

1 **Animal Welfare**

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A Lion of Tsavo at the Taita Rukinga Wildlife Conservancy

Research Cross River Gorillas

On the Trail of the Great Apes

Lebialem Highlands, Cameroon

CAMEROON, A COUNTRY THAT'S NESTLED AMONG SIX OTHERS, CONTAINS SHARP JUXTAPOSITIONS that comprise much of Africa: The Sahara and the sea, extreme heat, and more moderate climates. About 200 ethnic groups live in environments ranging from rural tribes to modern cities. It's hard to be bored here.

Your accommodations won't be swanky—two-person tents in rough terrain (no bathrooms), simple foods, and high heat and humidity—but compared to the gorillas and chimpanzees you'll be watching, you'll be living like royalty. The destruction of the apes' habitat is their biggest threat, even greater than the illegal bushmeat trade. The development of wildlands into farms and plantations and the numerous roads for local transport and logging cut the primates' ranges down to an uninhabitable patchwork, endangering both Cross River gorillas and Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzees.

Locals are now beginning to understand the value of conservation and recognize the apes—once viewed as a nuisance species that raided crops—as an endangered species vital to the region's web of life. Part of the challenge here is educating indigenous tribes and developing a wildlife preserve. The primary focus is to survey and record the habits of the remaining 250 to 300 apes. You'll work with local scientific staff and live among the tribes, meeting with the kings and chiefs, teachers and children who call the African rainforest home.

Your life will be a nomadic one, breaking camp each day to move to the next site (with the help of field guides and porters). You'll cover steep ground, sometimes

making for extreme hiking and trekking, as you follow family bands of gorillas and chimps. You'll look for animals and nest sites, signs of feeding and habitat, and you'll photograph and note GPS coordinates. You'll encounter other endangered primates and hundreds of bird species and other wildlife. English is the project language, and you'll receive field training in scientific survey techniques and GPS tracking and mapping.

YOUR NEXT STEP: **Global Vision International** (☎ 888/653-6028; www.gviusa.com). This 2-week project, US\$1,990, includes meals, tent accommodations (without bathrooms/plumbing), project training and support, and side trips to a wildlife rehabilitation center.

DON'T MISS: More so than many African nations, Cameroon has a high percentage of land devoted to national parks, and wildlife still outnumbers human visitors. **Boubaandjidda National Park** covers 544,000 acres (220,150ha) and is Cameroon's largest and most remote park, located along the Chad border. It is home to roaming lions, rare black rhinoceros, and dinosaur fossils.

📍 www.ambacam-usa.org

Study Madagascar Fossa

Exploring a Protected African Forest

Mahajanga, Madagascar

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A CHALLENGE OF MAN VERSUS BEAST AND WANT A TRULY DIFFERENT experience, the rare, difficult fossa, which lives in a part of the world known for its indigenous, unusual species, may very well be your match.

The 333,592 acres (135,000ha) of the Ankarafantsika Protected Areas Complex is one of the last and largest tracts of dry deciduous forest on the island of Madagascar. It's ironic that the mysterious fossa, which inhabits the park, has only 7% of its original habitat remaining. The fossa is a species similar to the mongoose, native only to Madagascar, and is in rapid decline. Deforestation and hunting threatens this endangered species and several others in the region. Your team, led by the premier research scientist of fossa, will monitor them, but it won't be easy. Fossa are extremely rare, predominantly nocturnal, and quick.

You'll hike for miles each day, set humane traps for the elusive creatures, use radio-tracking transmitters/receivers to keep tabs on study cases, and measure and record data on captured subjects. Monitoring the habits of this rare species will help in future conservation efforts. Madagascar's iconic lemur will be easier to spot than your target species (the fossa is actually a predator of the lemur), and you'll see plenty of other wildlife throughout the national park in the island's north-west sector.

You'll be immersed in the forest landscape, with free time to explore from your tented research station and base camp.



Releasing a fossa into a protected area

ANIMAL WELFARE

Precious woods (often poached) and orchids, as well as prehistoric-seeming giant Baobab trees, are the walls of your world for these two weeks.

Camp life between research sojourns is easygoing. Evenings are often spent sharing festivities, music, and meals at the nearby village and neighboring women's cooperative.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Earthwatch  800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org. This 13-day expedition, US\$2,550, includes tented research station accommodations,

meals prepared by a local cook, and full project support. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

DON'T MISS: To get a sense of local customs on a grand scale, visit the incredibly evocative ruined temples of **Ambohimanga**. It is historically and religiously significant to the people, and was the birthplace of the state. The *Indiana Jones*-like citadel's main gate is an enormous stone disc; 40 men were needed to roll it into position.

 www.tourisme.gov.mg

Surveying Wildlife

3

Elephant Conservation

Tracking the Giants

Damaraland, Namibia

YOU'RE IN BUSHMAN COUNTRY, SO IF AT THE END OF THE DAY YOU HAVEN'T HAD ENOUGH interaction with African culture, you can see the famous White Lady painting, along with the petrified forest, believed to be millions of years old, and massive, massive rocks waiting to be admired—or climbed.

Thanks to diligent conservation practices, Namibia is one of the only countries in the world where the elephant population is growing. In the northwest open area inland from the Skeleton Coast, desert-adapted animals like black rhino, giraffe, baboon, lion, leopard, cheetah, and black-backed jackal also thrive. Subsistence farmers have also moved into the area in the recent past, however, and competition for scarce water and grazing causes direct conflict between people (and their domesticated herds of cattle, goats, and sheep) and the herds of elephant.

You'll patrol via a 4x4 vehicle and on foot, spending days bush tracking and collecting data from identified herds of desert-roaming elephants. You'll also put in time improving the superstructure around rare water sources with fencing and walls that limit (but don't eliminate) free access by the elephants. You don't need any

special training but will quickly gain a skill set that has you comfortable approaching enormous and often dangerous animals on foot, as well as camp craft, scientific recording, navigation, GPS tracking, and compiling identification kits on individual elephants and herd groups.

This is wide-open land without a power grid, so when you sleep under the stars (with mosquito netting) at a different campsite each night, you'll really appreciate the lonesome beauty of the African night sky. Farmers and shepherds are nomads, so cities and even villages of any size are unseen here—your team (including wildlife experts and support staff) will be truly on its own. You'll come home with survival skills and a renewed connection with nature after working to support the re-emergence of the Damaraland elephants.

4 SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION

YOUR NEXT STEP: Twin Work & Volunteer Abroad (☎ 800/80 483 80; www.workandvolunteer.com). This 2-week project, US\$2,240, includes meals prepared collectively over an open fire, accommodations in tents or under open sky at mobile campsites (with Bushman showers/drop toilets), tracking, training, and full project support. **Global Vision International** (☎ 888/653 6028; www.gvi.co.uk) does a similar 2-week Namibian elephant project, US\$1,200, including camping and meals, project training and support, as

well as project time spent building structures in the community.

DON'T MISS: In the Damaraland region, you'll find **Twyfelfontein**, home to more than 2,500 San (Bushman) prehistoric rock engravings. Their 6,000-year-old secrets are not entirely unlocked, lending—along with the charred nearby landscape of volcanic debris known as **Burnt Mountain**—an eerie air of mystery to this arid land.

📍 www.namibiaturism.com.na

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Surveying Wildlife

Sea Turtle Conservation

Standing Watch Amid Volcanoes & Rainforests

Chacocente Wildlife Refuge, Nicaragua

SURROUNDED BY MESMERIZING VOLCANIC LANDSCAPES, YOU'LL WORK WITH CONSERVATIONISTS from sun up to sun down to study several species of threatened sea turtles. Later, head north to León, the country's intellectual capital, to explore the rich cultural side of Nicaragua.

Many eco-zones in the Southern Hemisphere have one or two species of sea turtle that come ashore to lay eggs each year, thus beginning one of the most perilous journeys on Earth. Farther north, Nicaragua is home to five species (of seven worldwide), all in the shadow of volcanic landscapes filled with fragile and endangered species. Sea turtles in particular are poached for meat and eggs, making them highly endangered. Basecamp International is partnering with Fauna & Flora, a charity working to conserve threatened ecosystems and species worldwide, for this project at the enormous Chacocente Wildlife Refuge on Nicaragua's Pacific coast.

You'll support the scientific staff by following up on field investigations and doing conservation and restoration programs, flora and fauna management, and data collection. While your focus will be broad and have you studying and recording the diet, nesting, migration, and social patterns of

many species, a particular weight is given to sea turtles. You'll have your fair share of days devoted to monkeys, birds, and reptiles as well, but when sea turtles arrive, it's all hands on deck (or on beach).

From the beach you move inland to a stretch of mangroves that give way to wetlands and eventually a lush forest that climbs the sides of the volcano. Each band of habitat has its own cast of plant and animal characters, many of them in trouble.

You'll be thoroughly trained in Spanish language and the rural culture upon arrival to make your work flow smoothly. Training also includes techniques to conduct biodiversity surveys, aid in turtle monitoring and beach patrols (with some time at the hatchery and—if your timing is right—a nighttime release), and compile species inventories of mammals, birds, and butterflies. Awareness-raising work also needs to be done with the local indigenous people, providing environmental education that stresses the rational use of resources and

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shows the outcome of indiscriminate foraging of wildlife.

You'll be based in a communal tent camp where everyone pitches in to cook over an open fire (and gather firewood), and you'll bathe in a waterfall. This is a multifaceted project, so it's only fitting that your free time be just as diverse. Camp life is mellow, but you'll have opportunities (with a fee for local adventure providers) to horseback ride, take cultural tours, and strap an old snowboard onto your hiking boots and go volcano surfing down the slopes.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Basecamp International (📞 866/646-4693; www.basecampcenters.com). A 4-week project

(longer available), US\$1,715, includes tent camp accommodations, communally prepared meals, airport transfer, comprehensive project training and materials, a week of culture and language orientation, and 24-hour support.

DON'T MISS: After working hard and roughing it in a completely remote forest zone, you'll likely want a change of scenery. Head north of León to the **Hervideros de San Jacinto**, a lunar-like (or at least boiling-moon-of-Mercury-like) collection of natural sulfuric hot springs and boiling mud baths fed by an underground river and heated by the Telica volcano.

📍 www.visitanicaragua.com

Surveying Wildlife

5

Wet & Wild Amazon

Following Pink Dolphins and Giant River Otters

Iquitos, Peru

THE AMAZON IS AN AMAZING PLACE, AND IQUITOS, AS A JUNGLE CITY, IS NO EXCEPTION. THIS large, isolated tropical center is the jumping-off point for rainforest exploration.

You'll spend a little more than 2 weeks living aboard a riverboat on the mighty Amazon, the world's largest river. This rainforest zone is home to more species of plant and animals than science has been able to count, and some of the most charismatic are unique to the area. The mythology-laden pink dolphin (yes, they are blush-colored) and entertainingly playful giant river otters (who can grow nearly 6 ft./2m long) are some of the most well known, and they are surrounded by monkeys, turtles, fish (including piranha), macaws, and hundreds more.

Your vintage rubber-boom-era riverboat will be a moving home base in the remote Lago Preto and Pacaya Samiria Reserve regions near the headwaters of the Amazon. You'll set out daily via motorized canoe to conduct surveys of the river

dolphins (both pink and gray), manatees, otters, fish, caiman, and river turtles. Other times you'll be land-based on a hike to survey macaws, peccaries, tapirs, deer, monkeys, and game birds. This rarely penetrated eco-zone still has a thriving population of wildlife, but your efforts are needed to keep it that way. Farther along the huge chocolate-brown river, hunting, the illegal timber trade, and the exotic pet trade have all helped decimate the wildlife. It is an uphill battle to keep this region pristine and healthy, aided by the study findings of your team.

