

Drakensberg Horse Trails



Overview

Location Closest town: Nelspruit (about 35 km away), Kaapsehoop, South Africa.

Duration From 2 – 8 weeks.

Dates All year round.

- Requirements**
- Minimum age: 18 – 40.
 - You must have an Upper Intermediate level of English.
 - Special skills: This programme is only available for experienced riders. You must weigh below 90 kg (animal welfare considerations require that a horseback riding weight limit must be applied to ensure that the horses do not suffer back injuries).
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Your impact 

The impact of your volunteer work depends on the nature of the project. In addition, it may also depend on whether the project offers a full volunteering experience or a combination of volunteering and tourism. For details, please see the description of the project and what's included in the project fees.

Documents required Enrolment form, curriculum vitae, letter of motivation, riding experience questionnaire, passport copy, proof of medical insurance.

Day of arrival Monday.

Day of departure Monday.



Highlights

- Work with horses in their natural habitat.
- Learn aspects of natural horsemanship.
- Experience the wild horses of the area and the local community.
- Take part in amazing excursions outside of the project such as Kruger National Park and other sanctuaries in the area, hot air ballooning or caving.
- Make new friends from all over the world.

Project information

The Drakensberg Horse Trails project is a well-known and peaceful retreat on the beautiful Drakensberg escarpment, 35km from Nelspruit, Mpumalanga in South Africa.

The project was established in 1994 by an amazing South African named Christo on a 17,000ha private concession on the Berlin forestry plantation of Komatiland. With over 30 years of trail riding experience, the team works on a natural horsemanship basis. The project is geared toward allowing the public to enjoy comfortable and safe horse riding whether they are beginner or experienced riders, on the well-trained cross-bred horses.

The project caters for small groups, families and individuals wanting a real outdoor, stunningly beautiful horse riding experience. Guests to the project as well as volunteers enjoy 1 hour/2 hour or longer outrides in the beautiful scenery of the Drakensberg mountains.

It is a must for horse lovers and guaranteed an unforgettable experience!

Programme details

The horse breeds mainly used for the trails are crossbreed horses that include Boerperd, Friesian, and draught horse crossbreeds. The horses are free-roaming, hence they're never over-taxed. They live a natural life with the wild horse of Kaapsehoop. This means there are no stables for the animals and they sleep out at night. The animals are called in during the morning hours and are prepared by the volunteers for the trail rides. On days when there are no bookings for outrides, the volunteers help with training and exercising the horses, as well as grooming and equipment maintenance.

Your role

You will work full days from Monday to Sunday. Although weekends are always busy, you can ask to have time off should you want to do something.

Activities during the week could include:

- Training of young horses.
- Grooming and cleaning.
- Assisting shoeing of horses.
- General equine husbandry.
- Lessons in saddles and bridles.
- Horseback riding.
- Counteracting alien vegetation.
- Community project with the local forestry community.
- General farm maintenance.

Please note that the work on the project is for experienced riders only. There are a number of tasks that require a very good working knowledge of equine husbandry. The days can be long and tiring, but incredibly rewarding, and you will learn valuable lessons in how these amazing beasts live and work in South Africa.

It is important to note that this description serves as an example only. The daily tasks and challenges depend on the volunteer, the time of the year and the work that needs to be done. The final job description can therefore vary substantially from the above.

Getting to and from the project



The Kruger Horse Project is based in Kaapsehoop, approximately 35 km away from Nelspruit, Mpumalanga.

You need to arrive at KMIA (Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport) where you will be collected by the volunteer staff. The drive from KMIA to the project will take just over one hour. Transport is provided on both your arrival and departure from Monday to Friday.

Alternatively, there is a shuttle transfer from OR Tambo International Airport (Johannesburg) to Nelspruit. This drive will take approximately 4 hours and is a safe way of travelling in South Africa. To book a shuttle, visit either of these two websites: www.citybug.co.za or www.lowveldlink.com.

The project arranges transfers from either KMIA or Nelspruit, depending on which option you have chosen. You need to provide your travel information two weeks in advance.

Accommodation

The project accommodation is very basic but comfortable. You will be housed in a volunteer quarter which is a two-bedroom house located on site. The house has a fully-equipped kitchen, a shower, a separate bathroom and a lounge area. The bedrooms are each equipped with two single beds and you will be asked to share with one other person if the maximum volunteer capacity of 4 persons is reached. The veranda looks out onto the stunning mountains of the Kaapsehoop region. There is also an open fireplace should you wish to barbecue or sit around a campfire in the evenings. Bedding and towels are provided. Laundry



service is available. WiFi is available at your own expense – the project team can help you to purchase a South African SIM card for your devices/phone.

Meals

Three meals a day are provided. Breakfast usually includes cereals and muesli with yogurt and fruit salad. At lunch light sandwiches are offered. For dinner you will be provided with South African cuisine, either a braai (barbeque) or a cooked meal. You will be asked to assist with the meal preparation as well as with the cleaning up.

A vegetarian option is available and it is also possible to cater for special dietary requirements.

Free time

After your workday you can play some games, watch TV, take walks, go swimming, socialize with other volunteers, etc. or you simply explore the surrounding area. Kaapsehoop itself is a beautiful village with scenic views and hiking trails.

There are many exciting opportunities for excursions that can be done during your stay. You can visit the world renowned Kruger National Park, which is about one and a half hour's drive away and offers the possibility of viewing the Big Five in their natural environment. You can enjoy the Panorama route that takes you to some of the historic sites of the region as well as to breathtaking waterfalls. There is the Elephant Sanctuary, Moholoholo Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, the Endangered Species Centre & Kapama Cheetah Breeding Project as well as other animal sanctuaries that are one to three hours drive from Kaapsehoop away.

