



South Africa Newsletter



Welcome to Mzansi!!*



Well summer is hitting our shores again with the days getting longer and blue clear skies!! Despite the holiday feel in the air a cloud still hangs over us in South Africa. It was just reported recently in our local news that another 2 white rhino have been poached at a private game reserve. This brings the number of rhino poached in 2011 up to 341!! That's more than one a day!!! Travellers Worldwide is keen to assist in this area and we were fortunate to be involved with a rhino relocation project in September. This was a success and Helen Purdy who volunteered on the project had the most amazing time and had this to say "Just back from the rhino/cheetah experience in South Africa and it was awesome! I strongly recommend it to anyone who wants an introduction to South Africa, lots of wildlife, friendly hosts and a relaxing but unpredictable trip! Apart from sitting on the back of the safari truck a lot watching the reserve go by I also hid from poachers in a lightning storm, flew in a helicopter on a game count and watched the cheetah eating from only 10 feet away in the setting sun. Fantastic!"

Some of the Knysna volunteers were indeed lucky to get the chance to see these beautiful creatures up close and personal while doing a horse riding safari in their free time. Imagine their delight on seeing that there was a baby rhino too!!!



Helen also had this to say about the their beautiful cheetah, Rebecca "

The afternoon session started at 3pm and usually involved more animal tracking. Often Anthony would take the afternoon trip and we

would end the session with a visit to track and, if we were lucky, to sit with Rebecca the cheetah. She is so beautiful and enigmatic and it's such a privilege to be able to get close to her. You really do have to pinch yourself to remember that she's a wild animal who



just tolerates us because of Anthony's hard work and time investment. She even let us sit within ten metres of her while she ate her latest catch, a hare, in the late evening sunshine. "

In fact our volunteers have been so busy helping teach English, Drama and Music in local township schools, working at youth development centres, safe houses, soup kitchens, animal rescues, wildlife rehabilitation centres, just to name a few, that they deserve a bit of fun in their spare time and South Africa has so much to offer whether it be taking a trip to the world famous—or should that be notorious—Robben Island where our ex-president and Noble Peace Prize winner, Nelson Mandela, was incarcerated for so many years, taking the cable car up the magnificent Table Mountain, one of the newly appointed 7 Natural Wonders of the world, visiting cheetah sanctuaries, walking with elephants or having birds of prey eating out of your hands. And for those we enjoy their sports to the extreme we have the best spots for skydiving, kite surfing, surfing and the world's highest bungee at 216m off Bloukrans Bridge in the Eastern Cape.

In beautiful Plettenberg Bay, we presently have Humpback whales calving in the bay from October to December. These majestic

creatures are so wondrous and can sometimes be spotted close to the shore.



For those that are determined to do a bit of whale and dolphin watching the best option is to take advantage of the 'ocean tours' that many companies offer. As whales are quite curious creatures there is even a chance of them swimming up close to the boat. This is definitely one of those unforgettable experiences that you will carry with you in your memories your whole life.

Apart from our wonderful whales that are so wonderful to observe off our coastlines we are also known for our shark population, in fact a man was attacked recently after not heeding the shark signals and flags on the beach in Fish Hoek in Cape Town.

For those that have a fascination with these misunderstood creatures then the opportunities to go cage diving with them and observe them from their natural habitat are plenty. It's even possible to volunteer on projects that just focus on marine life and sharks. Not for the faint hearted but with our Great White shark population worldwide vulnerable to extinction—in fact in South Africa they have been protected since 1991—research on them is vital. In South Africa it is illegal to catch Great White sharks while fishing and hopefully with the public becoming more educated about these killers of the deep we

might be able to increase their dwindling numbers. The 'White Death' as they are also known, are quite amazing being one of the only types of sharks which 'breach' while hunting sharks and can reach an estimated 6 meters and weigh up to 2.268 kilograms. There are only rough estimations as to the size of their population though.



The population of South Africa is something that we are at present having counted with our Census 2011. The last time we had a census was in 2001 and our statistics show that across South African our most commonly spoken home languages are Zulu at 23.8 %, Xhosa at 17.6%, Afrikaans at 13.3% with English coming in at 8.2% despite it being the language used most widely for commerce and science. We have 11 official languages spoken all in all across the country in our population of close to 50 600 000 people with the others being Ndebele, Sepedi (Northern Sotho), Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati (Swazi), Tshivenda (Venda) and Tsonga.

