SOUTH AFRICA: SAFARI & CONSERVATION EXPEDITION

14 & 21-DAY PROGRAM

HIGHLIGHTS

- Assist rangers with ongoing rhino, big cat and African elephant conservation projects
- Track and monitor wildlife movement on a renowned reserve
- Spot Africa's "Big Five" wild animals
- Enjoy a bonfire under the stars
- Visit the extraordinary Snake Pharm project and see how they're advancing the field of anti-venom
- Experience tribal culture and traditional storytelling
- Support the reserve's local community projects
- Zipline through the Karkloof Forest reserve
- Journey to iSimangaliso Wetland Park to support hippo and crocodile conservation efforts (21-day program only)

ACTIVITY LEVEL

- Heavy

2026 PROGRAM DATES

14-Day:
- July 09 – July 22

21-Day:
- July 09 – July 29

GET IN TOUCH!

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Be on the front lines of animal conservation, and learn how to track, monitor and protect South Africa's most majestic wild animals.



OVERVIEW

On this program you will experience life on two renowned game reserves and learn about hands-on conservation on the front lines. You might spot Africa's "Big Five" in the region — lions, leopards, elephants, Cape buffalo and rhino. By night, you'll live at a rustic Home Base on the reserve, hearing traditional stories and learning about tribal culture.

By day, shadow wildlife conservationists in the South African bush on game drives to track and observe animals and learn about sustainably preserving the region's endangered keystone species.









ITINERARY

Actual schedule of activities will vary by program session. The information detailed here is typical for what you can expect to experience; however, service work and activities vary depending upon the needs of our local community partners, various celebrations and customs, as well as the weather and specific needs of the student group.

14 Day Itinerary Map for South Africa



DAY 1: WELCOME TO SOUTH AFRICA!

Touch down in Johannesburg, the heart of South Africa! GLA staff will greet you upon your arrival, and our group will drive together to a local hotel for an overnight stay in Johannesburg. Rest up, because we'll be heading out early the next morning for a road trip to Home Base in the African bush.

DAY 2: SUNSET IN THE RESERVE

Once the whole group has arrived, we'll make our way to Nambiti Game Reserve (approx 4 -5 hour drive). Take the time to get to know your fellow travelers along the road trip After lunch, we'll hike down to our Home Base for the next few days where you can settle in on the vast and peaceful grounds, located right along a biodiversity corridor where migratory animals travel.

DAYS 3-4: SERVICE WORK BEGINS

While at Nambiti, we'll get an introduction to reserve life, an overview of the research being conducted on the reserve as well as an introduction to the use of telemetry to track and monitor animals which will mark the start of our service work to support the reserve! After dinner, a night drive will introduce you to the nocturnal wildlife species that one normally does not see during the day. You will get involved in monitoring activities that will help to collect data on these lesser known species! During the day at camp we'll learn more about tracking animals on foot, go on bush walks to study the region's biology and ecology and just enjoy being in nature. We will end with an open-fire cooking competition under the starry night. Team up and show off your skills! Ever wondered how scientists figured out that birds go South for the winter or how much birds weigh?

DAY 5: TRANSFER TO HOWICK & ZIPLINE

Today we start moving east and along the way we'll experience the thrill of a lifetime in Karkloof Forest Reserve by going on an exhilarating zipline









DAY 5: TRANSFER TO HOWICK & ZIPLINE

adventure through the trees! Soar high above the stunning landscape as you glide through the treetops, taking in breathtaking views of ancient rock formations and diverse wildlife.Whether you're a seasoned adventurer or a first-timer, this unforgettable experience will leave you craving more!

DAYS 6: TRANSFER TO BONAMANZI GAME RESERVE & SERVICE CONTINUES

Transfer from Howick to Bonamanzi. Once we arrive at Bonamanzi, we'll get straight into service work around the reserve.

Monitoring of endangered species, such as rhino, is a critical management activity as it ensures that individuals and family groups are safe and thriving. You will learn how to use telemetry, how to identify individual animals through their ear notches and how to capture the data so it supports the work of reserve managers and the anti-poaching unit.

DAYS 7-9: ANTI-POACHING UNIT ROTATION

Be exposed to the important work of the Anti-Poaching Unit (APU) and assist by checking if there are holes in fences (where poachers enter) and collect wire snares that are used to illegally hunt animals. These activities will be conducted with armed rangers. Ensuring the long-term protection of a wilderness area requires ongoing projects that manage road repair, broken fences, address alien plant invasion and assist with the overall management of the reserve.

This rotation will be focused on supporting these projects and getting involved in activities that expose you to the behind-the-scenes work of a wildlife reserve. Camera traps are cameras that are secured to trees and are triggered by movement. They are important tools for monitoring wildlife that are elusive (such as leopards) and or nocturnal (such as hyenas). Cameras traps are placed in strategic locations and photos are downloaded and analysed to find out what wildlife is in the area and it helps to monitor their movements and behaviour. This forms an important part of the research conducted in the area.