Your three-level restored riverboat has a bathroom/shower in each cabin, as well as air-conditioning, and when the boat is underway (often at night for repositioning), you'll relax in the library, watch films, or hang out on deck. The hum of the

6 AMAZON RAINFOREST CONSERVATION




Surveying along the Amazon River

motors will easily lull you to sleep for a siesta between the morning and dusk research ventures (as well as night surveys for caiman, bats, and other nocturnal species). You'll also meet and socialize with indigenous people from riverside villages you'll stop at along the way.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Earthwatch  (☎ 800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org). This 16-day expedition, US\$4,150, includes meals, project training, and full support. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

DON'T MISS: You'll fly into **Iquitos** to meet the boat, and may want to spend a couple of days before or after the expedition in this completely isolated city (accessible only by air or river) and its mélange of architecture, including an improbable metal-clad building by Gustav Eiffel.

 www.visitperu.com

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Surveying Wildlife

Amazon Rainforest Conservation *Living & Learning at a Wildlife Preserve*

Madre de Dios, Peru

YOU'LL GAIN A TRULY COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF THE AMAZON'S ECOSYSTEM WITH THIS program, where you can study the flora, fauna, and birds in the southeastern part of Peru.

The Amazon is the largest river in the world, surrounded by some of the most biodiverse rainforest. This jungle remains remote, and tribal life along the banks of the mighty river and her tributaries has undergone few changes through the years. More bird and insect species can be found here than almost any region in the world, and plant variety is unmatched. Several projects surveying and recording jungle life await you in this verdant playground.

You'll live and work in the thatched-roof conservation center, and you'll get on-the-job training with conservationists. You might spend one day cutting new paths in

the jungle, the next doing population studies and surveying salt licks where thousands of macaws roost, and then move on to mammal observation at mud pits used as footprint/track recording sites. There are species here that have never been recorded. You'll be monitoring and recording data on several categories of flora and fauna, ranging from jaguar and puma to tarantulas and tortoises. Some of the land in the 1,500-acre (607-ha) reserve is untouched and some has been cut back for farming in the past; it is from comparative study of the old and new forest that scientists are learning about the effects of

ANIMAL WELFARE

humans on biodiversity, and the rainforest's potential for regeneration.

While the days are full, nights are spent relaxing around the center, where you'll sleep in open-walled buildings above the labs and common rooms. A waterfall nearby is a welcome respite (especially since there is no hot water at the center), and the evenings are lit by candlelight because the generator runs only a few hours each day. English is spoken at the center, and local team members will be eager to practice, so getting to use your Spanish skills might be tough (and is not required).

YOUR NEXT STEP: Travellers Worldwide (☎ +44/1903 502595; www.travellersworldwide.com). A 2-week project (longer

assignments available), £995 includes three communal meals daily, accommodations in the group lodge with shared bath (cold water) in a separate building, full project support and training, and airport transfers to/from Cusco (9–10 hours on a bumpy, unpaved road, then a final river crossing by boat).

DON'T MISS: The city from which you'll arrive and depart is **Cusco**, the Incan "navel of the universe" and home of the gods. The colonial churches, cathedral, and manor houses, as well as Inca Empire historical sites like the fortress **Sacsayhuaman**, can fill an additional several days of exploring before or after your volunteer project.

(i) www.visitperu.com

Surveying Wildlife

7

Mkhuze Game Reserve Project

Tracking Big Game

KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

PEOPLE PAY THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS FOR A GUIDED SOUTH AFRICA SAFARI VACATION, complete with game drives. But for a fraction of that cost you will contribute labor and get a coveted perspective—really learning about the animals in their habitat.

KwaZulu-Natal, the nation's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, is one of the most famous game regions in all of Africa. Join this project for 3 weeks and you'll be part of an important research team monitoring endangered or threatened species, including cheetah, leopard, white and black rhino, elephant, buffalo, and wild dog.

The Mkhuze Game Reserve is inside KwaZulu Natal, off the beaten tourist track, and the nearly 100,000 acres will be your headquarters and home. You'll find a revered and protected area little changed since 1912, with a wide array of natural habitats, including mountains, savannah, swamps, woodlands, sand forest, and river forest. The work, environment, and target species you'll study—as well as all

the other species that thrive here (hippo, crocodile, fish eagles, pelicans, wildebeest, warthog, hyena, and loads of hoofed animals)—make it impossible to be bored. You'll learn to track the target species visually, sometimes using radio telemetry, then photograph and record data about their movements, behaviors, numbers, and more. Each day's work brings the important endangered species research into sharper focus. There may also be the opportunity to up your adrenaline levels even higher and assist in the capture, radio collaring, and reintroduction of various large species.

Each day will be divided between morning and evening work shifts, with a long stretch of afternoon unscheduled for

8 ELEPHANT CONSERVATION PROJECT

exploration, swimming, and relaxation or napping. You'll be surprised at how well you'll sleep in the thatched-roof staff accommodations, exhausted from your active day in the South African sun, gaining a more intimate understanding and closer access to priority species than any commercial safari can give you—all while helping ensure the survival of these wild animals.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Travellers Worldwide (☎ +44/1903 502595; www.travellersworldwide.com). This 3-week assignment,

£1,545, includes housing in lodge staff quarters, communally prepared meals, full project support and training, and airport transfers.

DON'T MISS: After your stay in the heat of Africa's wildlife park zone, a little foray at the beach is just what you'll need. You're close to the town of **St. Lucia** and its beaches, boat excursions, and whale watching. **Sodwana Bay**, one of Southern Africa's best scuba diving sites, is also in the area.

(i) www.southafrica.net

8

Surveying Wildlife

Elephant Conservation Project

Protecting Endangered Pachyderms

Matale District, Sri Lanka

YOU'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE A GROUNDBREAKING EFFORT IN THE CENTRAL PART OF THIS SMALL island, helping to alleviate the plight of elephants whose numbers are dwindling. In your spare time, explore one of the island's many spice gardens, which showcase the country's specialties, including vanilla, cinnamon, and cardamom.

You'll join forces with the Sri Lankan Wildlife Conservation Society to catalog and conduct surveys in several elephant roaming zones. Watering holes, grassy plains, and forests are habitat for the endangered pachyderms—less than 3,500 wild elephants remain in Sri Lanka. Your fieldwork will inform sustainable conservation programs and projects intended to resolve conflicts between humans and elephants. As a bonus, you'll also be part of the groundwork to establish the first Trans-Climactic Zone National Park in Sri Lanka.

The threats to the elephants include ivory poaching, loss and fragmentation of habitat, and degradation of living zones from human pollution and development.

A lack of electricity at camp means you'll rough it in your new digs at the field base station. Solar-powered lights beat back the darkness for a little while, but make no mistake, you're in the wilds of this enchanting Asian island. In the morning, you'll hop on a bike or hike to research outposts in order to collect data, interview locals about elephant crop raiding, and assess elephant damage. Your afternoons will be spent relaxing, except on days when you'll be assigned to do an elephant observation run in the jeeps, watching and recording social interactions and ranging patterns. Some nights you'll do nocturnal investigations and surveys, based in a tree hut.



Endangered wild elephants of Sri Lanka

YOUR NEXT STEP: Global Vision International (☎ 888/653-6028; www.gviusa.com). The 2-week project, US\$1,470, includes housing in a basic field station (with shared kitchen and cold water plumbing), meals, project transportation, training, and support.

DON'T MISS: One of the most vibrant export industries of Sri Lanka is tea, so a

visit to the iconic town of **Nuwara Eliya** in the heart of the tea zone is a great side trip. It is a study in opposites, as British-style Georgian and Queen Anne homes, with hedgerows and gardens, are side by side tiny homesteader shelters and miles of hillside tea crops in this foggy, serene retreat.

📍 www.srilankatourism.org

Surveying Wildlife

9

Swimming with Sharks (and Rays)

Conservation on the California Coast

Monterey, California, USA

WINE COUNTRY IS JUST BEYOND YOUR DOOR—OR DOCK, AS THE CASE MAY BE—AND THE Pacific Coast Highway makes for some stunning scenic driving. If that isn't enough to entice you, San Francisco should provide plenty to see once your marine work is finished.

The coast of Central California is one of the most beautiful seashores in the world, and Monterey Bay is home to a wide array of ocean animals. Surfers know only too well that sharks are no strangers here. You'll

study seven species of sharks and rays on this project: leopard sharks, gray and brown smooth-hound sharks, bat rays, thornback rays, shovelnose guitarfish, and round stingrays. In the mid-20th century,

oyster fishermen in nearby Moss Landing, in an ill-founded attempt to eliminate the predators of their bivalve crops, killed off hundreds of sharks and rays—using tools like pitchforks, shotguns, and dynamite. The vagaries of nature, habitat changes, and natural ebb and flow of species was to blame, not predators, so despite the hunt, the oyster population collapsed. In the last several decades the shark and ray populations have been protected. The study of the recovery of these seven populations is an indicator of the general health of the bay.

You'll spend most of the day in a wet-suit, setting nets in the bay and open waters to capture, measure, record, and tag the animals before releasing them back into the water. When you have specimens in the nets, the research team will teach you how to determine species, gender, whether they've been previously tagged, and perhaps fit some with radio transmitters. A tiny fin clipping for DNA typing might be taken (not harming the animal). You'll learn how to input all the data you've collected in the field—broadening the scientific knowledge about why some species are recovering while others are lagging—and perhaps begin to see patterns that will illuminate the reasons why. You'll work part-time from small boats and the remainder from the shoreline and tidal salt marshes.

Pajaro Dunes, a relaxing holiday community of shoreline beach houses and condos, is home for the next 10 days. You'll share a four-bedroom house with

the rest of the volunteer team, enjoying evenings by the fireplace, DVD player, and high-speed Internet. The project staff comes in and prepares meals for you, and you'll pack a lunch to eat on the fly between your scientific duties. During free time, enjoy excellent kayaking and hiking right out your back door or head into Monterey to Cannery Row for restaurants, pubs, and galleries or to walk the breezy streets of the city before returning to fall asleep to the sound of the waves hitting the beach.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Earthwatch  (☎ 800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org). This 10-day project, US\$2,650, includes beach house accommodations, meals prepared by staff, field training, local transportation, and support. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

DON'T MISS: At the northern end of Monterey Bay is the city of **Santa Cruz**, vying for the title of Surf City and secure in its reputation as the most laid-back of beach towns. The beach boardwalk amusement park has one of the nation's oldest wooden roller coasters, the nearby redwood forests are a dreamlike journey among ferns and the towering giants, and the downtown is full of great dining, bookstores, coffee houses, drum circles, street musicians, farmers' markets, and colorful locals.

 www.seemonterey.com

10

Surveying Wildlife

Bats, Birds & Small Wildlife

Monitoring & Planning on the Savannah

Swaziland

THIS SMALL BUT FRIENDLY AFRICAN COUNTRY CAN BE A QUICK STOP IF YOU'RE MOVING through South Africa to Mozambique, but there's lots worth sticking around for. Check out the Ezulwini and Malkerns Valleys; the former is home to the country's royalty and the latter is worth investigating for handicrafts.

ANIMAL WELFARE

When you think of African wildlife, the big beasts—lions and leopards and elephants—come to mind. But the sharp blade of endangerment cuts in all directions, and smaller species of birds and mammals are equally threatened, often more so, from encroaching human development and degradation of their habitat. Swaziland itself is lesser known than other African nations; still true in many ways to their traditions and uncomplicated lifestyle, the Swazi people's harmony with the environment makes them particularly dedicated to its preservation. You'll work with project experts on monitoring several species: night drives searching for nocturnal hunters; day transect parties where you'll methodically cover a grid pattern to study fauna and search for nests, roosts, and dens of birds and small mammals; searching for evidence of large raptor hunting and the nests of threatened birds; weighing, measuring, and ring-tagging young birds for future study before release; putting up nets and harp traps for study subjects; and monitoring already-tagged subjects with GPS tracking devices. All of this helps to paint an accurate picture of the health of individual species and their interdependence within the ecosystem.