Of course we shall have to see once the statistics are in if these figures have changed a lot.

So on visiting South Africa a few good phrases to know are;

Hello **Hallo (Afrikaans)**
Molo (Xhosa)
Sawubona (Zulu)

How are you? **Hoe gaan dit? (Afrikaans)**
Kunjani? (Xhosa)
Unjani ? (Zulu)

I can only speak English **Ek praat net Engels (Afrikaans)**

kuphela (Xhosa)

isingisi kuphela (Zulu)

Bye **Totsiens (Afrikaans)**
Sala kakuhle (Xhosa)
Sala kahle (Zulu)

Ndithetha isiNgesi

Ngikhuluma

It seems extremely intimidating but most South Africans are fluent in at least two languages and quite a few even speak more so communication is never a problem. It just makes our country that little bit more colourful after all we are the 'rainbow nation'.

News Updates

Knysna

(The jewel of the Garden Route)

New on our books in Knysna is our safe house and soup kitchen project, which has received such a positive response. It is a non-profit organisation that provides a warm loving and stable home to children from abusive and neglected backgrounds in our local township. On top of this the housemother takes on the challenge of feeding as many of the children from the community as she can after school on weekdays. For some children this might be the only decent meal they get. To help out with the



children is extremely rewarding as just spending time with them gives them a positive influence in their lives and they

are just so happy to have the attention. It is so amazing to see how some who have so little in their lives can still smile all the time; it really is such a humbling experience.

I am also thrilled that the local youth development centre project has also recently launched its skills centre and will be teaching the youth and locals from the community computer, pottery, welding, sewing, cookery



and even marimba lessons. It has been a long time coming but it is finally up and running with a launch that even our local mayor attended.

And last but not least our local mascot at the volunteer house, “Blondie” our male Vervet monkey has turned out not to be an albino like I originally thought but a genetic anomaly which has been confirmed by Dave from the Vervet Monkey Foundation.



He is indeed a very special boy and possibly one of a kind!!!

Cape Town (The Mother City)

Our volunteers in Cape Town waste no time and soon after they arrive they have their list of activities ready. High on the list is the tour to Robben Island. A recent volunteer said that it was fascinating to talk to the guide

who showed them around the island – as he was one of the inmates of that infamous prison during the time that Nelson Mandela had been there. As one crosses the few kilometres of ocean between the mainland and the island, the views of magnificent Table Mountain looming above the city make one want to take hundreds of photos. In such contrast are the sad stories of the people who spent years looking at that view, but away from friends, family, work and freedom. A visit here is a must when in Cape Town.

One activity which could only be done once a month was a climb up Lion’s Head (a peak next to Table Mountain) above the city of Cape Town, done in the late afternoon to see the sun set and the full moon rise. Armed with goodies to eat, bottles of champagne and torches, a group of Travellers Worldwide volunteers from the backpackers, Colleen, Sofia and Alicia, set off following the path round and round the peak until the spot where you do the serious climb to the top. And they are not alone, a whole bunch of Capetonians and visitors sit at the summit and wait eagerly for the full moon. As the sun sinks behind the ocean, the sky turns an amazing red and gold colour – and then one looks in the opposite direction and the huge moon rises up behind the Hottentots Holland Mountains. It is absolutely stunning and can only be described as an experience of a lifetime!

It begins to get a bit darker and the journey down is a little less steady, and one has to tread carefully by the light of the moon which is now climbing up into the sky above the city. You can see the trail of little torch lights bobbing ahead of you, and every now and then someone stumbles and sends a tumble of pebbles down into the darkness. Amazingly enough, one never hears of any accidents during this great traditional ritual of Cape Town.

Colleen and Alicia are planning to go again tonight as it had been so amazing the last time. On Saturday Colleen is going to climb Table Mountain with a group of friends. Another

must-do activity here – and no namby-pamby going up the cable car for Travellers volunteers! They are escorted up the mountain on foot-usually by one of the managers at the backpackers-and what a feeling of achievement this is, worth every moment of sweat and tears experienced on the way up.

