

Penguin & Marine Bird Rehabilitation Project

2025/6



Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), Eastern Cape, South Africa



Marine Bird Conservation



Education





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I. Who is SANCCOB?

In 2000, the South African Marine Rehabilitation and Education Centre (SANCCOB) was established in Port Elizabeth following the Treasure ship disaster that spilled oil near Cape Town, endangering 20,000 penguins. Despite being relocated, many penguins swam back 800 km to Cape Town within 11 days. This incident highlighted the vulnerability of the African Penguin and the need for facilities to address potential future threats to their largest breeding colony.

The focus of SANCCOB is to care for sick or injured African Penguins (also known as Jackass Penguins) because of their vulnerability as well as other marine birds such as gannets, cormorants, and seagulls. Their work is vital for the safety of the largest breeding colony of African Penguins in the world, which is situated on St Croix Island right in front of Port Elizabeth.

One of the main causes of the decline in the numbers of African penguins is that the cold currents in which penguins find their food have been pushed further out to sea due to climate change. This results in them having to swim almost 60 kilometers away from their burrows on St Croix and by the time they get back to feed their babies much of the food has been digested. This results in the young chicks not being fed properly and therefore taking much longer to fledge and become independent. When the chicks are left to fend for themselves, not knowing how to catch their own meal, they slowly weaken and wash up on our beaches.





SANCCOB is the only center in Port Elizabeth that has the capacity to collect washed up penguins sick, hurt or exhausted and to treat any diseases they may have, give them a vitamin boost, fatten them up and release them into the bay again.

Modern marine traffic and the Coega seaport in Algoa Bay pose significant threats to the local penguin breeding colony. While pollution is monitored in the harbor, oil spills can occur as ships queue in the bay. Even a small amount of oil on a penguin's feathers can be fatal. SANCCOB rescues and cleans these birds, boosting their health for successful release.

The center's secondary function is to inform and educate the public. The extensive displays at the center give tourists, school groups and other visitors the opportunity to learn about these endangered birds but also a wider variety of marine life in the beautiful and incredibly diverse Algoa Bay

2. What do volunteers do?

Volunteers will be assisting in a variety of tasks and activities such as:

General

- Welcoming visitors
- Answering the phone and office duties (filing, taking, and delivering phone messages, printing, copy work, receiving deliveries, data capturing, stocktake, postage, communication with suppliers etc.)
- Attending to "Bird Calls" (phone calls relating to birds in need of rescue)
- Assisting with emails
- Guiding visitors and school groups through the centre
- Helping at the coffee shop when needed
- Centre maintenance duties

Fundraising

- Capture visitor's data into database
- Filing
- Thank you letters to donors
- Tracking donations from donors
- Assisting in creating Penguin adoption packs
- Assist with tin collection program





Sea school

- Teaching the visiting children about the centre
- Helping with rock pool and shipwreck lessons
- Looking after displays and educational material

Bird hospital

- Maintaining a high standard of hygiene and cleanliness in the rehabilitation centre.
- Scrubbing and cleaning the bird hospital facilities
- Washing and drying of laundry
- Cleaning equipment used in food preparation and feeding
- Defrosting and preparing fish for a variety of seabird species.
- Preparing and administering medication to different bird species.
- Feeding the penguins and other birds (force feeding and free feeding)
- Hydrating (tubing) different bird species.
- Assisting in maintaining the permanent bird exhibit (scrubbing rocks, raking sand and food preparation)
- Cleaning and caring for the birds that are brought in
- Catching and handling of different bird species.
- Assisting with bird release preparation
- Joining the staff (when possible) at rescues in the Port Elizabeth area





3. How can I help?

Fundraising & Donations

Keep in mind that you have already made a donation to the project but if you feel motivated to raise further funds before visiting, we are happy to help with any information you may need. To wisely and effectively spend such donations we suggest first to spend some time here and then plan your donation to ensure maximum impact. If you are keen to bring certain materials before traveling to South Africa please connect with us so we can let you know which items are most needed.

Volunteer your time and energy!

Days:

The centre is open 365 days of the year and needs volunteers throughout the year. Volunteers work 5 days per week from Monday to Sunday from about 8h00-17h00 with a lunch break 13h00-14h00 and short tea breaks during the morning and afternoon.

This means that you will be asked to work on weekends but then you will have two days off during the week. Some days might start earlier or later and in summertime, due to the heat, hours can change.

