

# Great White Shark Conservation

## Project GANSBAAL, SOUTH AFRICA



At African Impact, we see ourselves as the on-the-ground **AFRICANSPECIALISTS** in volunteering. We were founded over 5 years ago in Zimbabwe and have our head office in Cape Town, South Africa, with supporting operations offices in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. To date we, together with our project managers out in the field, have had the privilege of sharing Africa with over 3,000 volunteers who were determined to make a difference in the amazing communities and conservation areas in which we work.

We invite you to join our Great White Shark Conservation Project in South Africa and get involved in the research and conservation of this magnificent creature!



African Impact

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## Project Highlights

- Observe Great White Sharks on a daily basis
- Cage-dive with Great White Sharks
- Learn about the biology and behaviour of the Great White Shark
- Learn basic seamanship, including wind directions and anchoring positions
- Get involved in underwater filming and still photography
- Assist with research and learn about shark conservation
- See other wildlife species such as whales, seals, penguins and dolphins
- Immerse yourself in local South African culture

## Project Location

The project is based in Gansbaai, a diverse and scenic seaside village situated approximately two hours south east of Cape Town, in South Africa – known as the world capital of the Great White Shark! Gansbaai depends on fishing and tourism for its survival. The White Shark fieldwork will take place around Dyer Island and possibly other shark locations. Dyer Island (popularly known as Shark Alley!) is possibly the best place in the world to see Great Whites.

The shark team document much shark activity using aerial surveys of the island. The area is the perfect habitat for the Great White, as the island is the breeding ground for Jackass Penguins, Cape Cormorants and Gannets, while Geyser Rock, which is opposite the island, is a breeding mecca for Cape Fur Seals and is currently home to approximately 20,000 seals. In season, whales and an occasional dolphin can be spotted.

## More about Great White Shark Conservation

Roaming the world's oceans, the Great White Shark is undoubtedly the greatest predator of the seas. Cloaked in myth, misunderstanding and fear, this awesome animal remains a mystery to humans. Sharks are intelligent and vulnerable, and deserve sympathy and respect. Education helps to dispel the numerous myths about them, and people begin to realize that sharks are a complex and precious species.

The Great White Shark Project is a unique opportunity to view the Great White Shark in its natural environment, either from a boat or an underwater cage. The knowledge which you have gained will be put to use, by assisting in the conservation and research into this awesome animal.

The Great White Shark Project works in conjunction with a world leading organization focusing on the Great White Shark and dedicated to their conservation. Founded in 1989 purely as a research centre, it has since grown and broadened its



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services to include a film department, a diving and viewing centre and a separate conservation and education department. The dedicated Shark Team have been conducting population dynamics and behavioural research since 1991.

The Great White Shark Project is dedicated to the exploration and conservation of the world's greatest predator, the Great White Shark, and its environment. The project works with students, eco-tourists, scientists, conservation organizations and marine resource users (subsistence fishermen, sport divers and dive operators) to gather data on Great White Sharks, correct negative misconceptions about sharks, and stop the needless slaughter of over 100 million sharks annually.



Finding the Great White Shark is a skill, involving years of practice - the water temperature, depth, visibility, swell height, current and wind direction are all major factors. Great White Sharks are surface feeders, so volunteers will be spellbound when seeing the Great White lift its head right out of the water to take the bait, and sometimes breach completely. Divers will get to experience Great Whites from the safety of cages, while non-divers have a great opportunity to view the sharks from the safety of the boat, where exhilarating photographs and video footage may be captured at close range.

In Shark Alley, you will likely also see seals, penguins and the occasional dolphins frolicking near the islands, as well as magnificent southern right whales coming up from Antarctica to breed from May to November. These expeditions are more than just thrill-seeking adventures, they are educational experiences.

### **The Volunteer Project**

The programme provides volunteers with hands-on, practical experience in working with Great White Sharks. Volunteers will enjoy regular trips to sea to view / cage dive with the Great Whites. Volunteers are involved in all aspects of the work, which includes preparing baits, packing the boat, washing the equipment, working with the eco-tourists, recording data on the sharks and even helping with the dishes. The expeditions encompass getting up early, working during long days at sea, and then relaxing with the crew or other volunteers at night!

Weather permitting, you will go to sea frequently on the projects custom built white shark catamaran, where you will get involved as much as possible with all aspects of sea work. This will focus on working with the sharks from above and below the water. Emphasis will be placed on observing behaviour and the interactions of sharks around the boat and you will be joined on the boat by day visitors to the project, wanting to experience the magnificent Great White first hand!

### **Cage Diving with Great White Sharks**

Once anchored in the channel, the project makes use of a specially designed, secure, four man steel cage, which floats on the surface, with divers no more than 1m below the surface. Volunteers will be taught how to get in and out of the cage and how to remain secure and safe in the cage. Volunteers are also responsible for recording observations on the Great Whites, including sex, size, markings and behaviour. Diving takes place on a rotational basis on good diving days. The duration of each dive depends on the diver, the number of eco-tourists and the activity of the sharks, but could be up to half an hour per dive.

