



Vervet Monkey Project

- 📍 Bela Bela, Limpopo, South Africa
- 🔍 Monitoring & tracking
- 🐾 Wildlife rehabilitation
- 🌿 Conservation: rescue, rehabilitate, and release.





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I. Who is BAMBELELA?

Vervet monkeys are one of South Africa's five indigenous primates. The other four are the lesser Bush baby, the thick-tailed Bush baby, the Samango monkey, and the Chacma baboon.

Vervet monkeys are classified as "old world monkeys", meaning that they have been around for over 65 million years - long before apes and humans.

However, their numbers are declining due to habitat loss, formerly classified as a pest or vermin so they are shot and killed by farmers, laboratory testing of medicines, used for 'muti' or traditional medicine and the illegal pet trade.

Vervet monkeys are vital to our ecological system and need to be protected. They are an integral part of the natural food chain in parts of Africa as their messy eating habits distribute food from high places to the ground for ground feeding animals. They provide natural insect control by eating the eggs and larvae of many species. They assist in the germination, pollination, and dispersal of various floras.

History

This project, established in December 2003, is a privately owned and operated wildlife rehabilitation and conservation centre in the Waterberg district north of Pretoria. It is well known and especially well regarded for its exceptional work with Vervet monkey and Baboons.. Since 2008 they have successfully rehabilitated 12 troops of monkeys, who are now living free at safe release sites, on Bushveld farms in Limpopo.

The Vervet Monkey Rehabilitation Center is located 20km out of Bela Bela in the Limpopo province in South Africa. The founder of the project originally immigrated to South Africa from Germany in 1990 with her late husband. After his death in 1997 she decided to dedicate her life and savings towards the care and conservation of South African Wildlife.

From a rocky start, they began taking care of animals that were almost ready for release back into the wild and in doing so, recognized their true calling: to help wild animals in need.

People from the Waterberg district learned of their work and started to call upon them for help, as did the veterinarians from the region. They became well known and well regarded as a Rehabilitation Centre and have successfully rehabilitated and released many species of antelope, including Eland, Kudu, Impala, Red Hartebeest, and Nyala, Blue Wildebeest, Warthogs, Bush pigs, Serval cats, Zebra, Yellow-billed Kites, Black-back Jackals, Porcupines, and many more. They even had the pleasure of looking after an orphaned Rhino baby in 2009, who is now a sub adult and living free.



Monkey Business

Then, by chance, the owner's heart was touched by a Vervet monkey. It was found abandoned in a cage on a property outside Bela Bela, which was for sale. The owners had already departed, so the estate agent brought the young, female Vervet to the project. A few days later, a neighbour dropped off a younger Vervet. Then, a new Vervet baby was taken away from someone who kept it as a pet and was brought in.

The spark of interest in Primatology was ignited! The quest for knowledge about these special creatures, how to hand-raise them, how to build appropriate enclosures or camps for them, how to feed them, and how to prepare them for release back into the wild was started.

The project is now home to over 300 Vervet monkeys, field guide students and volunteers from around the world to join in the work with these monkeys and all the other wildlife that comes for rehabilitation. They also work in close collaboration with local veterinarians and function as a transfer station for orphaned or injured baboons in the Waterberg district.

The project rescues, rehabilitates, and releases members of three of our five South African Primate families:

- The Lesser bush baby,
- Chacma Baboon and
- Vervet Monkey.

The incredible team of staff and volunteers concentrate mainly on Vervet monkey rehabilitation, taking in injured and orphaned monkeys, forming troops, and finding monkey friendly game farms to release a rehabilitated troop. To date they have successfully given 13 troops, a total of almost 300 monkeys, a second chance to live free again after, as a persecuted species, they had lost their freedom due to habitat destruction, illegal shootings by farmers, snares, electrocutions, pet or 'muti' (traditional medicine) trade.





2. What do volunteers do?

Vervet monkeys show their emotions through biting and they bite when happy, when sad, they give you little love bites and they bite much harder when they are upset with you!

Expect a few bruises (especially in the first few days) and maybe you will get urinated and pooped on (we call it "Monkey blessings") so expect to be dirty at the end of the day. It will all be worth it when you have gained the trust and confidence of one of our orphans who climbs onto your lap for a cuddle or a nap.





3. How can I help?

Volunteer your time and energy!

Days

Normally the working day starts at 7h45am and depending on the season, finishes between 17h00 (winter) and 18h00 (summer). Always remember that the needs of the animals come first, so working hours and duties can change at short notice.

Typical day

07h45-10h00: Cleaning of cages, food preparation, feeding, cleaning up of grounds and food preparation area.

10h00-11h00: Brunch.

11h00-13h00: Project work.

13h00-14h00: Lunch.

14h00-15h00: Food preparation, feeding of cages and cleaning of food preparation area.

15h00-17h00: Project work.