Supervision:

You will be supervised by our Volunteer Coordinators who will pick you up upon arrival, make sure you are settled in, show you around the city and prepare your work activities at SANCCOB. They will transfer you to and from the project, make sure the shopping is done and organize fun outings for the weekends.

At SANCCOB your work will be supervised by one of the staff members who will allocate daily tasks and activities to you. They will also be the people to report to in the mornings and sign out before you leave again at the end of the day.





4. How to become a volunteer

Step 1

Submit your application.

Step 2

Our booking office will help you to confirm your stay.

Step 3

Check out our special discounts and offers & book your flights and/or travel arrangements.

Step 4

Finalise your payments.

Step 5

Wait in anticipation for your departure date!





5. Location!

Port Elizabeth (new name: Gqeberha), Eastern Cape, South Africa

The Eastern Cape and the surroundings of Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha) show a large variety of natural beauty, and this makes it a great place to see the variety of South Africa.

To the East you will find the Wild coast (former Transkei and Ciskei) which is mostly rural and undeveloped, but closer you will find Addo National Elephant Park and great coastal villages such as Port Alfred.

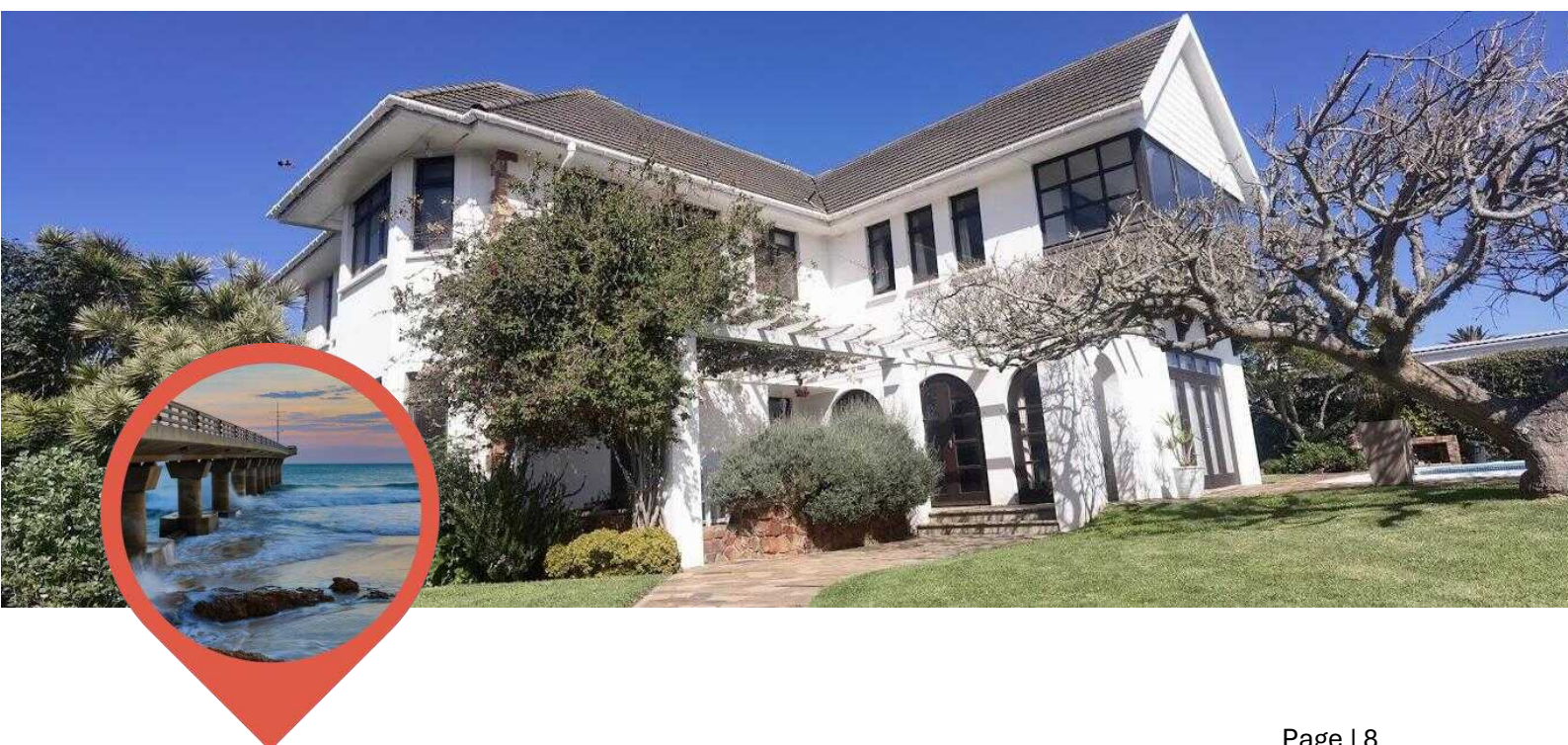
To the North you will find the great Karoo; a semi desert area with wide open spaces, large nature areas and long open roads with historical places such as Graaff Reinet, the Baviaanskloof Wilderness and much more.