Your work will help create a conservation plan for the region and the locals, who are growing more aware each day of the work that must be done. This is a society with strong ties to the land and traditional ways. You'll be part of a village life that will seem quite unfamiliar: plenty of witch doctors practice in this monarchy; tribal gatherings and feasts are full of dancing and competition between bands of warriors;

and if your timing is right, you may be here for the annual "reed dance" festival in August or September or the Inewala ceremony in late December or early January. (Keep in mind that the project has needs throughout the year.)

Base camp is in rustic cottages or small tents within the national park. There is no electricity, but you won't miss it as you quickly settle into a simple rhythm during your 4 weeks on the project. In your free time, you may want to take advantage of tour options nearby, including white-water rafting, mountain biking, and horseback riding, but the wildlife access right outside of camp is spectacular enough to keep you exploring and discovering new things every day.

YOUR NEXT STEP: The Society for Environmental Exploration (**Frontier**) ☎ **+44/20 7613 2422**; www.frontier.ac.uk). This 4-week project, £1,695, includes camp accommodations (basic cottage or tent), three meals daily, airport transfers, local orientation and project training, and 24-hour support.

DON'T MISS: After all that fresh air and outdoor living, get down to the root of Swaziland with a **cave excursion**. Speleological trips into the mountainside are half-day adventures, with several hours spent underground in the caverns and winding narrow passageways inside the Mdzimba Mountains. Isn't that the whole reason you got so familiar with bats on the project?

📍 www.welcometoswaziland.com

Wildlife Conservation Adventure

A PhD in Big Game

Kilombero Valley, Tanzania

THE LARGE ANIMALS ARE WHAT WILL BRING YOU HERE FOR WORK, BUT THIS SECOND-LARGEST wetland in East Africa is also known as an important bird area, its habitat crucial to the conservation of global bird populations.

In partnership with the University of Dar es Salaam, this project is all about the big animals: elephant, leopard, lion, hippo, and buffalo. This wide savannah on the Kilombero floodplains is home to a web of wildlife and tribal village outposts. The once-plentiful mammal populations in this region are currently in decline (in part because human populations are on the increase). You'll be surveying and monitoring these shrinking communities, learning bush-tracking techniques, and condensing all the data you record into usable reports that will help to bring attention and awareness to the international scientific and conservation communities about the

pending crisis. Habitat and conservation plans are dependent upon this research, and the effort to find a delicate, symbiotic, and balanced relationship between man and beast is finally being prioritized.

The end result of your fieldwork will be wildlife pattern mapping and species distribution, recording levels of habitat disturbance, and creating survey reports on species large and small. Larger predators follow the patterns of their food sources, so some of your work will be setting up bucket and canopy-net traps for the study of smaller mammals, frogs, bats, and insects. For the big fellas, you'll set up camera traps, sand pits for tracks, and



Studying a spider in Tanzania

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your own visual sightings. This work will be by day and by night, with afternoon downtime for rest—just like the animals on the savannah.

Camp life among your fellow volunteers, research professionals, game trackers, and wildlife guards is easy and simple. The campfire provides the main gathering spot, a waterfall plunges into your swimming hole for exercise and bathing, and card games and chess tournaments provide the wild nightlife. A few songs, a few games, some time being hypnotized by glowing embers and millions of stars, and you'll drift off to bed. On the nights when local tribes invite you to a feast or festival, it will be exhausting after so much quiet repose.

YOUR NEXT STEP: The Society for Environmental Exploration (Frontier) (☎ +44/20 7613 2422; www.frontier.ac.uk). This 3-week project, £1,095, includes remote African bush camping in a large, communal *banda* (bungalow) and sleeping on raised bamboo platforms, two meals daily, in-country ground transport, local orientation and project training, and 24-hour support.

DON'T MISS: The name Tanzania comes from the combination of *Tanganyika* and *Zanzibar*, so a jaunt to **Zanzibar**, the spice island, and scuba diving amid the shipwrecks and large coral reef off the eastern coast, is a great way to wash off the dust of the savannah.

📍 www.tanzaniatouristboard.com

Rescue & Protection

12

River Dolphin Study

Dolphin Research, Houseboat Living

Mamirauá, Brazil

DOLPHINS THAT LIVE IN A RIVER? JUST ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE DIVERSITY AND UNEXPECTED mysteries to be found in the mighty Amazon River. Studying these amazing creatures is one part of a larger effort to ensure sustainability of both the ecosystem and tourism.

Your base is a floating house tethered to fallen trees in the flooded Amazon forest of Brazil. From here you'll aid the tireless efforts of the Mamirauá Institute for Sustainable Development. A small skiff will motor your team along rarely accessed tributaries and black water lakes, in search of the Amazon's rare pink dolphins. The legendary dolphins are believed to have the power to transform into beautiful young men who come into villages and charm away the loveliest girls. They are a protected species from hunting, but that doesn't put an end to the degradation of the river habitat they call home. Gill nets, construction, mercury-laden gold mines, and small inlet dams threaten their survival a little more each day.

This reserve area is a bountiful wildlife region overflowing with flora and fauna, much of it unique to this location. Research on the dolphins (both pink and gray) includes tracking new births and calf development (you haven't seen cute until you've seen a baby pink dolphin frolicking in glassy water). The growth cycle of young and adult dolphins is also monitored, as is group movement and interactive behavior. This research work is depended upon by dolphin projects around the world, contributing to the health and protection of many species.

You'll venture out with alternating morning or afternoon teams each day for a full 5 to 7 hours of field study and tracking on the water. Your off-duty hours will



Searching for pink dolphins

likely be spent resting, as the heat and hard work can drain you. Life on the floating house is simple but comfortable, with hammocks or beds, solar power, and basic bathroom and kitchen facilities. The quiet of the area (aside from the usual sunrise and dusk din of birds and insects waking and growing more active) is like a lullaby, and while you can spend free time hiking or paddling the calm waters, chances are you'll swing in a hammock and cat nap.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Global Vision International (☎ 888/653-6028; www.gviusa.com).

This 2-week project, US\$2,690, includes accommodations in the floating base station, shared meals, scientific and field training, project transportation, and support from the field team.

DON'T MISS: After being immersed among the trees, get above the canopy with an **Amazon Air Tour**. Board a Cessna hydroplane that takes off right from the water's surface, then gives you an aerial view of the flooded forest, Meeting of the Waters, and **Manaus** city. www.amazonatravel.com.br

(i) www.turismo.gov.br

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Rescue & Protection

Giant Panda Conservation

Nurturing the Bears in a Mountain Forest

Ya'an City, China

OTHER THAN ITS FAMOUS BEAR RESIDENTS, THIS MOUNTAINOUS AREA IS KNOWN AS THE starting point of the Sichuan-Tibet stretch of the historic Tea-Horse Road. The city is one of the places where tea culture got its start; don't miss a trip to its markets to purchase some of the amazing blends available here.

ANIMAL WELFARE

In 2003, in an effort to help the giant panda (one of the planet's most endangered species and a symbol of goodwill for the Chinese nation), the Befengxia Panda Base opened as part of the world's largest giant panda migration. In 2008, a devastating earthquake struck the Sichuan Province of China and did extensive damage to a sister panda base in Wolong, making Befengxia China's most important panda protection program. Befengxia's natural landscape is beautiful, with waterfalls, forest, rolling rivers, and expansive grounds covering almost 15,000 acres (6,070ha). Whenever possible, after training in this wild but protected zone, feral pandas are returned to free-range environments.

Six kinds of bamboo grow here, and more than 80% of the habitat is covered in vegetation, so it is panda paradise. More than 20 spots in the broadleaf-shaded grounds have been set aside for panda-related activities—including dedicated grazing grounds, “kindergartens” for young pandas, and a panda hospital/nursery/research institute—and you rotate from one to the next.

During your time in this mountain getaway where you'll live in a hostel within

the base habitat, you'll be trained in the care of pandas and might be asked to do a range of tasks, from cleaning enclosures, preparing their vegetarian diet, gathering and recording behavioral data, and the part you'll talk about most when you get home: interacting with the adult and baby pandas.

YOUR NEXT STEP: WLS International (☎ +44/870 479 5145; www.gapyearinasia.com). One- or two-week assignments, US\$795 to US\$1,150, include basic hostel accommodations at the project site, breakfasts (other meals on your own), airport transfers, local transportation, and a volunteering fee paid for direct support of the project.

DON'T MISS: The 230-ft.-high (70-m) **Leshan Giant Buddha** was carved from the side of a mountain to calm the turbulent waters. He sits facing Mount Emei, with visitors gathering at his feet, clearly understanding the local saying “The mountain is a Buddha and the Buddha is a mountain.”

📍 www.cnto.org

Rescue & Protection

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Animal Rescue & Care Program *Touring, Aid & Yoga in India's Pink City*

Jaipur, India

JAIPUR IS INDIA'S FIRST CITY TO BENEFIT FROM SOME CAREFUL URBAN PLANNING, PROTECTED by high walls and bisected by straight, wide avenues. In your time off from working with animals, you'll want to explore the city, shopping for brassware, rugs, linens, and other crafts.

Life can be tough for the economically disadvantaged in and around Jaipur, and the ever-growing population faces daily troubles with hunger and disease. Unfortunately, families that once had space and food for pets are frequently forced by circumstance to turn these animals out to fend for themselves. Add to this already unhappy equation a lack of affordable

access to spay-neuter programs and you have a burgeoning population of street animals suffering neglect, disease, and mistreatment. You'll contribute by helping treat sick animals, vaccinating the healthy, and working to sterilize strays to curtail the unhealthy population expansion.

Your efforts won't be restricted to veterinary pursuits, as very valuable project

time will be spent helping place animals in happy homes and working on community awareness. When out in the “field” (Jaipur’s streets), you’ll be based in an animal ambulance from which you’ll help professionals identify and transport animals in need back to the shelter.

Knowing that this project can be emotionally harrowing, project organizers work hard to find a balance. There is daily yoga instruction, frequent cooking classes, and several guided trips in and around the beautiful palaces and Haveli mansions of Jaipur, the “pink city.” English is the primary language on the project, and many of the residents will converse easily (and want to practice), as English is taught in Jaipur schools.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Center for Cultural Interchange (☎ 312/944-2544; www.cci-exchange.com). The 2-week program, US\$1,590, includes housing in the dormlike base camp, where you’ll share a room with other volunteers and meals prepared by a local cook. Training, project support, side trips and city orientation tours, and airport transfers are included.

DON’T MISS: It’ll seem a little touristy, but the royal elephant ride up the switchback trail to Jaipur’s historic **Amber Fort** is undeniably Rajasthan in mood. The white-marble and red-sandstone fort overlooks the pink city of Jaipur and beautiful Maottha Lake.

www.rajasthan tourism.gov.in

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Rescue & Protection

Lions of Tsavo

Safari Tent Camping & Research in the Wild

Nairobi, Kenya

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND ANIMALS YOU NEED TO IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THEIR PATTERNS AND rhythms. This unique opportunity in a preserved wildlife habitat gives you the chance to track, tame, feed, and otherwise try to learn more about what threatens these lions.

They look a little different than in *The Lion King*, but the maneless lions of Tsavo are no less magnificent, and they make clear why the common nickname King of the Jungle is entirely apt. Within the almost 170,000-acre Taita Rukinga Wildlife Conservancy, these regal beasts rule at the top of the food chain. Lions can be tough to spot, but your expert team of trackers will lead from jeeps three times a day, then you’ll nap in the afternoons, just like the lions. When a pride or individual lion is located, you’ll scan for prey, whip out your camera and video recorder to help identify individuals (using whisker patterns), and record their behavior. Other local species rarely seen on traditional safaris include civets and aardwolves.

