



# MARINE CONSERVATION: WHITE SHARK PROJECT SOUTH AFRICA

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

South Africa has everything ...

- ◆ Sun, sparkling warm and clear oceans, and the most beautiful golden beaches you will ever see ... stretching for miles.
- ◆ Mountain climbing, biking and hiking
- ◆ The *Garden Route*, world famous and sheer paradise!
- ◆ Outstanding Game Reserves where you can see wild animals in their natural habitat, and by contrast symmetric vineyards stretching to infinity
- ◆ Sharks, whales and dolphins, and the amusing Cape Fur Seals.
- ◆ Elegant restaurants, barbecues and beach parties
- ◆ And FRUIT everywhere!



But most of all, South Africans are the friendliest and most hospitable people in the world - without a doubt! If you're invited to dinner ... don't eat for a week beforehand because you'll be overfed, especially if it's a barbecue. Wine is cheap and good. The salads are to die for. And - of course - the fruit! From the exotic to the commonplace, it's everywhere.

## THE GREAT WHITE SHARK PROJECT

Roaming the world's oceans, the Great White Shark is undoubtedly the greatest predatory force of the seas. Cloaked in myth, misunderstanding and fear, this awesome animal remains a mystery. Contrary to popular opinion, shark attacks are rare, with only 20 to 30 fatal attacks each year worldwide. The media hype of these attacks and movies have installed a primitive fear in humans. This fear has been exaggerated, exploited and then marketed at the expense of the well being of the shark species. Sharks natural feeding areas are seal colonies, not a beach packed with surfers. In fact, it is recently said that sharks hate the taste of human blood!

**100,000,000 sharks are killed each year by humans**, usually through fishing. They are, as a result, in danger of extinction. Great White Sharks are the last wild predator on earth that we cannot tame; from that point of view alone it deserves our respect and attention. There is an increased awareness and interest in the plight of this animal, thanks to organisations like the one you will be working for.

Great White Sharks are very stable animals, displaying stable and predictable behaviour. They do not fight with or bite one another. They are highly intelligent animals, able to remember and learn quickly. Sharks are vulnerable and deserving of sympathy and respect. Education helps people to lose the *Jaws* phenomenon and to gain the accurate realisation that sharks are a complex and precious species that we need to understand better and to preserve.

### THE WHITE SHARK PROJECT (WSP)

White Shark Projects is a world-leading organisation focusing on Great White Shark diving, viewing, filming, conservation and education. The Organisation was founded in 1989 as a research organisation carrying the name South Africa White Shark Research Institute. This was triggered by a shark attack on a girl further up the coast. Several teams got together to form a research centre with the intention of creating a better understanding of the animal. Until then no real research into the Great White Shark had taken place.

Since then, the company has grown, broadening their services to now offering a film department, a diving and viewing department and a separate conservation and education



department run under the name South African

Conservation Education and Exploration Society (CEES). The CEES runs Student Educational programmes, White Shark Expeditions, International Lecture tours, International member/adoption programmes, School lecture programmes, community development programmes, volunteer programmes and more.

WSP used to be run by Craig Ferreira and his dedicated Shark Team who have been conducting population dynamics and behavioural research since 1991. Craig Ferreira is world renowned for his extensive work with White Sharks in the fields of research, filming and conservation. He is also the founding member of The *International White Shark Exploration Society* and has spent much time lecturing about sharks in South Africa and at universities around the world. Craig's father, Theo formed the original shark project and was responsible for having the Great White declared as a protected and endangered species in South Africa. Their concern is with furthering and enhancing the chances of the survival of this rare species. The WSP Mission Statement states:

*“Everything we do we aim to do in harmony with nature and the environment we are working in”*

WSP is now owned and directed by Charmaine Beukes, Rene Beukes, Wilmeen Harris and their partners Kappie Beukes, Jakkie Beukes and Edwin Harris. There are about 20 people working for WSP- and **five** full time boat staff.