To the West towards Cape Town, you will be amazed by the Tsitsikamma National Park, holiday villages such as Plettenberg Bay, Knysna and Nature's Valley & world-famous surf mecca; Jeffreys Bay.

This gives you plenty to see and visit while you are here, and we believe even provides you more diversity than staying in Cape Town for example. You could always add a visit to The Mother City before or after visiting us in the Eastern Cape.

South Africa

Especially for a country like South Africa, researching the history before you go will explain cultural differences you might see and will add a whole new dimension to your experience. If you understand the history of a country, you will understand not only the country better but also the people, their culture, and customs.





6. But is South Africa safe?

Despite general ideas of South Africa being very unsafe, it is important to know that South Africa is known to many as very friendly and welcoming. But please remember that you must realise that in big cities you must stick to a certain behaviour to avoid complicated situations. As 70% of people live in poverty and few are extremely rich, the differences in life and hope for a better future creates a situation that fuels crime, lack of education, substance abuse, domestic violence and many more problems.

Your safety is very important, and your host will look after you to the best of their ability. We do expect you to do your bit and keep to our safety guidelines. Common sense if you best friend when it comes to safety, but here are a few guidelines:

- Do not walk alone or at night, use an Uber.
- Walk in a group where possible and stay on roads where you are in sight of other people.
- Do not walk around with visible valuables.
- Do not carry a backpack on your stomach; it shows you have valuables and are a tourist.
- Be confident and know where you are going without standing on corners looking at your phone.
- Have a phone on you but do not walk around while calling.
- The project manager at the project will give you additional guidelines that must be followed.





7. How much does it cost?

Included in fees:

- Information and assistance before departure
- Pick up upon arrival and drop off at the end of your stay (Monday – Friday)
- Stay in an exclusive beautiful Volunteer House with shared rooms and many facilities (wifi, washing machine, swimming pool, large lounge, dining room, garden)
- 3 Meals per day (family-style)
- Daily transport to-and-from the project
- Weekly offer of outings and fun activities (some for an extra cost)

Excluded from your fees:

- Private Luxuries (snacks, cool drinks, alcohol etc.)
- Costs for weekend outings to safari parks etc.
- Flight tickets
- Insurance
- Arrival/Departure transfers on weekends (Saturdays & Sundays) ZAR250 local payment applies
- Laundry powder for personal washing

DURATION:	EURO	USD	GBP
4 Weeks	€ 1,145	\$1345	£1000
Donation 4 Weeks	€ 190	\$225	£165
Additional Weeks	€ 240	\$280	£210
Donation Per Additional Week	€ 30	\$35	£25





Accommodation

The exclusive Volunteer House in Port Elizabeth is a gorgeous home with lots of space. If you prefer to relax in the garden, at the pool or in the lounge; this home has a special place for everyone.

The home is a beautiful old house renovated and decorated with modern touches. A large swimming pool for summer and a fireplace for winter, what more do you need?

The property is well secured with electric fencing, a security company backup and superbly located within walking distance of the beach for a swim or surf, different restaurants, a laundromat & other shops.

If you would like a private room as a single traveller or as a couple, please let us know and we will advise you on availability and potential surcharges.

Meals

All meals are included, and we work on a set menu per week, lovingly prepared by our cook Mary with your assistance, so don't be shy, help out in the kitchen and you might learn to cook some new dishes. All dinners are cooked, however on weekends when our cook is off, volunteers warm pre-made meals or make a simple dinner with ingredients provided (hamburgers are a favorite).

Breakfast: choices of bread, fruit, yoghurt, cereals and/or eggs.

Lunch: make your own sandwiches with cheese, marmalade, cold meat or other spreads to take with you to the project.

Dinners: a variety of hearty homely, cooked meals such as pastas, soups, stews, pies and oven dishes.

There is free instant coffee, tea and safe drinking water available at any time. We also cater for vegetarians & vegans but please inform us before arriving to prepare accordingly.