The zone you’ll traverse is part of Kenya’s largest wildlife sanctuary, nearly 5

million acres (2 million ha). Lions here kill a large number of livestock each year, so local farmers hunt them to save their herds. Simultaneously, naturally wild habitat is being converted to cropland or burned for the charcoal trade, crowding the lions into ever smaller corridors, where their behavior and social patterns are compromised. Your study and contribution to this project helps the understanding of the needs of this lineage of lion, and will help conservation efforts to try to find the best way for lions and humans to coexist peacefully.


Home base is a comfortable tented research camp mid-wilderness. There is electricity, flush toilets, and hot water, so it’s relatively luxurious here, affording you the opportunity to really settle in for your

ANIMAL WELFARE



Tracking a lion in Kenya

2-week assignment. Spend evenings over long meals learning the history and folklore of the English-speaking (and eager to practice) staff before heading off to bed and falling asleep to the sounds of the wild. A lion's roar outside camp will be bone chilling, but it's really the one sound you'll want most to hear.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Earthwatch  (☎ 800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org). This 13-day assignment, US\$3,150, includes safari tent accommodations, meals

prepared by staff, field training, local transportation, and support. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

DON'T MISS: Before you head *Out of Africa*, head to the house of that book's author, now kept in the same condition as when she lived there. The **Karen Blixen Museum** house and gardens, overlooking the Ngong Hills, display a blend of original furnishings and props from the Oscar-winning 1985 film that was shot here.

 www.magicalkenya.com

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Biodiversity & Colobus Monkeys

Living in a Swahili Village in the Coastal Forest

Shimoni, Kenya

PEOPLE FLY HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD TO EXPERIENCE KENYA'S GREAT DIVING AND FISHING opportunities. This small fishing village is your base, but it's not a run-of-the-mill destination—unusual coastal caves, which once served as hiding spots for Arab explorers, run along the coast and into the forest.

Facing the highest rate of species extinction due to habitat loss, the East African coastal forest is one of 11 “hyperhot” conservation priorities on the planet. The populations of black and white Anghon Colobus monkeys here are some of the most important animals in Kenya for study, and they are critically endangered. Training in biodiversity hotspot information gathering will be provided as you track and record the movements and behavior of the Colobus. The rare Zani elephant shrew and certain endangered butterflies will also be part of your focus.

You'll be living in a traditional Swahili village, completely immersed in the culture and considered a member of the community. The idyllic Indian Ocean coastline might lull you into forgetting how vital the work is, but the project leaders will keep you passionate—and busy. You'll be up before the sun for dawn bird surveys, early-day primate tracking, afternoon habitat surveys, and evening game searches. But it isn't all exhausting—your job may be to lie on your back for an hour to observe the play of a band of Colobus in the trees overhead.

You'll get free time to snorkel in and around Kenya's best coral reefs in this

protected marine area. Your home is a shared tent that has access to the Shimoni Reef Lodge for electricity, kitchen, and shared bath, but after a few days, you'll truly see no reason to have a roof over your head.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Global Vision International (📞 888/653-6028; www.gviusa.com). This 2-week project, US\$1,290, includes basic accommodations in shared tents with lodge access, communal meals prepared on a rotating basis, project transportation, training, and support.

DON'T MISS: Although it's a dark chapter of history, it's important to remember it. The **Shimoni “Slave” Caves**, said to hold slaves before shipment to Arabia, are quite close to the lodge. The caves are believed to travel underground for 3 miles (5km). Iron shackles can still be seen on the walls, and well-preserved wooden crates, used to transport slaves, are still found here. Archeological findings show that these coral caverns have been inhabited for several centuries.

📍 www.magicalkenya.com

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Rescue & Protection

A Month of Hippos

Nomadic Camping & Conservation

Senga Bay, Malawi

LAKE MALAWI IS SO LARGE ITS SURFACE AREA OCCUPIES SPACE IN THREE COUNTRIES, MAKING it the third-largest lake in Africa. Its shores continuously attract travelers who want to enjoy the natural beauty, warm tropical waters, and protected habitat in its national park.

When you think of the most dangerous animals in Africa, lions, leopards, or some of the other big cats come to mind. In reality, however, the ones you have to be most careful of are the buffalo and hippos. Three tons of floating, grazing laziness, hippos can move awfully quickly when they want to.

In Malawi, hippos are highly threatened by the human population, and they need

your help. You'll spend days aboard a research boat, traversing giant Lake Malawi and following the southern shore, observing and recording the behavior and movement of the hippos. You'll plot locations and movement by GPS, as well as gather secondhand stories of hippo encounters from local fishermen (translators provided).

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Some off-lake days you'll visit local communities to promote hippo conservation and to help develop eco-campsites that better protect and respect the indigenous pods of hippos. Since these giant animals are relatively indiscriminate in their nocturnal feasting, they tend to destroy crops on local farmland. In retaliation, farmers shoot hippos, also indiscriminately. The human-animal conflict has reached crisis levels for the hippo population—their numbers have plummeted to only 10% of where they were 20 years ago.

Your month of hippo time will be pretty rugged. You'll bring your own tent and sleeping bag and set up in a new shore camp each day. While you are out on the boat, support staff transports your tent and luggage to the next campsite so it will be waiting for you when you come ashore. Simple food is prepared for you. Some nights you'll stay in small rural villages and meet and celebrate with local tribes.

YOUR NEXT STEP: The Society for Environmental Exploration (Frontier) (☎ +44/20 7613 2422; www.frontier.ac.uk). This 1-month project, £1,495, includes staying in satellite campsites in new shore locales or small villages each night, sleeping in your own tent, and enjoying hearty communal meals prepared for you. Training and project support, ground transfers, local orientation, and 24-hour support are also included.

DON'T MISS: At the southern end of enormous Lake Malawi is the world's first freshwater national park. Deep, clear water and mountainous backdrops, hundreds of fish species, and an ecosystem as important to evolutionary species study as the Galapagos make snorkeling in **Lake Malawi National Park** a rare treat.

① www.malawi-tourism-association.org.mw

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Wildlife of the Mongolian Steppe

Hiking & Cultural Immersion

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

MONGOLIA RECEIVES VERY FEW VISITORS IN COMPARISON TO ITS NEIGHBORS TO THE EAST AND west, but that very unspoiled nature makes for an authentic experience, albeit one of extremes—the open expanse of the Gobi Desert, the huge snow-capped mountains, and, yes, the Internet cafes in its capital city.

Space doesn't get much more wide open than on the Mongolian Steppe. Your view is uninterrupted for miles as you look across the vast, and sometimes unforgiving, landscape of the Ikh Nart Nature Reserve. You'll observe and record the behavior and migration patterns of a broad range of grassland animals, including Argali sheep, Siberian ibex, mountain goats, hedgehogs, Pallas's cats, Corsac foxes, and vultures. Vegetation is sparse and desertlike, so spotting the animals will

be easier than you think. You'll take the occasionally strenuous hike over rocky outcrops to get to study points.

You'll be living steppe-style in a traditional Mongolian ger (yurt) with your volunteer colleagues, and you'll have plenty of free time to explore this wilderness and satiate even the deepest craving of wanderlust. Your work will add to the general conservation knowledge about these threatened species in this unique ecological zone. As every undeveloped habitat in

the world is shrinking with human expansion, this research will help guide protection measures before the situation reaches a crisis level. Sharing the steppe with you are wolves, ibex, gazelles, wild asses, eagles, hawks, and multiple rodent species burrowing underground.

An extra benefit to this trip is the cultural immersion in the Mongolian community. On the steppe, horses are the main form of transportation and tent life in the ger is surprisingly comfortable and, in a sense, timeless. Small social groups enjoy meals together and stories and songs by the fire without modern and technological distractions. You'll sleep well as the wind buffets the woolen walls of your home after a hard day's journey.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Earthwatch  (☎ 800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org). This 2-week excursion, US\$2,950, includes cozy accommodations in a shared ger house, cook-prepared meals, project training, and research supervision. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

DON'T MISS: As an incremental step toward returning to your cerebral life after the profoundly uncomplicated and physical life of this project, stop in Ulaanbaatar at the **International Intellectual Museum** to peruse its collection of puzzles and mental challenges to get your synapses firing again. <http://museum.pixel.mn>

 www.mongoliatourism.gov.mn

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Rescue & Protection

Cheetah Conservation

Farm Living in Namibia's Largest Safari Park

Windhoek, Namibia

NAMIBIA'S CENTRALLY LOCATED CAPITAL CITY HAS GERMAN ROOTS AND IS THE STARTING place for most safari-going travelers. You'll find a vast expanse of desert, a long coastline dotted with dunes, and an extensive national park system, chockablock with native, endangered, and otherwise important species.

Few animals capture our imaginations like the big cats, and the sleek, streamlined racer that leaves them all in the dust is the cheetah. These lanky felines are the fastest land animals on Earth, but they can't outrun the manmade threat to their survival. Conflict with humans has the biggest impact on wild cheetahs, as farm livestock make an easy meal for these superb hunters. Diminishment of habitat and shrinking gene pools also make the cheetah's life difficult. The largest population of cheetahs on Earth is in Namibia, but their numbers continue to decrease.

Your work at the headquarters of the Cheetah Conservation Fund will include wildlife surveying, feeding and caring for

captive cheetahs, and entering all your information into a database. Sometimes wild cheetahs are rescued and humanely captured, and you'll be asked to help collect biomedical samples to assess the animal's health and get it released back to the wild as soon as is practical. Your study data on behavior and ecology is part of a large effort to protect the species and strengthen protection laws. The care of resident cheetahs at the project is also an important component of the attempts to turn the statistics around.

Home is a huge working farm, Eland's Joy, where you'll bunk in a two-person, solar-powered bungalow. The farm is also home to kudus, hartebeest, oryx, duiker,

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A cheetah in the vast Namibian desert

steenbok, warthogs, jackals, leopards, brown hyenas, numerous bird species, and an array of smaller animals. In your free time, you'll make a day trip to Etosha National Park for a broader safari experience. Etosha is the largest park in Namibia and chock full of elephants, zebras, lions, rhinos, giraffes, and wild cheetahs. You'll speak English, Namibia's national language, on the project but hear plenty of Afrikaans and German.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Earthwatch  800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org. This

15-day project, US\$4,050, includes shared bungalow accommodations, group meals prepared by a staff cook, project and survey training, and full project support. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

DON'T MISS: When you think of Namibia, you likely picture the dune-rippled desert and rough Skeleton Coast, but take the time to visit the expansive **Fish River Canyon**, the world's largest earth fissure after the Grand Canyon.

 www.namibiatourism.com.na

Stray Animal Care

A Tropical Shelter

Vieques, Puerto Rico

THIS ISLAND, ABOUT 11KM (7 MILES) EAST OF PUERTO RICO, SERVED AS A U.S. MILITARY training base for more than 50 years. These days it's gaining attention as a relatively unexplored tourism destination, although more and more travelers come to enjoy its sandy beaches and laid-back atmosphere.

Hundreds of stray dogs, called *sato* in Puerto Rico, start as pets (or the offspring of pets) that are discarded by their owners. As strays, they run in packs, scavenging for survival. This small shelter on the island of Vieques—once a military zone and now an under-the-radar tropical vacation haven off the big island of Puerto Rico—takes in and rehabilitates as many street *sato* as it can handle. Extra hands for the care of these loving but unloved animals are always needed.