Examples of project work: cage repairing, fire clearance, making enrichment tools for the cages, food sorting and cage building.

The work is not too physically demanding but a reasonable level of fitness is required. As in most remote areas of South Africa, there are no facilities for the disabled.

Supervision

You may find your first few days a little overwhelming and confusing. Don't worry, you will find yourself fitting in very soon. You will have a tour of the compound and meet the staff and your fellow volunteers. All will be happy to show you the ropes. Much of our day is scheduled; you will have activities and responsibilities assigned to you in due course. As you show an aptitude for various things, different assignments may come your way.



Project Needs

We are often asked by volunteers what they can bring for the babies so if you have any spare capacity in your luggage, here are a few suggestions:

- Pampers nappies-newborn to size 3
- 50ml and 250ml baby milk bottles and teats
- Soft toys
- Soft blankets
- Tennis balls
- Baby Dummies/pacifiers
- Baby bottle brushes
- If you have access to veterinary **supplies**, please contact us.

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

Bela Bela formerly known as Warm Baths (English) or Warm Bad (Afrikaans) is a small Bushveld town famous for its hot springs. The small town is now mostly a stopover point for the many safari reserves in the area and popular with holidaymakers from Johannesburg. The village has all the shops you might need for groceries, clothing, medical services, and restaurants.



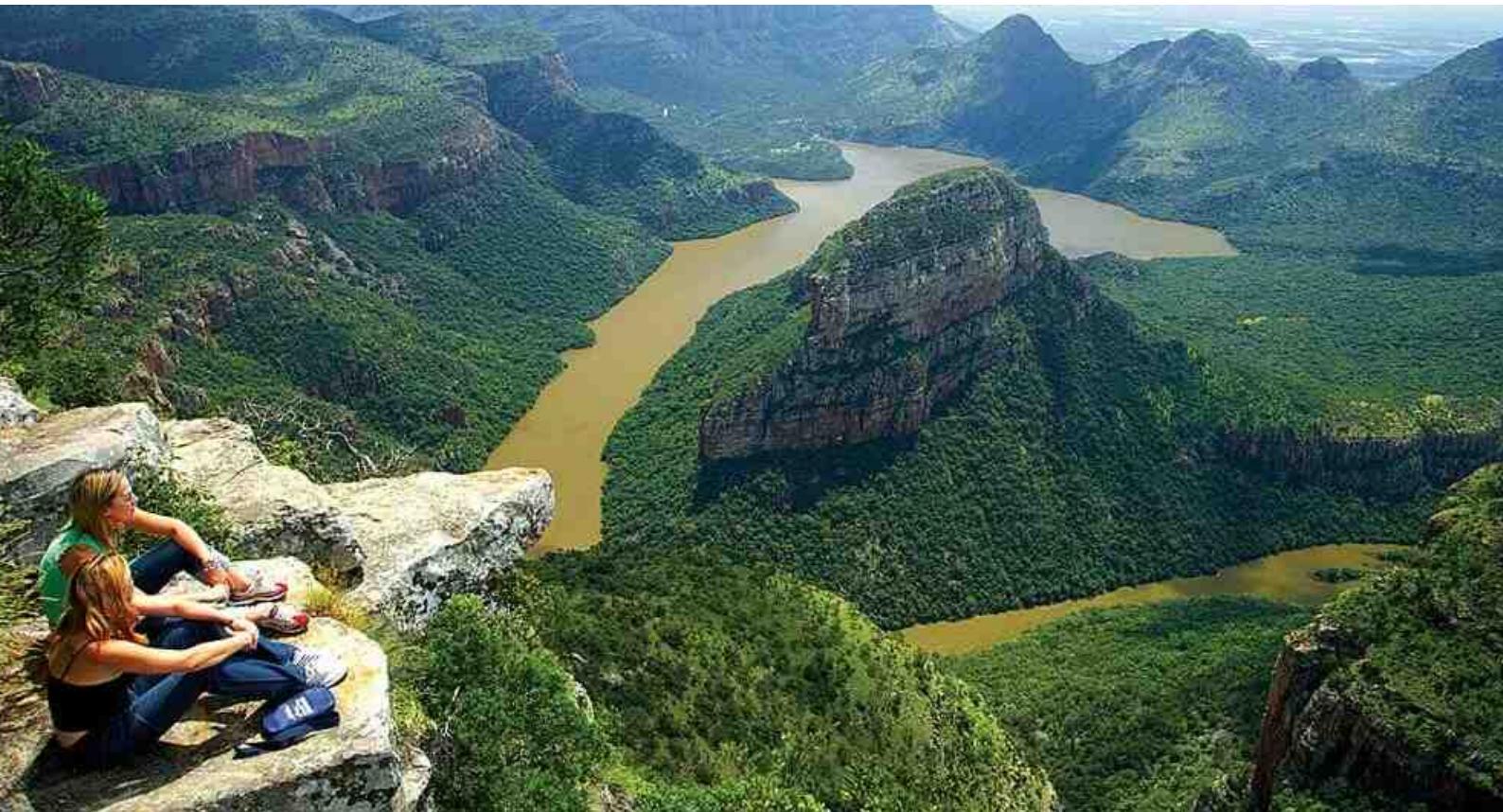


6. Is South Africa safe?

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 is your 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.