### **White Shark Field Research Data Collection**

Volunteers will be taught how to collect data in the field on free-swimming white sharks. At sea, you'll be focused on working with the sharks from above and below the water, observing behaviour and the interactions of sharks around the boat. You will be educated in an informal environment, learning about the behaviour of the great whites, their history and the urgent need for research.



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### **Basic Seamanship**

Volunteers will also be taught basic seaman skills including boat handling, welding, trailer reversing, equipment maintenance and repairs. In addition, talks and videos may be given in the evenings or off-sea days on Great White Shark biology, research, behaviour, conservation, changing attitudes, attacks, basic seamanship(which includes anchoring positions, wind directions), underwater filming, still photography and shark tourism. The program is designed to train and educate volunteers to a level of competence of a field assistant.

### **Project Staff**

Viewing the Great White Shark is a serious activity which should only be done with the right people, equipment and approach. The Great White Shark Project works in conjunction with one of the top shark organizations in the world and has the most experienced shark team in Africa. They have worked on and featured in over 30 white shark documentaries, including BBC, Discovery Channel and National Geographic; written articles for African Indigo, Outdoor Adventure, Dive Style, Peak Performances, Surf Magazine and Immersed; and lectured at institutions such as Cambridge University, the Royal Geographic Society, London University and the University of Stockholm. This background and knowledge, combined with an enthusiastic staff and excellent infrastructure, has resulted in an organization that produces high quality and successful Great White Shark expeditions.

The project is a responsible tourism operation that sets a benchmark in its commitment to community development and upliftment and is deeply involved in the social, economic and environmental needs of the surrounding communities. The project also runs tourism and environmental education programmes in the Gansbaai schools – fostering pride, a sense of personal responsibility towards the environment, and teaching life skills. The aim is to empower children in caring for their environment and themselves - if the project has any outreaches during your stay you will be included in this.

The Project's latest venture is the White Shark Recycle Swop-Shop. The school children collect rubbish and litter from the streets and in their homes. They earn points for these recyclable materials which they 'spend' in the shop on much-needed



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school stationery or clothes. This project promotes recycling, environmental awareness, and self-reliance, and helps to provide for some of the basic needs of the children. The volunteers and staff involved find it an enriching experience that helps bridge the gap between different cultures and communities. On Tuesdays you will be expected to help at the Swap Shop – if you want to bring a contribution, it will be greatly appreciated.

### **A typical day in the life of a Great White Shark Conservation Project**

**06:30** - Get up, have a help-yourself breakfast of cereals / porridge, toast, tea / coffee, and start preparing to depart for your project

**07:30** Head off to your project for that day (a 30 second walk) and inspect the boat and cage

**08:00** Travel out to sea with the boat and spend the morning assisting with data collection and shark identification

**12:00** Return to the mainland for a short break and make sure everything is in order for your afternoon trip to sea

**13:30** Depart for sea again with the day visitors and assist with showing them the magnificent Great Whites!

**16:30** Return to the mainland, clear the boat, clean diving equipment and enjoy tea and scones.

**18:00** Evaluate the day with fellow volunteers and project coordinators, and discuss the schedule for the next day. Check your e-mails or go and hire a DVD from the shop around the corner.

**18:30** – Prepare dinner at your volunteer house or enjoy dinner at one of the local restaurants.

On days when the weather is unfavourable, you will be given a lecture on one of a variety of project related topics for example Great White Shark biology and behaviour. Local excursions could also include Cape Agulhas, Hermanus, Betty's Bay and the Birkenhead.

As the Great White Project is involved in the day to day running of Great White Shark cage diving trips you will be required to work on weekends with time taken off as and when required. If at any stage you are feeling tired or unwell you will be more than welcome to take time off.

*(Please note that your itineraries may differ from this, depending on your own experience and the number of other volunteers on the placement at the same time, and this is simply to give an example)*

### **Project Costs**

Your volunteer fee for this project is payable in South African Rands (ZAR), if you would like to check currency exchange rates we recommend [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).