8. When can I start?

Arrival at accommodation can be any day of the week, but new volunteers usually arrive on **Mondays** and start at the project on Tuesdays.

Participation is in full weeks only (7 nights per week). If you need to arrive a few nights early or stay a few extra nights, please let us know and we can advise you on availability and cost.

The centre admits a variety of seabirds throughout the year and for each species there are peaks and lows during the year. When working with wild animals, there can never be guarantees but the centre has seen certain patterns that can give you an idea of what to expect:

	Peak Season	Common Reason For Admission
African Penguins	October to January	abandoned chicks
Cormorants	January to March	weak juveniles
Cape Gannets	January to May	weak juveniles & abandoned chicks
Hartlaub's Gulls	February to April	abandoned chicks
Kelp Gulls	January to June	Botulism
Swift Terns	February to April	Abandoned Chicks





9. What will be expected of me?

It is important that volunteers:

- Are physically fit and able to stand for a full shift
- Are comfortable with getting dirty
- Are willing to work in all weather conditions, often outside
- Can work in a team as well as independently
- Can follow Standard Operating Procedures
- Are reliable and accountable
- Are of a compassionate and caring nature with a love for seabirds
- Can work well under pressure
- Are at least 18 years old
- Are up to date with their tetanus vaccination
- Have consulted with their doctor before volunteering if they are pregnant, on medication or allergic to animal dander or detergent.
- Persons with chronic respiratory ailments or impaired kidneys or liver should avoid working around crude oil.

This project is not for the faint-hearted. The birds are wild and will bite at any opportunity. Learning how to work with birds is a bit like riding a bike... the more you practice the better you become. Volunteers should know that commitment is the key to learning how to handle and feed birds.





10. Things to consider

Visa

Most countries will get a free visa upon arrival in South Africa, please check if you are unsure and note that visas are the responsibility of the volunteer, and that Go with Khaya can not be held responsible for clients being denied entry, should they not be in the possession of the relevant visa.

In general, the rule applies that any stay of longer than 90 days in South Africa will require you to apply for a visa before departure. If you plan to stay shorter than 90 days most nationalities receive a free visa upon arrival in Johannesburg or Cape Town airport which can be extended for another 90 days (total of 180 days) in South Africa at [VFS Services](#).

All travellers must be in possession of a valid onward/return air ticket.

Passport

South Africa insists on people having 2-free pages available when you enter. Keep this in mind if you are going to fly home from South Africa after completing a tour to multiple African countries. Please ensure that your passport is valid for at least six months after your date of departure from Africa. You are personally responsible for ensuring that passports, visas, vaccination certificates and other travel documents are in order and for all costs relating thereto.

Vaccines

Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha) is a malaria free area. We do have mosquitoes in summertime, but they are more of an annoyance. For other vaccines we recommend that you contact your local physician or travel clinic for information and advice.

Weather

The weather in this part of Africa can be diverse and summers can get warm, while winters can get quite cold. Port Elizabeth has a very moderate climate though due to the ocean currents and winds, cooling things down on those hot summer days.

Not what everybody expects of Africa but bring a jacket and warm sweater to be prepared for some of those colder days, if you come in our winter months (June, July, and August).

Summer (Dec, Jan and Feb) 16 – 40 ° Celsius

Autumn (Mar, April and May) 10 - 32 ° Celsius

Winter (June, July and Aug) 8 - 25 ° Celsius

Spring (Sep, Oct and Nov) 10 - 32 ° Celsius

Insurance

Accidents can happen to anyone. Make sure to get comprehensive travel and medical insurance.



Alcohol

We allow alcohol to be enjoyed at the accommodation but only for those of 18 years and older. Volunteers under the age of 18 are not allowed to drink alcohol as per South African Law.

We do not allow any parties or gatherings at the house where alcohol is consumed and advise you to go out to enjoy yourself and to drink responsibly.

At this project volunteers work with children who are exposed to alcoholism and all the negative results of it. For this reason, volunteers will not be allowed to participate if they smell like alcohol in any way.

Drugs

Using or possessing drugs is illegal in South Africa and we have a zero-tolerance policy so if we become aware of this, you will unfortunately no longer be welcome at our accommodation or program.

Disclaimer

Go with Khaya commits itself to always offer accurate and correct information, but please keep in mind that information can change, and all projects can be subject to change regarding their programs and/or accommodation arrangements.





II. Let's stay connected

We'd love to stay connected! Please follow & subscribe to our social media platforms below.



[Instagram](#)



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