You'll clean kennels and feed dogs in the shelter, and work in a mobile clinic alongside local veterinarians. Spay and neuter programs attempt to decrease the number of unwanted animals. More endearing work is also part of every day, like the often joyous task of helping the animals socialize with one another and humans. The tumbling play of puppies with a new lease on life (and a newfound reserve of energy with an appropriate diet) is hard to resist. Even



One of Puerto Rico's many stray puppies

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more rewarding is when one of these terrific companions is placed in a loving home.

The shelter also owns a nearby home where volunteers can stay for weeks, months, and sometimes indefinitely. If tropical splendor on the lovely island seems like it will be just too luxurious and relaxing, you can volunteer to transport some of the Puerto Rican dogs to Vermont, where they stay and get strong in a sister shelter before being adopted.

YOUR NEXT STEP: **Explorations in Travel** (📞 802/257-0152; www.exploretravel.com). Volunteers choose the length of stay, with a minimum of 1 week, and

pay a US\$975 placement fee. Included is housing in the project home near the shelter, but the rest of your expenses are your responsibility, including food and local transportation.

DON'T MISS: You're only 30 minutes from San Juan and all the nightlife you could ever need, but the most fascinating nightlife you'll experience may be a night kayak in Vieques's **Bioluminescent Bay**. The paddles seem to stir stars as the water around glows vivid green whenever it is disturbed. Slip in and swim a while to really feel transported to outer space.

📍 www.gotopuertorico.com

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Animal Welfare

Caring for Pets that Need Care

Cape Town, South Africa

CAPE TOWN IS RENOWNED AS A LIVELY, BEAUTIFUL, CULTURE-FILLED CITY. WHEN YOUR WORK caring for the animals is done, explore the town, visit its famous wineries, or take in gorgeous views of the region's sloping mountains and rugged coastline.

You may guess that your veterinary support volunteer assignment in Cape Town will have you cuddling puppies and a few kittens all day long—and you would be right. But you'll also work with donkeys, geese, parrots, pigs, and any other animal that gets domesticated in a large city. This project provides welfare veterinary service to pet owners who can't afford a private vet service and supports animal welfare officers who tirelessly work to vaccinate, care for, and provide sterilization for animals from poorer communities. The project has been a great success and is growing, trying desperately to keep up with demand.

You'll split your time between the recently opened permanent clinics in Cape Town and the mobile clinics in townships and neighborhoods that provide both general and occasional emergency

services for animals. Except in serious cases of abuse, animals are treated, nursed to health, and returned to their owners. Because of your work, families are able to keep their beloved pets even if they've had a change in financial circumstances (the cause of most animal abandonment in any city). You'll be fully trained for your tasks and fully introduced to life in this beautiful city by the sea. You may also pitch in with marketing and community relations, helping impart the wisdom of spaying and neutering pets. English is taught in all Cape Town schools, so communication is effortless.

You'll live with a local host family in one of the trendiest neighborhoods of Cape Town, so during downtime you'll find plenty of distraction. Days off can be spent sightseeing and taking activity tours in and around the city.

22 REHABILITATING RESCUED HORSES

YOUR NEXT STEP: Twin Work & Volunteer Abroad (☎ 800/80 483 80; www.workandvolunteer.com). This 2-week project, US\$1,289, includes hosted room and board (morning and evening meals) with a family in the city, project training, and support.

DON'T MISS: The long and difficult history of **Robben Island** is nothing to be

proud of—it was a place of banishment and prison for hundreds of years and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The most famous incarcerated prisoner was Nelson Mandela, exiled with other political prisoners during the terrible reign of apartheid.

📄 www.southafrica.net

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Rescue & Protection

Rehabilitating Rescued Horses

Working & Riding Along the Eastern Cape

Chintsa, South Africa

SADDLED UP AND READY TO RIDE, YOU'LL GAIN A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON YOUR SURROUNDINGS—the “wild coast” of the eastern cape of South Africa—and the needy horses that you help return to optimal health.

For the past decade, the Dickerson family has been working with the Wild Coast African SPCA on the troubling but rewarding

task of rescuing and rehabilitating abused and neglected horses. They created the New Hampshire Rehab Centre to nurture



Rehabilitating a rescued Chintsa horse

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equines back to health and vitality. Chintsa horses generate both tourism revenue and income for the rehab program via trail-riding opportunities with the rescued horses.

You'll be actively involved in the rehabilitation of horses, both on the ground and in the saddle. You'll prepare feed and special diet meals for recovering horses, groom, assist with veterinary examinations, muck stalls and water horses, and help with exercising and training. You needn't start as an expert at horsemanship, but by the end you'll feel like one, with plenty of time for trail rides and ring work. A 2-day trail excursion is included. You'll stay in a lagoon-side cottage near the shore of the Indian Ocean, and your free time will be packed with exploration and wandering the Eastern Cape's magnificence. The crashing waves, seen from

the saddle, will be an indelible memory, as will the effect your warmth has upon these strong yet improbably fragile animals.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Aviva (☎ +27/21 557 4312; www.aviva-sa.com). This 2-week project, US\$1,205, will fly by when you get into the routine of cottage life on the lagoon, prepared meals, and the hard work you've been well trained to do. Also included are airport transfers, in-country transportation, and trail ride time.

DON'T MISS: The Eastern Cape is home to the Xhosa people and birthplace of Nelson Mandela, and also host to some gnarly waves. Surfing is extraordinary at **Jeffrey's Bay**, where people call the famous "super-tubes" the world's best waves.

📍 www.southafrica.net

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Black Rhino Research *Catch & Release*

Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Reserve, South Africa

YOU CAN BECOME AN INTEGRAL PART OF SOMETHING SPECIAL BY HELPING INTERNATIONAL nonprofit organizations learn more about this troubled species. Camping out on the grounds of Africa's oldest park, you'll have a front-row seat to see Big Five game—including the black rhinoceros.

The black rhinoceros is a critically endangered species, and 10% of the small remaining population is found on this 237,000-acre (95,910-ha) wildlife reserve. All of Africa's Big Five also call Hluhluwe home, so your time spent here will be adrenaline-packed, to say the least. You'll help researchers ascertain how individual rhinos respond and recover from capture-and-release operations and how the herd units cope with the change in their population. A deeper understanding of these processes will inform and determine policy for species management throughout the animals' wild habitat.

The Rhino Research Programme is working with the World Wildlife Fund to reintroduce the species to other reserves in the region. Being involved with such a threatened species can feel like being at the center of an emergency, as any decision that affects this herd population also affects a large proportion of the animals left in the world. It remains a challenge of public relations as well, since the relatively abundant white rhino is seen on practically every safari jeep trip for tourists, so visitors don't recognize the very real threat to "rhinos."

In addition to the wild animals you'll study, you'll help with the care of captive

rhinos being prepared for relocation. These animals are strengthened with a special diet and conditioning to improve their chances in the wild. You'll bushwalk during the days and stake out watering holes at night for the best sightings. Your downtime will be quiet around camp, except when you are contributing to cooking and cleaning chores.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Enkosini Eco Experience (☎ +27/82 442 6773, or 206/604-2664; www.inkosiniecoexperience.com).

This 2-week program, US\$1,395, includes farm house, hut, or tent accommodations (varies by nomadic site location), meals, orientation tour, telemetry and other training, and living expenses in the field.

DON'T MISS: The field site is near the world-famous surfing beaches of South Africa's eastern coast. The **Dolphin Coast** is a relaxed holiday destination with water sports and beach time beckoning you.

📍 www.southafrica.net

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Rescue & Protection

Elephant Orphanage

Bathing & Bottle-feeding Baby Elephants

Pinnawela, Sri Lanka

SITUATED NEAR BUDDHIST MONASTERIES AND A LAKE IN THIS ISLAND NATION'S HILL COUNTRY, this elephant orphanage is a popular attraction located about halfway between the capital, Colombo, and ancient royal city of Kandy. You'll play a hands-on role in supporting the mental and physical health of these large animals.

You'll assist *mahouts* (elephant handlers) at an elephant sanctuary and orphanage in 25 acres (10ha) of lush forest. This is hands-on elephant work: you'll bathe the gentle giants twice daily in the river—a process they love—clean and maintain enclosures, perform maintenance repairs as needed, and the giggle-inducing part of the job is working with the babies. These little trumpeters are nearly helpless and depend on you for bathing, bottle feeding, and mental stimulation and play. Mostly they depend on you for love and affection, as they've been lost or abandoned by their mothers.

This sanctuary has been caring for elephants for decades but still operates at a severe deficit of resources and is perpetually in need of helping hands. With the guidance of the mahouts, you will have great latitude to devise your own games and activities to challenge your young charges, who, if bored, tend to get a little

too mischievous and find trouble. A recent breeding program has broadened the scope of volunteer work.

You'll live with a host family nearby, but the location is relatively remote, so free time will be spent exploring the immediate vicinity, hiking, and enjoying the peace and quiet (aside from the occasional blaring of an elephant trunk). While you'll be able to get by with English, you'll appreciate the language and cultural teaching that goes along with this project. But you'll find the most rewarding communication is non-verbal and frequently takes the form of a trunkful of river water aimed right at you.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Institute for Field Research Expeditions 📍 (☎ 800/675-2504; www.ifrevolunteers.org). This 2-week project, US\$645, includes host family accommodations, meals, trip insurance, airport transfer and in-country transportation,

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language and cultural teaching, and full project support.

DON'T MISS: The largest, best preserved cave temple in Sri Lanka is **Dambulla**. Dating from 1 b.c., it was known as the Golden Temple. A tremendous collection of 153

sacred Buddha statues are found in this underground cavern, as well as other idols, surrounded by more than 22,000 sq. ft. (2,044 sq. m) of murals.

www.srilankatourism.org

Rescue & Protection

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Orangutan Health

Monitoring the Health of Apes

Sumatra, Indonesia

PACK YOUR HIKING BOOTS AND WATERPROOF CLOTHING. THE WILD, RUGGED ISLAND OF Sumatra—home to the coffee bean of the same name—invites adventurous travelers to experience its volcanoes, untamed landscape, vibrant tribal cultures, and to scuba dive in its waters.

We know apes are our closest relatives in the animal kingdom, but some of their behaviors are startling, making them seem much more closely related than we

thought. The origin of the word *orangutan* is Malaysian and means “forest person.” On this project, you’ll know why. These red-haired primates in the Sumatran jungle



Orangutans of Sumatra treat their illnesses with specific plants

self-medicate with specific doses of plants to treat illnesses such as an upset stomach and to combat parasites. No wonder they are being studied!

This project is the first of its kind, investigating ecological conditions and overall fluctuations in orangutan vitality and how the animals keep themselves healthy. Based in one of the largest national parks of Indonesia, you'll be surrounded by tropical rainforest, mangroves, and giant mountains. You may be trekking for lengthy stretches to locate the bands of animals for observation and data collection. Your days will be full with organizing samples, preparing equipment, assisting the field scientists, nest counting, and actual study once you locate the orangutans. The oranges' neighbors (with whom you'll probably become acquainted) include the Sumatran elephant, giant flying squirrel, and the dancing lemur. You'll enter your gathered data into the computer system each evening.

You'll be roughing it in tents, with pit toilets, no hot water, but lovely environs in

verdant rice fields. For a portion of your 2-week trip you'll be staying overnight in the jungle, while other evenings will have you at the permanent base station camp. Your free time is limited, as is the range of things to do, save for exploring this wild zone and experiencing this ancient rainforest habitat like few people ever will.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Global Vision International (☎ 888/653-6028; www.gviusa.com). This 2-week trip, US\$1,280, includes basic tent accommodations and camp meals, project orientation, scientific training techniques, and species background.

DON'T MISS: Proposed as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, Sumatra's **Lake Toba** is the largest volcanic lake in the world. The steep mountains ringing the lake are picturesque, as is Samosir Island, in the middle of the lake, with small villages and plenty of water-based recreation options.