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION + DEVELOPMENT:** White Shark Projects host a very active and progressive education programme. They believe that by educating people they can dispel the myths and inaccuracies surrounding sharks and save the many endangered species around the world.

There are several civil development projects in the area, such as teaching the local children, educational grants to people with disadvantaged backgrounds, monthly beach clean up projects and more.

Adventure seekers, photographers and naturalists come from all over the world to work with the Shark Team, brought together with one common goal - to save the Great White before this magnificent creature disappears from our oceans forever.

**DIVING WITH THE GREAT WHITE:** Finding the Great White Shark is a skill involving years of practice, the correct water temperature, depth, visibility, the height of the swell and current and the wind direction are all major factors.

WSP undertakes cage diving with sharks. This was originally not a popular idea, as it was believed that by baiting humans in cages, sharks would associate humans with food, by conditioning. At White Shark Projects they proved this theory incorrect by discovering through their research that sharks are highly nomadic animals. Their territory ranges over vast areas, even across continents. Research shows that a shark does not stay in one place long enough to become conditioned. They also disagree that cage diving is dangerous on the basis that a shark cannot mentally separate the human diver from the cage.

**THE LOCATION:** The program will run out of Gansbaai, South Africa. Gansbaai is a seaside village, which depends on fishing and tourism for its survival. It is situated approximately two hours south east of Cape Town. The White Shark fieldwork will take place around Dyer Island and possibly other shark locations. The shark team document much shark activity using aerial surveys of the island. Many other wildlife species can be viewed from the boat. It is the breeding ground for Jackass Penguins, Cape Cormorants and Gannets, and Cape Fur Seals. In season whales and an occasional dolphin can be spotted. This is a perfect habitat for the Great White.



## YOUR PLACEMENT

The placement is designed to give volunteers the opportunity to work with WSP in the area of sharks, tourism and community development. You will work with the shark teams directed by Mike Ladley. You will be taught, guided and lectured by one of the most skilled field teams in the world.

The kind of work you will be doing will largely depend on what WSP are working on at the time you are there. During the summer time, WSP are very involved in tourist trips and dives (these fund research and community development projects) and thus they have very little time for the research and development side of their work during this period. They also run Student Education Programmes throughout the year. This is a two week course for students from around the world where they come for lectures on sharks, conservation, photography and cage diving.



**RESEARCH:** Your participation in research with the WSP will depend on a number of factors mostly to do with the resources available to WSP at the time you are there, i.e. are there any available boats and do they have enough people on their team. These factors will influence whether or not the shark tagging takes place while you are there.

This area focuses on working with the sharks (the Great White and other species in the Cape including copper sharks) from above and below the water. Much emphasis will be placed on observing behaviour and the interactions of sharks around the boat. You will be taught how to get in and out of the cage and how to remain secure and safe in the cage. In the cages, you will record observations of the White Sharks. This will include sex, size, markings and behaviour. Most of the research is more a type of educational research.

**TOURISM:** If your project falls during the high season – which is December to February – you will be more heavily involved with the tourist boats as WSP is very busy with tourism at this time. Throughout the year there will be tourists, though, and you will be expected to help out with this aspect of the WSP. You will also be involved in helping to run the guest house and preparing lunches for the tourist on the boats.

You will also be helping the crew prepare the boats and (when there is space on the boats) taking the tourists out to sea.

The WSP has a strong affiliation to research, education and conservation. High standards are essential and you will be working under the full authority of the WSP, as all the paid staff members do. As a volunteer, if you work well in a team, you will have a wonderful experience working with some of the most skilled white shark teams in the world.

*Please remember that your work will depend on outside factors, such as what is required from you at the time you're there, what the weather is like, what time of the year you're there, what research projects they are working on and how busy WSP is during your placement.*



## A TYPICAL DAY

Wake up at and get ready at around 6:30 – 8:00. After breakfast, assuming that diving will take place that day (because dives are subject to weather conditions), the day may start with helping to make sandwiches or perhaps giving assistance in the bait shed. There is quite a bit of preparation required before setting off, and some of your work could also include preparing food to take on the trip for yourself, the crew and the tourists. This will be followed by helping to load the car with all the necessary equipment and taking it down to the boat.