7. How much does it cost?

Included in fees:

- Accommodation in shared volunteer dorms (male and female separated)
- 3 meals a day (light breakfast, brunch, and dinner)
- Supervision of your activities
- Contribution to the running costs of the project

Excluded from your fees:

- Flights
- personal expenses
- visa, immunization costs
- transport to the project from OR Tambo International Airport Johannesburg
- Upgrade to private bedroom
- Bedding, towels

DURATION:	EURO	USD	GBP
1 week	€ 550	\$ 645	£ 480
2 weeks	€ 930	\$ 1 095	£ 815
3 weeks	€ 1 290	\$ 1 515	£ 1 130
4 weeks	€ 1 675	\$ 1 965	£ 1 465
5 weeks	€ 2 075	\$ 2 440	£ 1 815
Extra Weeks (after 5 weeks)	€ 395	\$ 465	£ 345
Transfers from/to JHB (one way)	€ 130	\$ 155	£ 115

Accommodation

The project is based in the bush on a privately-owned wildlife reserve and offers the unique opportunity to be away from the craziness of everyday life and enjoy true nature. You will not only have all these monkeys around you but also passing troops of baboons who frequent the centre on most days, porcupines who come to visit at night, a herd of zebras who love the long grass outside the volunteer house and other animals. There are even tracks of leopards seen close to the house, so nature is on your doorstep.

The volunteer accommodation consists of 2 rooms which sleep 4 each with en suite



bathrooms (shower and toilet) and in the middle a lounge/kitchen area to cook and relax. The outside 'stoep' (porch in Afrikaans) offers a shaded area to eat meals and socialize.

The volunteer accommodation is shared with some of the orphaned monkeys and baboons as volunteers will need to care for them 24/7, feed them every 3 hours and change their nappies so expect to share your bed with a monkey or two.

If you prefer a private bedroom with your own bathroom, let us know. These rooms are often available at a surcharge and depend on availability.

There is internet access 24 hours a day available for a small fee per week.

On weekends only the bar will open for a game of pool and a drink or two and volunteers can ask permission to use the swimming pool on the premises

Meals

Meals are included. Breakfast consists of cereal and rusks with coffee and tea early in the morning and a brunch at 10:00AM.

Dinner is served at 17:30 and volunteers rotate with cooking and cleaning duties. Fifteen minutes prior to dinner time, a team of two will set the table with supplies from the volunteer house.

This same team will clear the table after meals and do the dishes. A schedule that will include you will be posted within a couple of days of your arrival.

We usually shop twice a week in town and volunteers will be given the opportunity to travel into Bela Bela to shop for themselves and for the other volunteers. We also run a small shop at the premises with beers, snacks and sodas and all profits go to support the monkeys.

Transfers from/to Johannesburg

When you arrive in South Africa this will mostly be at OR Tambo International airport in Johannesburg. You can make your own way to Bela Bela (formerly known as Warm Baths) but we gladly assist you in booking airport transfers from the airport straight to the project.

We have negotiated a special rate with a transport company who takes you from the airport 180 km up north and have you dropped off at the project. Please look at the "What does it cost?" section for rates. Please keep in mind that these rates can vary from time to time. If more volunteers share the transfer the costs will be reduced per person. These transfers are not done at night. Transfer times are only between 08:00 am - 14:00 pm. But chat to us so we can make the best plan possible for your arrival.



8. When can I start?

Starting your volunteer work is in general on Mondays but we try to be flexible so if another day fits better with your travel plans let us know.

9. What is expected of me?

It is important that volunteers of this project understand the importance of the following:

- Caring for animals requires patience, compassion, and a calm demeaner.
- A positive attitude,
- Willingness to help and learn
- Sense of humour
- Volunteers should expect to be dirty and exhausted by the end of the day!





10. Things to consider

Visa

As visa requirements vary per country, please look up if you can get a free 3-month visa upon arrival. Please note that visas are the responsibility of the volunteer, and that Khaya will not be held responsible for clients being denied entry, should they not be in the possession of the relevant visas.

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.

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

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. 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 drink responsibly.

Volunteers will not be allowed to participate if they smell like alcohol or are not capable of working because of partying.

Drugs

Using or possessing drugs is illegal in South Africa.

We have a zero-tolerance policy for drug or excessive alcohol usage and if we become aware of this you will possibly no longer be welcome at our accommodation or programs.

Disclaimer

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;



[Instagram](#)



[YouTube](#)



[Facebook](#)



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