📍 www.sumateratourism.com

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Rescue & Protection

Langur Project

Building Sustainable Eco-Tourism

Khao Sam Roi Yot, Thailand

A FEW HOURS FROM BUSTLING, CROWDED BANGKOK IS ANOTHER WORLD ENTIRELY—"THE mountain of three hundred peaks" is home to a national marine park that boasts caves, steep limestone mountains, short hikes with scenic views of the water, and animals that need assistance.

Though reminiscent of small monkeys, the dusky langur (or spectacled langur) is a slightly different species. It is only found in three zones of Southeast Asia, and its forest habitat is shrinking every day. Deforestation is encroaching on their treetop homes, and hunting for meat and sale in export markets is hurling them toward extinction. The Dusky Langur Conservation and Community Centre, with your

volunteer help, is working to educate locals in the small fishing village of this region about the positive effect conservation and wildlife tourism can have upon their struggling economy while simultaneously preserving natural habitats.

You'll be observing and recording the langurs' behavior in their natural forest habitat, occasionally leaving food and water for the undernourished populations

ANIMAL WELFARE

that can no longer roam large-enough feeding areas to support their numbers. Gaining a clear picture of the habits and behaviors of the langur will aid in the formation of a conservation and protection strategy. The shared goal of creating eco-tourism possibilities for the village of only 250 residents will benefit both wildlife and local human communities. The centre has worked hard at introducing eco-sustaining practices to the shoreside village, as well as rehabilitating and then releasing langurs back into the wild. One side effect of the hunting is the large number of orphaned baby langurs that must be cared for and raised until they can become self-sufficient.

You'll live in air-conditioned beachfront bungalows, and meals are taken at local restaurants (included in the trip price) that specialize in wonderfully spicy, fresh-caught seafood. Your work is on a regular daytime schedule, so evenings and weekends are free to explore the region's

natural caves, beautiful beaches, local temples, and the Huai-Yang waterfall, a popular tour spot.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Go Differently Ltd.

(📞 +44/1799 521950; www.godifferently.com). This 2-week project, £640, includes air-conditioned beach bungalow accommodations, all meals (in local restaurants), English-speaking assistance, and project orientation/support.

DON'T MISS: For a little post-assignment R&R, head straight to the seaside village of **Hua Hin**. This beach community is ground zero for some of the best spas and spa traditions in the world—you owe it to yourself to get at least one amazing Thai massage (or book a few days of spa vacation after all your hard work).

(i) www.tourismthailand.org

Rescue & Protection

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Chimpanzee Sanctuary

Land of the Chimps

Ngamba Island, Uganda

PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER PERSON, JANE GOODALL IS SYNONYMOUS WITH CHIMP studies, and on Ngamba Island you'll see the fruits of her labor—and learn that much is yet to be done. With Lake Victoria and its many islands (including the relaxing Ssese) as the setting for your work, there's plenty to do in your downtime.

Africa's wealth of what biologists call "charismatic megafauna" (wildlife that endears the public to conservation and species' survival) means there are many opportunities to work with injured or orphaned animals that are familiar from the toy store and animated films. Chimpanzees are astounding in their similarity to humans, and caring for them can be a lot like babysitting. The Ngamba Island sanctuary is supported by the Jane Goodall Institute and offers 1- and 2-week "long stay visits" where volunteers work on habitat improvement, field observation, and

work with the local nomadic communities as well as directly with chimpanzee populations in the wild and at the sanctuary.

The program is designed to immerse you in the life of the chimpanzees, to help you understand their plight in the African wild, and to put you to work directly aiding in their rehabilitation and care as well as encourage your advocacy for the species. Some of the time you'll clean cages and prepare food, repair and maintain enclosures and other facilities of the sanctuary, and some hours will inevitably be spent

28 DIAMONDBACK TERRAPIN CONSERVATION

crunching data, typing chimp diaries, and maybe even selling items in the project's gift shop. But then there will be the time spent in the nursery with the babies, and the sublime daily forest walks. You'll walk for an early-morning hour with a juvenile band of chimps through their forest habitat, and you'll be unable to stifle your laughter as they climb all over you, play bite, grab your hair or glasses, and then quietly stride by your side, holding your hand.

You'll be living in the Wild Frontiers tented camp on the island, enjoying meals prepared for you by project staff and relishing having plenty of downtime to nap, dream, chimp watch, hike, and explore (there is incredible bird-watching here). At dusk every evening, 50,000 fruit bats fly overhead, blackening the sky on the way out for their nightly forage.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Trust

(☎ +256/41 4320662; www.ngambaisland.org). Prices for 2-week programs vary by season: low season (Mar–Jun and Oct–Nov) US\$2,250; high season (Aug–Sep and Dec–Feb) US\$3,250. Tented camp accommodations and all meals provided, as well as park entrance fees and transportation to/from the island.

DON'T MISS: Most tourists visiting Uganda are on the trail of primates (both the chimpanzees and the mountain gorillas bring people from far and wide), so as a change of pace, pump up your adrenaline on a white-water rafting trip on newly established class IV and V rapids on the Nile River.

(i) www.visituganda.com

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Rescue & Protection

Diamondback Terrapin Conservation

Helping Turtles in Coastal Salt Marsh

Barnegat Bay, New Jersey, USA

RESIDENTS FROM NEW JERSEY, NEW YORK, AND PENNSYLVANIA FREQUENT CROWDED LONG Beach Island during summertime, but the northernmost tip of this 30km (18-mile) stretch is a special, unspoiled place: it's near a state park and home to colorful turtles whose shells look like intricately laid mosaic tiles.

Barnegat Bay is one of the nation's most extensive salt marshes, and the estuary is home to terrapins, small turtles with beautifully ornate shell designs. The terrapins have begun to move on in search of alternate regions in which to live—unchecked human development has left them no alternative. A broad spectrum of birds and fish are also being affected by human encroachment in this delicate ecosystem. The roaming range of the terrapins was once from Massachusetts to Texas, but coastal pollution and beach erosion has cleaved their habitat into piecemeal scraps.

From a research boat, you'll monitor the nests of these turtles—the only US native turtles found in brackish waters—and also humanely capture, tag, and track them. You'll measure pernicious sound pollution levels and record environmental and ecological data. Project teams (depending on the timing of your trip) also mark and tag hatchlings and determine hatching success.

The 9-day excursion includes lots of hard work balanced by free time, in which you'll want to take advantage of the wonderful kayaking and canoeing, lighthouse

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visits (Old Barney, one of the country's most photographed, is a short distance away), and the natural splendor of the 180 acres (73ha) of still-undeveloped coastal habitat. Your base will be the Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education, where you'll have an air-conditioned double room, shared bathrooms, dining room (all meals are prepared and served by a local chef), a computer lab, and laundry facilities.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Earthwatch  (☎ 800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org). This 9-day assignment, US\$1,950, includes

housing in the comfortable research center, all meals prepared by a local chef, research training, and project supervision and support. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

DON'T MISS: With all the natural estuary splendor of Barnegat Bay, there's no reason to stray far for relaxation after your project ends. A great choice is a **sailing charter** on the bay from Cedar Creek Marina—take a personalized sunset cruise or rent a boat if you have the skills to be a skipper.

 www.oceancountygov.com

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Teton Songbirds

Halting Species Decline in the Grand Tetons

Jackson Hole, Wyoming, USA

BUDDING BIRD LOVERS, LISTEN UP: THE SONGBIRDS OF WYOMING NEED YOUR HELP. HEED their call and soak up the stunning, sharp splendor of the Grand Teton National Park, part of the Rocky Mountain range and the setting of many films.

You've heard of the canary in the coal mine, an early warning of poisonous gases that could eventually kill miners. The decline of migratory and resident songbird populations in Wyoming might signify the same thing. Researchers are studying the remaining birds and their habitats to try to understand and, ideally, halt their decline. The work is being done in the postcard-perfect Grand Teton area, surrounded by three majestic mountain ranges that are home to scores of American species. To lose a vital element of the ecosystem will have effects that ripple throughout the local ecology.

You'll develop a keen eye as you hunt for nests and help to relocate color-banded tagged birds. The seasonal tracking of these study birds paints a picture we need to understand about migratory patterns, choice of home, and breeding

success. You may help set up mist-net traps, band the birds for release, and complete subsequent environment surveys of vegetation and nests. It remains a frustrating mystery as to why, for the past 30 years, the chickadees, sapsuckers, grosbeaks, thrushes, warblers, woodpeckers, and vireos have been disappearing—your help might be the key to the puzzle.

You'll return home in the evenings to your comfortable residence lodges on campus at one of two Teton Science Schools. Both are beautiful facilities and close enough to town to burn off any excess energy in local pubs and restaurants (though your meals are provided on campus). Spend downtime exploring the mountains, hoping to spot some of the resident bison, wolves, bears, raptors, and trumpeter swans.




Watching songbirds in Grand Teton National Park

YOUR NEXT STEP: Earthwatch  (☎ 800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org). This 9-day program, US\$2,150, includes housing in campus lodge or cabin facilities, all meals, research training and instruction, and project support. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

DON'T MISS: You're already based in one of America's most stunning natural areas,

the Grand Tetons, so take time to explore it on a breathtakingly scenic **horseback mountain excursion**. Many trail ride providers operate out of Jackson Hole and the surrounding communities, any of whom can match you to a good horse no matter your level of riding experience and expertise.

 www.wyomingtourism.org

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Rescue & Protection

Saving the Crocodiles

Catching Crocs at Night

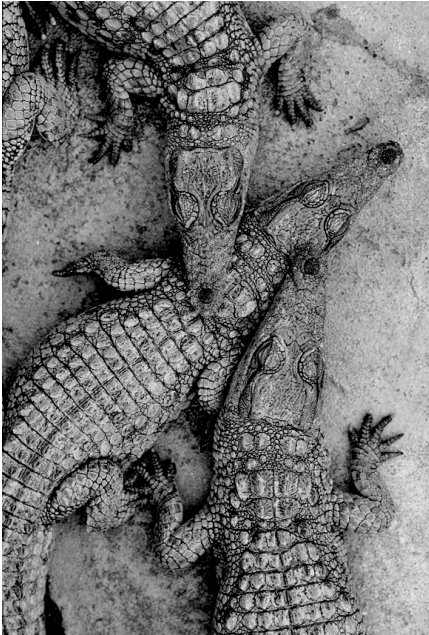
Lusaka, Zambia

PEOPLE TRAVEL HERE FOR THE FAMOUS WATERFALLS, THE WALKING SAFARIS, THE BIRDS, THE lakes, the wildlife—but check out the capital's friendly people and the abundant crafts for sale at its busy markets to gain the full range of an African experience.

If you're naturally a night owl, why not make your way to the mighty Zambezi

River and spend your nights catching crocodiles from a boat? Your high-powered

ANIMAL WELFARE



Nile crocodiles of Zambia

spotlight beam will flash along the banks and water level, looking for the telltale red pinpricks of a croc's eyes reflecting the light back at you. You'll ease up on them, barely coasting so as not to startle them, and eventually measure and tag them. Grab a cat nap, and then in the morning, track tagged crocodiles with radio tracking devices or visit local schools and communities to educate the locals about the importance of the crocodile.


About 70% of Zambia's flowing water makes its way into the Zambezi, the fourth largest river in Africa. This is the habitat for the Nile crocodile and a vast number of

mammals, birds, amphibians, fish, and reptiles. Most of them fear the croc, which can grow to nearly 20 ft. (6m) long. The impact of hide hunting, egg harvesting, and the capture of wild animals for illegal breeding farms has severely compromised the Nile crocodile population. The research data gathered on your project will help establish conservation practices and successful species management.