Colleen, Alicia and Sofia have been here for nearly 3 months, each at a different placement. All have had a wonderful experience at their respective placements. Sofia has taught drama and art, Colleen has not only worked in the classroom at her



school for children with autism, but been to the sessions of horse riding for the disabled and been on the school bus taking the kids back to their

homes - what an eye-opener.

Work at the Red Cross Hospital for Children is always a favourite. Every day the volunteers go and choose which toys they are going to “play with” that day. Then off to the wards to spend time with the children, many of whom

have no-one visiting them and the thrill of having someone to play with them for the morning is great. In the township areas one of the frequent tragedies is house



fires. Someone leaves a candle burning, their house catches fire and next minute there is a raging fire leaping from house to house as there are hardly any spaces between them. Adults and children are caught unawares and the burns suffered are unbelievable. It is so terrible to see little kids covered in bandages, sometimes not even aware what has

happened to them and their parents. At the Red Cross the doctors and nurses perform miracles and volunteers bring a bit of fun and enjoyment into the recovery period. We have had a steady flow of volunteers at the Red Cross this year-Alicia has worked at the hospital now for nearly 3 months-and it has been an amazing experience. She will be joined next week by Ciara and Lois, our last two volunteers for 2011.

KwaZulu-Natal (Kingdom of the Zulu)

The cold KZN winter has left, allowing a warm spring to find its way into our province, although we have had some days that are grey and drizzly. Two of our most recent volunteers have been greeted at the airport by pouring rain and were wrapped up in jackets to keep warm.....we are not quite ready to put away the winter woollies.

KwaZulu-Natal is an extremely large province about the size of Portugal. Travelling distances between towns and cities can take anything between one or six hours and the scenery during these drives is very diverse -green rolling hills one moment and the next are the unexpected purples of distant mountain ranges bordered by the warm Indian Ocean on the East.



Our projects are spread across the province and each one offers a different experience. At the

wildlife rehabilitation centre in Durban the volunteers get involved in a variety of tasks. The centre has recently held a fundraising golf day which was a great success and a Travellers PR volunteer was instrumental in helping to raise in excess of R40 000. Much needed funding!

The Director had this to say:

“Rachel’s efforts will probably stand us in good stead to raise approximately R 40,000 in



our upcoming golf day and she has also made the front page of one of the Durban newspapers with a press release she wrote for us. She

has also done extensive research and copy writing for information panels for our environmental education centre that is being upgraded; this will be a legacy she will leave for at least the next 15 years of public tours coming through the centre. Well done Rachel, you have been a real star and we will surely miss you!”

Our two recently established projects, one in Pietermaritzburg and the other in northern KwaZulu-Natal have attracted volunteers in the past two months. These two projects, although vastly different in terms of volunteer requirements, both, hopefully, will bring forth a similar result. One will restore dignity and provide vitally needed life skills to women who can then go back into their communities, fully able to provide for themselves and their children, whilst the other will release rehabilitated wildlife back to their natural environment.



Indeed South Africa is truly the rainbow nation, our cultures, customs, fauna & flora and history is so diverse from region to region. From the top of our world famous Table Mountain along the Garden Route and the breathtaking Knysna Heads all way to the magnificent Drakensburg Mountains and the remarkable St. Lucia Wetlands, both World Heritage sites in KZN, our beloved country is truly magnificent!!!! Visitors are always amazed at how beautiful South Africa is and let’s hope you will come and experience the wonders of **Mzansi!!!!***



*local slang for South Africa coming from the word uMzantsi which in Xhosa means “south”

**You can either e-mail or post any stuff to us:
7 Mulberry Close, Ferring, West Sussex, BN12
5HY. Email: info@travellersworldwide.com**

SA Team

Bill Fussell, Sharon Dreyer, Jim Morel, Eleanor Kilduff, Christine Hydes

Written by Sharon Dreyer and thanks to Christine Hydes, Eleanor Kilduff and Helen Purdy for inserts and photos. Thanks to Jochen Brem, Carey Reis-Pessoa Radford and Rachel Hickinson for photos.

