

Valley of a 1000 Hills



Overview

Location Isithumba Village (closest town: Cato Ridge, about 14km away), South Africa.

Duration From 2 weeks.

Dates All year round.

Requirements

- Minimum age: 17.
- You must have an Upper Intermediate level of English.
- Special skills: You need a love for children and you should display sensitivity and empathy.

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, passport copy, proof of medical insurance, police clearance certificate.

Day of arrival Monday.

Day of departure Monday.



Highlights

- Work and live in a Zulu village.
- Learn how to skate or improve your skills with a professional skater from South Africa.
- Be instrumental in the change that takes place in vulnerable youth.
- Experience warm and tropical weather all year round.
- Experience the Zulu culture and traditions first hand.
- Work with the local kids and elderly from the community.
- Take part in excursions outside of the project: Waterfall hikes, surf trips, safaris, etc.
- Make new friends from all over the world.

Project information

In 2001 skateboarding was fast becoming an attractive activity amongst youths throughout South Africa as it was an expression of a new-found freedom without limits and boundaries. In an attempt to include rural and vulnerable youths in the sport, South African professional skateboarder Dallas Oberholzer set out to nurture a sustainable skateboarding environment in a rural Zulu village in an attempt to bring people from diverse backgrounds together and add credibility to the power of sport, specifically skateboarding, as a tool for nation building.

The project's presence was instantly embraced by the local community while the local chief gave them land in kind. The focus on development soon shifted to upskilling young leaders within the community, creating jobs and sharing in the project's vision to put the work in them, knowing that it would provide for everyone's future. This is how, from merely playing innocently together 12 years ago while skateboarding, young leaders were in turn nurtured and are now the leaders of the Skate Camp Youth Movement.

They see their movement and facilities as safe places where youths can grow up in a healthy, inspiring and active environment. The staff that run the facility coordinate daily programmes with youths after school, sharing knowledge of wellbeing, nutrition and fitness. In the library anything goes down, from art classes to technology, film and photography.

Still, the project's biggest focus is on developing communication skills, specifically spoken English. Their English improvement programme started by developing a resource library in their facilities clubhouse. They then developed a series of ice-breakers and skateboarding games that prompt spoken English, encouraging crowd participation and support.

Even though rural communities in South Africa are plagued with lethargy, the skate park has engaged youths in their growth, development and maintenance. This world-class facility has been built by their own skateboarders and in doing so they have nurtured skills in others.

Programme details

The project offers volunteers the opportunity to see change and progression in both the grounds and the youths/community they engage with. Volunteers will share in the happiness of the kids and staff as they help create and maintain the grounds and facilities or engage in activities with the youths.



You will be able to assist these youths in creating a brighter future for themselves through their passion for skateboarding.

Your role

The morning starts with general maintenance and ground keep. Plants/gardens need watering and care while preparations for the afternoon's programme commence. If there is any building or maintenance going on, you are expected to help. Lunch is from 11.30 until the programme starts at 14.00.

Skating with the kids will be in the afternoon - from 14.00 to 16.00 you will be involved in the daily after school sessions where you will be able to do skating with the kids.

You help with the daily programme until the kids leave at 18.00, thereafter you take turns to cook and clean.

The work varies according to camp projects running, i.e. building, landscaping, gardening, etc. The project coordinators like to use you for your strong points so you will also be given personal projects to complete.

Other possible activities might be sweeping, raking, gardening, litter/clean-ups, cleaning, painting, building furniture, cooking, childcare.

The project runs from Monday to Friday, while Saturdays and Sundays are open park days too.

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 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 project is based in Isithumba Village, in the Valley of 1000 Hills. The Valley of 1000 Hills is named after the many hills, cliffs and valleys which rise up from the banks of the Umgeni River as it flows from the distant Drakensberg Mountains to the Indian Ocean.

You need to arrive at King Shaka International Airport in Durban where you will be collected by the volunteer staff. Airport transfers are offered between 08.00 and 20.00.



Accommodation

Your accommodation is within walking distance of the project and can accommodate up to 15 volunteers. You are accommodated in dorm-style or twin rooms with a shared bathroom. There will be a maximum of 5 volunteers in one room – men and women separated. The accommodation offers a lounge, a kitchen, a skate ramp, a skate pool, etc. Bedding will be provided. Towels are not provided so you must bring your own. Laundry can be done by hand or for R50 per load in the washing machine. There is a cell phone available – you pay per call. WiFi is available in the lounge/dining area.

Meals

Three daily meals are provided. Breakfast includes cereals, milk and toast. At lunch sandwiches, salads or leftovers from the main hot meals are available. For dinner you will be provided with a fully cooked meal. The food is healthy and fresh – when possible from the project's own gardens. All meals are eaten in the dining room or lounge.

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

Free time

In your free time you can walk around the village, swim in the river, relax on the camp grounds, enjoy camp fires, go on town trips, do some hiking, go climbing, make beadwork with locals, learn Zulu dancing, etc.

For weekend activities, e.g. Durban trip, safaris, etc. transfers can be arranged by the project.

Being in the Valley of 1000 Hills, you are in the middle of an adventure sports playground. There are also historical sites nearby like the institute where Nelson Mandela cast his first vote and where Mahatma Gandhi lived; this tourist route is called the Inanda Heritage Route. A short drive away further towards the Drakensberg there are many artisans with galleries. In Durban itself going surfing or hiring a bike and riding along the 'golden mile' beachfront is recommended. Or why not take a drive up into Lesotho along the famous Sani Pass, only 2 hours away? In the rainy season there are waterfall rock slides and hot springs for exploration 3 hours inland.

Local transport

Transport must be organised at your own expense. You are encouraged to take local taxis. Transfers can also be arranged by the project at an extra cost.

What to bring

You are advised to bring older clothes for work so as not to get your best clothes dirty or damaged. Summer season is from December to February, although it is hot from October through May. You should then bring light clothes with an old warm item like long pants and a sweater. Winter is from June to August. You should bring warmer clothing.

Other items you will need are:

- Swimming costume.
- Pajamas.

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- Toiletries and Towels.
 - Hat.
 - Sunscreen.
 - Camera.
 - Walking shoes.
 - A South African adaptor.

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.

Safety

HIV and AIDS are a major public health concern. You should be aware that you are working with children that could be infected. The project is situated in a malaria-free area so no drugs are required.



What's included / not included

Included:

- Project placement
- Airport transfer on arrival and departure (King Shaka International Airport)
- Accommodation (dorm-style or twin room, breakfast, lunch and dinner)
- An orientation at the beginning of your volunteering
- Electronic certificate (printed copy on request)
- Local support including a 24-hour emergency number
- WiFi

Not included:

- Local transport
- Excursions

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.