2 Week Placement: ZAR 10 000 (approximately £900 or US\$1380)

3 Week Placement: ZAR 15 000 (approximately £1360 or US\$2070)

4 Week Placement: ZAR 18 500 (approximately £1675 or US\$2550)

6 Week Placement: ZAR 25 500 (approximately £2300 or US\$3500)

8 Week Placement: ZAR 32 500 (approximately £2945 or US\$4475)

### **Project Cost Includes**

- Project Fee: this entails financing that goes directly back into the project that you are involved with. This fee facilitates funding for items such as research and diving equipment.
- Orientation program
- Board and lodging which includes breakfast at the volunteer house and lunch on the boat
- Email and Internet access at your volunteer house
- Unlimited tea, coffee and juice throughout the day
- Two volunteer T-shirts
- Volunteer Project Cape
- White Shark Field Book
- A wine tasting tour and outings to Betty's Bay – to see the Jackass Penguin colony and to Struisbaai – the Southernmost Point of Africa where you will feed the Manta Rays!
- A whale watching trip during Whale Season (August – December)



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### Project Cost Excludes

- All transport by air or bus to Cape Town
- All items of a personal nature, such as curios, gifts, clothing (work and other)
- Telephone calls (you will be able to receive telephone calls at the volunteer house)
- Laundry service during your stay (reasonably priced)
- Wines and spirits
- All visas for border crossings
- Any excursions over and above your planned itinerary i.e. Garden Route, Cape Town trip etc (your project manager can help plan this for you)
- Personal insurance cover for the duration of your placement, which is expected to include cover for repatriation

### Project Meals

Breakfast is on a help-yourself basis and usually consists of cereals/porridge, toast, tea and coffee. You will enjoy lunch on the boat and tea and scones in the afternoons when you return from your day's work. You will be responsible for your own dinner and need to purchase provisions and prepare it yourself. If you wish to eat out you are more than welcome to do so and there is a pick-up service in place with several local restaurants for volunteers eating out.

We do cater for vegetarians. *(Please let us know before you depart for Africa of any food allergies or specific requirements.)*

### Project Accommodation

Volunteers stay in a delightful brick house situated a one-minute walk from the harbour, which bustles with action and boats as people head out to sea. Overlooking the Indian Ocean, the house is very comfortable with dorm rooms, a nice kitchen, a dining area, a lounge with television and dvd player / board games, and an outside patio for those hot evenings. There is a small supermarket nearby (volunteers usually buy provisions and prepare meals together) and the house is located in a very safe and beautiful area, where you can freely walk around anytime of day or night.

### Project Orientation

Upon arrival in Gansbaai all volunteers are involved in a welcome and induction which is included in your fee. This is facilitated by the White Shark projects team leader and includes an introduction to our project and where you will be spending your days and further useful information for your time with us.



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## Project Support

You will also have the support and guidance of our experienced project managers. They are part of our greater African Impact support team, which will provide you with competent 24-hour field support and assistance.

## Weekend Highlights

The area surrounding Gansbaai contains many unexplored yet interesting places. You could explore the caves in De Kelders or hike along the coast and walk along the sandy white beaches of Franskraal and Pearly Beach. Enjoy a tractor ride in the fynbos or spend time in the Strandveld Museum learning about the history of the area. Visit the Dangerpoint Lighthouse and see where the *HMS Birkenhead* met her doom.

Vivacious Cape Town, one of the most stunning cities on the globe, is just two hours from Gansbaai. It is the home of the spectacular Table Mountain; the heritage site of Nelson Mandela's prison home, Robben Island; the gateway to the stunning Western Cape wine lands; and boasts magnificent beaches, amongst others. For the adventurer Cape Town also offers the opportunity of Sky diving (ZAR 1750 – including transport) or abseiling down Table Mountain (ZAR 495).

You could also arrange a Garden Route weekend for yourself!

*\*The above activities are not included in your volunteering fee, but our co-ordinators are able to assist you with making the necessary booking arrangements.*

Your project managers will be able to assist you with booking the above activities.

*(These are not included in your volunteering fee, but our coordinators are able to assist you with making the necessary booking arrangements).*

## How to get there

You will need to fly into Cape Town International Airport and arrange to overnight at an accommodation of your choice. Arriving the day before will give you a chance to catch up on some sleep and relax. You will be collected by our project co-ordinators from your chosen accommodation on the start date of your project, which could be early in the morning.



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## Meet your Destination Manager for this project!

Originally from the Netherlands, Marleen joined African Impact as a volunteer in Zimbabwe in 2005. She fell in love with the continent straight away, and joined African Impact permanently in 2006 to develop and manage projects in Zambia, and later in South Africa. Marleen now lives in Cape Town, where she works at our head office. Marleen will take you through the entire process of your placement, and will be available to answer any questions you may have.



## Our Partners

**The Happy Africa Foundation** [www.happyafricafoundation.org](http://www.happyafricafoundation.org) African Impact is proud to have been instrumental in the establishment of The Happy Africa Foundation in 2007 and continues to be one of the Foundations major supporters. UK Registered Charity Number: 1123529. The mission of The Happy Africa Foundation is to empower the African people through the support of community and conservation based initiatives that operate at grass roots level.

We are proudly affiliated to the UK-based **Know Before You Go** campaign that promotes education and knowledge-sharing amongst travelers.

African Impact is proud to be **WINNER** in the Africa-wide Imvelo Responsible Tourism awards 2010, as well as **FINALISTS** in the 2010 World Travel Awards. We see this as exciting recognition of our position as African specialists in Volunteering with over 6 years experience.



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