Next comes the boat preparation: You will help fill the boat with fuel, load the wetsuits, tie the fenders, load the boats and make sure everything is in order.

Once the tourists have had their briefing, the boat leaves the harbour and you'll spend a total of 5 hours out at sea. During that time, you will participate in data collection. This will include taking details of the weather, sea temperature readings and general conditions existing at that time. Once a shark is spotted, you will need to record as much information as you can about it, including data such as size, any scars or other identifying marks, the length of time it remains around the boat, etc.

If it is decided that it is a 'good' shark, the cage will be lowered into the sea and you will help with preparing the tourists for the cage dives. This will include getting them into their wetsuits and diving equipment.

You may not participate in a cage dive on each occasion, but you should have the opportunity on most occasions. Please keep in mind that not every boat trip ends in a cage dive – it will depend on whether there are any sharks around at that time, whether the sea conditions are conducive to lowering a cage, and other similar factors.

Just to give you an example, though, a very recent volunteer on a one-month placement went out to sea on 20 occasions, but the cage was only lowered on 9 of those occasions. She managed to swim in the cage on all 9 occasions for approx. half-an-hour on each occasion, but this participation frequency is not guaranteed.

At the end of the 5 hours, you will return to the shore and here your work will continue. You will assist in unloading the boat, reloading the car to take everything back up to the house, and then packing it all away after you have helped to clean the wetsuits and the lunchboxes and hang everything up to dry. After that the evening is yours!



## LECTURES

During your placement you will have opportunity to attend a number of lectures on various aspects of shark conservation. The number of lectures will vary at different times of the year. There is unlikely to be any underwater photography while you're there, as this activity has decreased substantially, but you may be able to attend a lecture on the subject.

### **Food:**

Food is NOT provided on this project. This is because when we have provided food to volunteers on this project in the past, there were such varied tastes, likes, dislikes, etc., that it proved difficult. The local supermarket stocks a variety of food; there are kitchen facilities in the house for cooking.



The local supermarket stocks a variety of food and there are full kitchen facilities in the house for cooking.

### **ON ARRIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA:**

You will be met at the airport by our Cape Town Manager, Jim Morel, Volunteer Coordinator, Eleanor Kilduff, or our preferred airport transfer company.

You will then be taken to a lodge in Cape Town, where you will spend one night before being fetched the following morning by the 'White Shark Bus', which takes you onto Kleinbaai. Please be aware that the bus usually arrives at around 5am so don't have a late night!

The White Shark project team will introduce you to everyone and go through an orientation with you when you arrive. Our SA team is on call 24/7 if necessary, and are always there to help you in many different ways.

### **THE NEXT STEP**

If you would like to join us on one of our exciting projects then please fill in either an online application form at our website ([www.travellersworldwide.com](http://www.travellersworldwide.com)) or one that is attached to our brochure. Once you have booked and confirmed your place we will send you detailed pack information regarding your placement and country.

**I do hope you join us and please do call or email if you have any questions at all about this or any of our other projects – 01903 502595 or email [info@travellersworldwide.com](mailto:info@travellersworldwide.com)**

**If you would like to know more about Travellers in general, or about any of our other projects we run in over 18 countries worldwide, please visit our website at [www.travellersworldwide.com](http://www.travellersworldwide.com)**

### **TRAVELLERS WORLDWIDE**

7 Mulberry Close  
Ferring  
West Sussex,  
BN12 5HY, England  
Tel: +44 (0)1903 502595  
Fax: +44 (0)1903 500364  
Email: [info@travellersworldwide.com](mailto:info@travellersworldwide.com)



**Travellers are very proud to introduce their new Division, TEFL Time! Get qualified to teach English as a Foreign Language. TEFL Time runs professional UK based weekend and online courses - see [www.tefltime.com](http://www.tefltime.com) for details.**