You'll stay in a well-shaded campground area overlooking the river. The volunteer team pitches in and helps with cooking and cleaning, and camp life is relaxed and easy. Since the lion's share of the work is done at night for the nocturnal crocodiles, daytime is spent sleeping and getting to know your fellow volunteers. There's plenty of distraction as you watch elephants and hippos splash, grazing animals eat their way across the plains, and the occasional drama of the bush that makes high-definition wildlife television pale in comparison.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Earthwatch  800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org. The 2-week project, US\$3,050, includes camp accommodations, campfire-cooked meals, croc research and interaction technique training, and project support. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

DON'T MISS: You're not going to go all the way to Zambia and skip its most famous sight, **Victoria Falls**. Tribes originally called the awesome falls "the smoke that thunders," and thunder it does as more than half a million cu. m (18 million cu. ft.) of water per minute plummet over the edge during flood season.

 www.zambiatourism.com

Coastal Ecology

Mapping Bahamian Beaches

Long Island and Great Exuma, Bahamas

LEND A HAND IN STUDYING THE ERRATIC, EBBING SHORELINES OF THE BAHAMAS, WHETHER replacing native vegetation or using technology to map the coast. Your work will preserve the ecosystem and record the effects of both man and devastating natural events, helping to ensure that the area's natural beauty remains intact.

Thirty towns and major communities in the Bahamian archipelago of islands take advantage of ideal locations near the islands' shores. Those locations are only ideal as long as that shoreline stays constant, but it doesn't. Your work will include mapping and plotting the shape of the shore via GPS and satellite maps, transplanting native plants, and occasionally constructing artificial reefs to maintain the integrity of the shoreline and keep it from eroding and vanishing. Like many ecological efforts around the world, this battle is a race against time. Reversing the harm done to the environment and beginning

repairs will be a slow march toward progress, but not every habitat can wait.

Development and tourism in the Bahamas has led to a greater appreciation of its beauty (and some wonderful vacations), but the price paid by the islands themselves has been dear. Caves, wetlands, marshes, rocky coasts, hardwood forest, farmland, mangrove stands, and sandy beaches are all part of the Bahamas, and the interdependence of these eco-zones is just now being studied. Your work, beyond the observation and data collection that will fill your days, may also include reforestation of coastal regions with native plant



Undertaking sampling on the shoreline of the Bahamas

10 Beaches Where Wildlife Comes First

Doing something great for the planet and having a beach vacation needn't be mutually exclusive. Work or play, you'll spend your time at the glorious junction of sand and sea, in service to some magnificent creatures.



A crocodile hatchling in Turneffe Atoll, Belize

32 Turneffe Atoll, Belize (Crocodiles) The American crocodile is endangered throughout North and South America, but in Belize it's still thriving after nearly 200 million years. You'll monitor this threatened species, collecting data on reproductive success/egg counts, nesting habits, hatchling behavior, measurement and identification of individual animals, and lots more hands-on tasks. Morning and night excursions provide the best encounters, so your days are relaxed, with project training interspersed with swimming and snorkeling. **The Oceanic Society** 🌐 800/326-7491; www.oceanicsociety.org. An 8-day excursion is US\$1,975.

33 Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica (Sea Turtles) You'll surf (or learn to), live on the beach, swim, and work researching three species of sea turtles and preparing hatcheries. Some of the work is in the middle of the night, so daytimes are sometimes spent relaxing, in surf lessons (provided at partner surf school), and exerting yourself with a siesta. It's not all play, and the work is important, as before these conservation efforts were put into place, poachers took almost 95% of unprotected sea turtles and eggs. **i-to-i** 🌐 800/985-4852; www.i-to-i.com. A 2-week project is US\$1,345.

34 Accra, Ghana (Shore Birds) You'll work alongside the scientist team leaders in the Important Bird Areas on Accra's shoreline, monitoring flocks, nest zones, and flight/behavior patterns. You'll also aid the community education programs of the Save the Seashore Birds Project and Wildlife Clubs that help raise awareness and appreciation of the many bird species, notably several rare types of terns, found in this region. **Ikando** 🌐 +233/21 222 726; www.ikando.org. A 2-week project is US\$913.

35 Zakynthos, Greece (Loggerhead Turtles) Eighty percent of the world's Mediterranean loggerhead turtles nest around this Ionian island, and the ever-expanding tourist industry has directly led to their decline. You'll do your Greek island vacation the responsible way by aiding the conservation of the species, patrolling beaches, educating tourists, rescuing injured animals, and working to clean up their beach habitat areas. You'll also pitch in at the Sea Turtle and Wildlife Information Centre. **Global Vision International** 🌐 888/653-6028; www.gviusa.com. A 2-week project is US\$1,700.

36 Shimoni, Kenya (Dolphins and Whales) This small archipelago of islands near the border with Tanzania is a magnet for cetaceans. You'll spend time in and on the water amid whale sharks and manta rays and observe and record data on dolphins and humpback whales. Inland, you'll survey Colobus monkeys, as well as promote

10 BEACHES WHERE WILDLIFE COMES FIRST

anti-poaching campaigns and community outreach projects with local villagers. **Global Vision International** (☎ 888/653-6028; www.gviusa.com). A 5-week intensive program is US\$3,150.

37 Michoacan, Mexico (Sea Turtles) Volunteering with the local university and villagers, you'll work with Negra and Golfina sea turtles: collecting eggs, reburying them in the protected sands of Turtle Camp, attending to the needs of hatchling turtles, and collecting statistical information. When the time comes, you'll transport baby turtles back into the sea. Your downtime will be relaxing in coco-palm-constructed shelters on the practically virgin beach. **Canadian Alliance for Development Initiatives and Projects** (☎ 604/628-7400; www.cadip.org) A 2-week trip is US\$265, with another US\$265 paid directly to the project upon arrival.



Bottlenose dolphins in Shimoni, Kenya

38 Ranong Province, Thailand (Sea Turtles) This project's biosphere reserve protects the mangrove forests that lend viability to the struggling turtle population. Project workers also care for macaques and gibbons in the neighboring rescue center when not monitoring turtle nests, identifying flipper tracks, and tagging and recording adults and nests. **Center for Cultural Interchange** (☎ 312/944-2544; www.cci-exchange.com). The 3-week program is US\$1,650.

39 Mahe, Seychelles (Coral Reef Species) Scuba skills will come in handy as you make twice-daily dives around this reef in the Indian Ocean, collecting research data on coral and fish species, whale sharks, turtles, octopus, and lobster species. The data helps paint the picture of the reef ecosystem's health and is used by the Seychelles government for marine wildlife management policies. **Global Vision International** (☎ 888/653-6028; www.gviusa.com). The 35-day trip is US\$3,370.

40 Aberdeenshire, Scotland (Whales and Dolphins) The northeast coast whales and dolphins are threatened with becoming as difficult to spot as the Loch Ness Monster. The Cetacean Research and Rescue Unit will take you out in inflatable boats to spot them, record their behavior and location, and make note of pod behaviors. When back on shore, you can pair the research with other gathered data to create thorough field reports. You may also help with the rescue of stranded marine animals. **Earthwatch** (☎ 800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org). An 11-day project is US\$2,450. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

41 St. George Island, Alaska, USA (Fur Seals) The Prilobof Islands in the Bering Sea (known as the Galapagos of the North) are home to a high density of marine and land animals, including the northern fur seal, whose numbers and viability are monitored by this project's scientist-led team. You'll carry out observations from a rookery and take notes on the size of the herd, genders, ages, and behaviors. The terrain is rugged but beautiful. **Earthwatch** (☎ 800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org). A 10-day excursion is US\$3,250. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

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species. Some of the ecological damage is due to natural forces (such as Hurricane Ike in 2008), and much is due to man. It is hard, exhausting work, but the result can have an immediate impact on soil retention, an invigorated tidal zone life and habitat, and other benefits for the shore plants and animals above and below the tide line.

You'll be based in shared apartments or dormitory-style housing, where food is provided (you'll prep your own breakfast and lunch, while dinners are made for you), and there are plenty of distractions during your free time. Wander the settlements and explore the island or take to the waves—snorkeling, boat trips among the many islands (some uninhabited), or just crashing on the beach can all be on your itinerary. You'll close your eyes and rest with a particular satisfaction as you listen to waves lap the shore, knowing that

you're part of the reason that shore is there.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Earthwatch  (☎ 800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org). This 11-day project, US\$2,350, covers shared accommodations in apartments or dormitories, meals, research training, and project supervision and support. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

DON'T MISS: It's been around for less than a decade, but the **National Art Gallery of the Bahamas**, in an 1860s-era Nassau villa, has an important collection of art from Bahamian artists as well as some unexpected ex-pats. You probably wouldn't predict you'd have to come to the islands to see originals by Winslow Homer. www.nagb.org.bs

 www.bahamas.com

Animal Habitats

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Rehabilitation of Abused Animals

Nursing Wildlife Back to Health

Villa Tunari, Bolivia

THE ACCOMMODATIONS ARE SPARTAN BUT SUFFICIENT AND THE DIFFICULT WORK OF WITNESSING what happens to neglected or abused animals may move you to tears. Once your important work here is done, travel to sunny Cochabamba or the country's largest city, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, for some R&R: Villa Tunari is about halfway between the two.


At this pair of neighboring wildlife refuges, you may spend 2 weeks assigned to one particular animal that needs your care and attention or perhaps work with many animals and species every day. There are monkeys, birds, and reptiles here, along with a few larger animals like wild cats. Dozens of animals are brought to the refuge every week. Parque Ambue has more varied work, but Parque Machia has better living facilities (electricity, hot showers, and so on) and included meals, so you'll decide which is best suited to your goals and interests. Although rewarding, this volunteer opportunity can be emotionally challenging. You'll see the results of

animal cruelty, abuse, and environmental damage. To counter these forces is the purpose of the refuge.

The project is eager for volunteers, and many people choose to drop in. The park's philosophy toward animals extends to human volunteers: none are turned away. Since there are permanent volunteer translators, you needn't be fluent in Spanish, but of course it helps. Your work time, from 7:30am to 6:00pm, will be varied in its demands and the ebb and flow of duties, with new challenges every day (if not every hour). Feeding, playing, cleaning, and lots of hands-on care is the order of the day for your charges. Longer-term


volunteers with additional training even get the opportunity to walk wild cats for exercise along jungle paths.

Life is simple at these two parks, with shared room accommodations in cabins or tents. Meals are provided at one park, and must be purchased in town at the other. Basic kitchen facilities allow for self-catering, and local restaurants are very inexpensive (US\$4–US\$5 per dinner, less for breakfast and lunch). The parks are also open to the public during the day, so you'll have the chance to share your incredible experiences.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Comunidad Inti Wara Yassi  (no phones in park, e-mail:

intiwarayassi@gmail.com; www.intiwarayassi.org). This 2-week excursion, US\$145–\$200], includes simple accommodations and meals (only at one of the camps, the other is self-catering), training, and care education. Your independent spirit and ability to get along without lots of supervision is a definite plus here.

DON'T MISS: It is practically a requirement when visiting Bolivia to be sure to go to **Lake Titikaka** and the shore town of Copacabana, a former Inca ceremonial site with astrological observation ruins and temples. The Copacabana Virgin statue is now a pilgrimage stop for hundreds of believers every August 5.

 www.visitbolivia.org

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Animal Habitats

Crocodile Conservation Center

A Month of Reptile Research

Chennai, India

YOU'LL BE A MASTER-OF-ALL-TRADES—SNAKE AND CROC WRANGLER, ENGLISH TRANSLATOR, safari guide, and general good company to those you encounter. In your spare time, visit Chennai's temples and churches, a testament to the city's diversity.

