock fences and extracting alien plant species, reconstructing water points for wildlife and revitalising grassy plains.

We are conducting extensive biodiversity surveys on fauna and flora. The Deep South has received extremely limited scientific research and so we are continuously collecting exciting data, perhaps even identifying new species. This research will give us a clear idea of which species occur, population size, and distribution- essential preliminary information when establishing a conservation area prior to wildlife reintroductions and management strategy.

The intern will be heavily involved in all of these operations. We are starting to build another camp on the river and a subsistence farm and the intern can be involved in the construction of these two entities and in the subsequent management of the farm.

We are constantly developing permaculture projects at all of the accommodation locations and the intern is welcome to develop their own project.

Oana Community Trust (OCT) is our charity that operates independently of the reserve and Oana Namibia. OCT is engaging with the community-owned conservancies of the Namibian Deep South and our model is to work alongside the Nama communities and local authorities in a holistic fashion that looks to improve water, education, medical care, livelihoods, infrastructure, rangelands and wildlife.

We feel that by promoting wildlife as a valuable resource that can attract tourists and generate an income for the conservancies, we work to ensure there is a trickle-down effect to the crucial areas of improving a standard of living. Beyond these core areas we also strongly feel we can improve the quality of life that is less tangible, one that puts smiles on faces and gives youth a chance to enjoy and express themselves.

We do this through the creation of skate parks, outdoor education and through local traditional music. The intern will be involved in the development and implementation of these projects.
**Personal Project**

We are keen for each intern to come up with and develop a personal project. The project will be guided and overseen by Red and Andrea and must align with the conservation, community or marketing strategy at Oana.

There is total freedom and scope to design and be creative – whether it’s designing new mountain biking trails, developing a research project on a particular species, creating a plant press logbook, making a documentary- the options are endless!

**Fun & Travel**

We are located in a remote part of Africa where weekend trips are not available (don’t worry there will be plenty to keep you busy on the reserve!) but we are flexible if an intern is keen to head north for a safari during the internship, we are happy to offer advice on where to go and who to go with.

The intern is welcome to go on the rafting expeditions with the expedition teams, this trip is done with a 3rd party (Gravity Adventures) and prices can vary so we would let you know once we know when you would like to come.

We also do a trip to our neighbouring reserve, Sandfontein Reserve, where we track on foot some of Africa’s greatest megafauna.
OUR PROJECT FEE INCLUDES:

- Accommodation throughout your stay at headquarters and base camp.
- Meals cooked by our local chefs when you are staying at base camp.
- Transport to the supermarket will be available once a week to buy and cook your own food at your accommodation. Your main accommodation will be the research/intern house at headquarters which is equipped with a fully functioning kitchen.
- Upington Airport or Karasburg bus station pick-up and drop-off.
- Experienced and trained international and local staff who will live alongside you every day.
- A full induction and orientation and training before partaking in each project or activity.
- All necessary project equipment.
- Free Wifi (on a voucher-based system).
- Expedition medic on site.
- 1 Rafting expedition (if the river levels allow rafting to happen, the drought has caused expeditions to be cancelled).

OUR PROJECT FEE EXCLUDES:

- Flights
- Travel Insurance (must be fully comprehensive)
- Visa-related costs (tourist visa free for most nationalities)
- Trips and safaris outside Oana Nature Reserve.
- Soft drinks and alcohol from base camp bar (or buy your own at the supermarket).
- Food when living at HQ (80% of the time).

Dates and Rates

Applicants are welcome to start their internship at any point between the 15th March and October 10th, our season ends November 30th.

2020 please enquire directly for costs.