There are also several activities in the near vicinity, i.e. geckoing, the Big Swing, caving, hot air ballooning, etc.

All these tours and activities can be booked onsite.

Local Transport

A town trip to Nelspruit, Mpumalanga's provincial capital is scheduled once a week so that you have the chance to get into town and do some shopping.

Any other local transport, i.e. for your free time, is at your own cost.

What to bring

Documentation

- Passport.
- Proof of travel insurance.
- Any other personal documentation required.
- Please note that it is advisable to leave photocopies of important documents at home with your next of kin.



Spending money

- Currency: South African Rand.
- NO ATM facility on-site.
- Bring cash.

Large travel backpack or suitcase as well as a small day backpack.

Personal toiletries and a small first aid kit

Clothes

We recommend bringing dark clothes that you don't mind getting dirty

- T-shirts.
- Light sweater or fleece top.
- Shorts.
- 2-3 pairs of jodhpurs.
- Long trousers.
- Skirts (optional for ladies).
- Underwear,
- Socks.
- Swimwear.
- Windproof jacket and/or waterproof jacket.
- Waterproof trousers (optional).
- Sun hat or cap.
- Pyjamas/nightwear.
- Casual or 'nice' clothes for the weekend (optional - you may feel uncomfortable going to a restaurant in khakis).
- Beanie.
- Hat.
- Gloves during wintertime.

Footwear

- Walking boots: medium-weight, well broken-in hiking boots for bush walks.
- Sneakers/trainers.
- Sandals or flip-flops.
- Formal shoes (optional - you may feel uncomfortable going to a restaurant in working shoes or flip-flops).

Equipment

- Sunglasses (with high UV protection).
- Torch (LED headlamp recommended).
- Sewing kit.
- Camera (with batteries or charger, film or memory card).
- Binoculars (optional for trips to the Kruger Park).
- Riding half-chaps (suggested).
- Riding helmet (suggested).
- Mobile phone and charger (recommended in case of emergencies, SIM cards are available at a low price at local supermarkets and the project will help you load data for Internet access).
- Plug adaptors for South Africa are generally not available in Europe and the US but can be purchased cheaply on arrival.



While there is no specific uniform, volunteers are asked to wear sensible clothing, e.g. long shorts and closed shoes. Hot pants, string bikinis and flip-flops are not suitable for work.

Medical insurance

It is required that you take out medical insurance before travelling to South Africa. For stays exceeding 90 days, it is compulsory to take out a South African medical insurance. We recommend NetworX from Compcare, which is specifically designed for people who visit South Africa for 3 to 12 months. You will receive an information leaflet and an application form together with your confirmation of booking.

Health

No vaccinations are required except for travellers going to the north-eastern areas of South Africa, where anti-malaria precautions are recommended. Clients should consult their doctor for recommendations.

A yellow fever certificate is compulsory for those persons who have travelled from, or intend travelling through, countries in the yellow fever belt:

Africa: Angola, Burundi, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zaire.

South America: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guyana, Guyana, Panama, Peru, Surinam, Venezuela, Argentina and Paraguay.

Bring medication just in case you suffer from any travel-related illnesses, e.g. stomach upsets, since your body needs to adjust to the change in food and water during your first few days in South Africa.

It is important to keep in mind at all times that HIV and Aids are widespread diseases in South Africa.

Consult your Travel Clinic on advised vaccinations for the Kaapsehoop/Nelspruit area. Recommended vaccinations include Hepatitis A&B, Typhoid, Rabies, Tetanus, Diphtheria and Polio. The ticks in the project area transmit a disease called tick bite fever. There are no vaccinations against this disease but it can be cured if caught in time.

You do not require antimalarial medication for this project. However consult your doctor before your trip, as this project is located on the border of a malaria area. Please note antimalarial medication can sometimes mask the symptoms of malaria, so if you choose NOT to take antimalarial medication, you should contact a doctor immediately if you feel ill on or after the project. Please contact us at Good Hope Volunteers should you have any questions about this.

Safety

While all safety precautions are followed, you are still working with wild animals and must be aware at all times and follow the safety guidelines. Horse riding and working with horses is classed as a high-risk sport, so suitable insurance is a good thought.



Cultural diversity

We suggest doing some light reading regarding the history of South Africa and its people. Please note it is a very ethnically diverse population, and there are many different groups of people with different ideas and behaviors. We suggest being as open minded as you can - try understand the history and note that in rural areas the differences can be more pronounced. Please try to be modest in what you wear and how you behave.

What's included / not included

Included:

- Project placement
- Airport transfer on arrival and departure (Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport or Nelspruit)
- Accommodation (shared room, breakfast, lunch and dinner, laundry with self-service)
- Town trip once a week
- Horseback riding
- An orientation at the beginning of your volunteering
- Electronic certificate (printed copy on request)
- Local support including a 24-hour emergency number

Not included:

- Excursions
- Any items of a personal nature
- WiFi

Visa

You can volunteer in South Africa on a visitor's visa for up to 90 days.

Nationals from certain countries (e.g. Brazil, Switzerland, Germany, Australia, France, Netherlands, Spain) will receive their visa when entering South Africa. Other nationals need to apply for a visitor's visa at a South African Embassy in their home country before travelling.

If you come to South Africa on a visitor's visa, you can extend once by another 90 days.

If you plan to come for more than 90 days, you need to apply for a visa at a South African Embassy in your home country. This visa is restricted to registered NGO's and therefore not available for this project.

For the latest information contact the South African Embassy or Good Hope Volunteers.