In the 1980s, 8 acres (3ha) of coastal land south of Chennai (formerly known as Madras) was set aside as a trust for the study and conservation of India's three types of crocodile: the mugger, the gharial, and the saltwater. Beginning with just 30 adult crocs, the center has bred more than 5,000 crocs over 30 years, and today it houses more than 2,400 crocodiles representing 14 species, as well as a dozen endangered species of turtle and tortoise. Several other reptiles and amphibians elicit squeals of delight, such as monitor lizards, pythons, iguanas, and King Cobras. This humble spot of land along the world's longest stretch of beach is now India's most important center for reptile/amphibian conservation, study, and education.

If scaly things are your passion, you'll have plenty of contact as you feed and

water animals, clean and maintain enclosures, help the scientific staff collect data, help support the education camp working with local children, act as an English-speaking visitor guide, lead day and night safaris, and facilitate and supervise visitor handling of non-dangerous pythons and baby crocodiles.

It is a month-long assignment, so you'll really get to know the distinct personalities of many of the animals in your care and certainly gain an appreciation for a herpetologist's expertise in the field of crocodilian studies. That's like a major in crocodiles with a minor in snakes and lizards. You'll live simply at the center's facilities, with two meals provided daily and easy access to the big-city life of Chennai (India's fourth largest city).

ANIMAL WELFARE

YOUR NEXT STEP: **Twin Work & Volunteer Abroad** (📞 800/80 483 80; www.workandvolunteer.com). This 1-month project, US\$1,495, includes group accommodations on-site, two meals daily, training, and full project support.

DON'T MISS: Since you're in the spirit of volunteering and helping where help is needed, it could be fascinating to see the

progress at **Marina Beach**. More than 8 miles (13km) long, it is the world's longest beach and was slammed hard by the December 26, 2004, tsunami. Horrific death and destruction struck that day, but the community continues to work hard and has made real progress toward revitalizing the area.

📍 www.tamilnadutourism.org

Animal Habitats

44

Wildlife Rehabilitation Center

South African Safe Haven

Hoedspruit, South Africa

BEASTS LARGE AND SMALL FIND RESPITE AND REHABILITATION AT THIS SANCTUARY FOR threatened, injured, and otherwise needy species. For those who want to take their education a step further—and relax a bit—arrange for an excursion to nearby Kruger National Park, the largest game reserve in the country.

It's tough being a wild animal in Africa. There's that pesky food chain, upon which you can never really be high enough; there's the hot, dry weather; and there's often a big lack of fresh drinking water. Add humans meddling with your home, food, water, and freedom of movement, and the odds aren't exactly in your favor. The Moholoholo Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre tries to provide respite and a safe haven for the endangered species of South Africa. Some have been abandoned, others orphaned, more poisoned, and many injured by natural or man-made dangers. Sick and injured wildlife is brought to the center from far and wide to be rehabilitated and, in the best-case scenario, reintroduced to the wild. Animals that can't be returned to their natural habitat become ambassador animals for the center that help educate schoolchildren and visitors. Moholoholo also runs a terrifically successful breeding program for threatened species.

You'll spend cherished hours hand-rearing orphaned cheetahs or warthogs, caring for and feeding resident

ambassador animals, aiding the medical care of injured and recovering animals, and helping in the capture of injured wild animals and, if you're timing is right, the release of rehabilitated animals. You'll keep the more mundane aspects of a wild animal habitat in top shape and contribute to food preparation, cleaning, the repair of habitats and enclosures, and some office work.

Home is in dormitory-style shared rooms with hot showers, a communal lounge, and kitchen facilities. Your meals are provided at the sister business, a safari lodge attended by tourists, where you'll dine with staff. You're out in the bush, quite near Kruger Park, so much of your free time will likely be spent on non-work game drives and relaxing at camp—you'll need your strength for the animals.

YOUR NEXT STEP: **Enkosini Eco Experience** (USA: 📞 206/604-2664; www.erkosini-ecoexperience.com). Your time at Moholoholo can be as brief as 1 week, US\$995, but you'll probably want to stay longer.

The fee includes all meals, housing at the center's volunteer facilities, field training in animal care and husbandry, extra activities (safari game drives, for example), and transport from Hoedspruit to the center.

DON'T MISS: Just 10 miles (16km) from Hoedspruit is a small regional airport where

you can take to the skies on a wonderful **microlight flight** over the game reserves. See the bird's-eye view of the animals and ecology in which you've been immersed, from what amounts to little more than a bicycle with wings and a small motor.

 www.southafrica.com

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Animal Habitats

Baboon Sanctuary

Protecting Primates

Phalaborwa, South Africa


YOUR IMPORTANT PROTECTION WORK TAKES PLACE AMID A TOURIST'S PLAYGROUND. DRIVE through the Drakensberg Mountains on the popular Panorama Route, and linger over the spectacular views that give this self-drive its name. Close to the project site is Kruger National Park, which includes 16 eco-zones; here you'll see wildlife that runs the gamut of South Africa's animal kingdom.

The Baboon Sanctuary doesn't discriminate. No matter what kind of animal you are—mammal, raptor, reptile, or bird—you can find nurturing care here. The eponymous mascot animal, however, is the Chacma baboon, and more than 400 of them live here, most of them orphans receiving long-term or lifetime care. Baboons, while classified as “threatened,” receive no protection under South African law, and are regularly shot or poisoned by farmers, captured for the pet trade, killed and dissected for traditional spiritual and medicinal purposes, and/or fall victim to human obstacles like road accidents and power lines. Former laboratory animals also are given refuge here after occasional releases and confiscations.

The goal is to rehabilitate and release as many animals back into the wild as possible, and sometimes full troops of baboons can be returned to open territory. (As habitat is compromised, however, these opportunities become more rare every day.) There is also a resident troop of about 60 wild baboons that lives just outside the sanctuary, filling the trees along the river at night and interacting with the residents, both human and primate. You'll assist in

daily operations at the sanctuary, as well as helping in the rehabilitation program. The days are full and exhausting as you move from one enclosure to the next, each holding a troop of up to 18 baboons. You might start the day at the baby baboon crèche changing diapers, bottle feeding, and playing with youngsters, fill water containers and feed trays after lunch, and be on behavioral observation duty all afternoon. However your day is divided, you will have plenty of primate time.

You are in a remote locale far from the next small town but can head in on food runs if you need a dose of civilization. Rustic cabin and tent accommodations are home to the volunteer team (and your morning wake-up call will probably be young baboons scampering across the roof), and everyone pitches in to clean and cook mostly vegetarian meals. The sanctuary borders a malarial zone, so be sure to check with your doctor about inoculations before your trip.

YOUR NEXT STEP: **Enkosini Eco Experience**  206/604-2664; www.enkosiniecoexperience.com). The Baboon Sanctuary

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needs volunteers to make a 4-week commitment, US\$1,695, which includes rustic housing in cabins, tents, or converted containers, communal meals, intensive training, project support, and a guarantee of constantly changing duties.

DON'T MISS: After a month in the rough with a bunch of apes, you may feel the need for some of the finer things, like a few days in South Africa's terrific wine

country. **Stellenbosch** is the country's leading wine area, a shady, quiet country town full of vintner's estates, a young vibe with the local university, elegant tasting rooms, and quite a few dining options from upscale to simple street food. www.tourismstellenbosch.co.za

i www.southafrica.com/limpopo/phalaborwa

Animal Habitats

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Wild Horse Sanctuary *Living Free in the Black Hills*

Hot Springs, South Dakota, USA

THIS PART OF AMERICA BRIMS WITH ICONOGRAPHY—IMAGINE OLD WEST COWBOYS, OR soaking your weary bones in the hot springs for which this southern Black Hills Town is named. Mount Rushmore and the Freedom Trail are nearby, too. But this wildness—specifically the horses—is also threatened.

Every year the US government rounds up wild horses and puts them up for adoption. Herds have grown so large, and available grazing land and open territory has become so small, that the land can no longer sustain all the animals that call it home. The capture-and-adopt mission is a noble effort, born of right ideals, but the program's effectiveness has decreased each year. Fewer individuals and ranches are interested in adopting wild mustangs, and animals go unadopted and uncared for, meaning that many eventually have to be put down. Rancher Dayton Hyde saw hundreds of formerly wild mustangs languishing in government feedlots and dedicated himself to creating a wild horse sanctuary in South Dakota.

More than 400 horses now run free across 11,000 acres (4,452ha) of canyons and riverbanks in the Black Hills. The sanctuary is run entirely by volunteers, many coming for a week or two, some never leaving. What you will do on this project will depend somewhat upon the season you visit, but rest assured you'll be busy.

Some of the horses are "special needs" and need to be fed, watered, and cared for more attentively than their wild brethren. At certain times of year, horses must be moved from one pasture zone to another to allow grass to regrow for the next season. Other odd jobs you might perform or help with include giving tours of the sanctuary, mending fences, even working in the gift shop.

There is a cabin for rent overlooking the river to call home (book early) and RV hookups if your home is mobile. There is no cost for volunteers, and your meals and entertainment off-project will be up to you. Stay as long as you like, and then stay longer—the horses need you.

YOUR NEXT STEP: **Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary** (☎ 800/252-6652; www.wildmustangs.com). No cost to volunteers, except burning lots of calories working hard. A cabin is available for rent (US\$150 a night), and meals and other costs are your responsibility. Full training in horse care and other project specifics is provided.



Wild mares in the Black Hills of South Dakota

DON'T MISS: Nearby, you'll find the **Mammoth Site of Hot Springs, South Dakota**, the world's largest mammoth research facility and site of ongoing paleontological digs and an interactive museum. Some 26,000 years ago, a sinkhole caved in, and wandering mammals came to drink from the bubbling springs

but were unable to get out of the sinkhole. An inordinately large number of fossilized remains are still being uncovered in this treasure trove of natural history. www.mammothsites.com

www.hot-springs-sd.com

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Animal Habitats

Western Wildlife Trails

Animal Corridors Along the Continental Divide

Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

IN RED BUTTE CANYON, WILDLIFE NEED SAFE ROUTES TO FIND FOOD AND SURVIVE, AND humans keep interrupting their pathways. If you're a trailblazing person who loves hiking, tracking, and keeping close eyes on your surroundings, this trip may be just the challenge you're looking for.

You'll hike deer trails in rugged mountains, occasionally tearing your eyes from the magnificent scenery to look at the GPS tracking device you carry to map game

trails and kill sites, notate wildlife census information, count tracks, and survey vegetation. You'll also prepare carnivore scent and track stations, and capture it all

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on film with remote cameras you'll monitor. You'll be on your feet and covering hilly ground for 5 to 6 hours a day, so bring moleskin for blisters.

Some of your trails are the same ones used by Lewis and Clark a couple of centuries ago, and your goal is to help design effective wildlife corridors along the western edge of the Continental Divide. The open region has been fragmented, and populations of wildlife get more and more isolated all the time, which seriously reduces their health. A corridor linking free-range areas can work if the animals will use it to get from one zone to another regularly or seasonally. The research on this project helps to understand travel and behavior patterns, which will be the basis for corridor creation through these mountains.

You'll bunk in a university guesthouse with shared accommodations, your hearty breakfast is in the guesthouse, lunch is in the field, and you'll have easy access to

student dining areas for dinners (included). A parallel project occurs in Pierce Creek, Idaho, where lodging is in cabins and meals are prepared together and shared.

YOUR NEXT STEP: Earthwatch  (☎ 800/776-0188; www.earthwatch.org). This 8-day project, US\$1,950, includes research technique training, project support, housing in shared university facilities (or cabins for the Idaho project), and meals. A US\$35 Earthwatch membership is required.

DON'T MISS: You have to be relatively fit to hike the 1,065 vertical ft. (325m) to the entry of the astounding caverns of the **Timpanogos Cave National Monument**, a system of caves and tunnels high in the Wasatch Mountains. Occasional evening programs (both underground and above ground at dusk) offer spectacular views of the American Fork Canyon. www.nps.gov/tica

 www.slctravel.com