Throughout the service , we'll learn from local biologists and conservationists about the issues that have reduced the Black Rhino population by 98% in the last thirty years. They range from land development to poaching for the illegal, international trade of rhino horn to parks being overrun by nonindigenous plant species. Guaranteeing a rhino sighting is near impossible, as the animals graze and wander at their own will across the large sanctuary—but keep your fingers crossed! You'll be able to track their whereabouts in real time with the conservation team, and are guaranteed to see countless other wild animals daily at close proximity, like the African wild dog, impala, kudu, nyala, giraffe and many others.

DAYS 10-11: SNAKE PHARM PROJECT

Over the next few days, we'll learn more about the world of Anti-Venom and the challenges faced by veterinarians in Africa. Learn how the Snake Pharm Project has made groundbreaking discoveries using biomimicry in order to shorten production time of life saving anti-venom. Students will hear first-hand about the Anti-venom production process from experts at the Snake Pharm and then support in the research lab with general lab admin. Other facility tasks we may support with include; digging up plants and decorating snake, water monitor, and crocodile enclosures.









DAY 12: LOCAL COMMUNITY SERVICE, TRADITIONAL STORIES & LOCAL CRAFTS - CONTINUED

Life on the reserve is very far removed from the tourist path, so prepare to encounter a wealth of traditional culture. Today you will spend the day in a local village to participate in specific projects that are being supported at the time. Project Rhino & Move Africa are local NGO's that we have worked with over the past few years, helping to facilitate their projects in the reserve's community. Hear stories straight from the source by spending time with local families and enjoying tea with the community Gogo (grandmother) and making traditional crafts and shop from artisans for handmade beadwork, intricate basketry and colorful pottery.

In the afternoon, we'll go on a Big Five Bush Walk. A highlight of a wilderness experience is having the opportunity to hike through the bush that is the animals' home. This is your opportunity to walk with experienced and qualified guides through the territory of the Big 5. While there is always the chance of seeing larger mammals, this is also an opportunity to learn about smaller animals on the reserve, as well as to identify the tracks and signs of the bush.

DAY 13: HLUHLUWE IMFOLOZI BIG FIVE

Today will be an unforgettable day in Hluhluwe–iMfolozi Park, the oldest proclaimed game reserve in Africa.

Hluhluwe–iMfolozi Park is widely recognised as the birthplace of modern rhino conservation. In the mid-20th century, southern white rhinos were on the brink of extinction, with fewer than 100 individuals remaining, many of them found here. Through pioneering protection efforts, the park launched Operation Rhino, introducing groundbreaking strategies such as anti-poaching units, wildlife monitoring, and the world's first large-scale rhino relocation program.

These efforts not only saved the white rhino from extinction but allowed populations to recover and be re-established in protected areas across Africa and beyond. Today, Hluhluwe–iMfolozi remains a stronghold for rhino conservation and a living example of how science-based management, community involvement, and long-term commitment can reverse wildlife decline.

Visiting the reserve offers more than wildlife viewing, it provides a rare chance to see what effective conservation looks like in practice, and to understand how protection, policy and people can work together to safeguard species for future generations. This experience offers a powerful contrast to your hands-on conservation work, moving from behind-the-scenes protection to witnessing wildlife thriving in the wild.

DAY 14: DEPARTURE TO DUR FOR 14-DAY STUDENTS

Time to say Hamba Kahle—"goodbye" in Zulu—to South Africa! We'll depart for the Durban airport together, and GLA staff will make sure that everyone is checked in for their flight and ready to embark on their journey home.









21 Day Itinerary Map for South Africa



DAY 14: TRANSFER TO ST. LUCIA & ISIMANGALISO WETLAND PARK FOR 21-DAY STUDENTS

Adventure time! We'll get an early start and travel coastward to St Lucia Wetlands Park and Cape Vidal Game Reserve for the remainder of our program.

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park is one of the outstanding natural wetland and coastal sites of Africa and South Africa's first Unesco World Heritage Site. This region includes coral reefs, long sandy beaches, coastal dunes, lake systems, swamps and extensive reed and papyrus wetlands, providing critical habitat for a wide range of species from Africa's seas, wetlands and savannahs. The interaction of these environments with major floods and coastal storms in the Park's transitional location has resulted in continuing speciation and exceptional species diversity. Its vivid natural spectacles include nesting turtles and large aggregations of flamingos and other waterfowl.

DAYS 15-17: CROCODILE CENTER SERVICE & HIPPO BOAT EXCURSION

Over the next few days, we will learn more about one of the world's oldest and most fascinating animals - the crocodile. St Lucia is home to the largest breeding population of Crocodiles in South Africa. Get behind the scenes at the KwaZulu-Natal Crocodile Center where we'll put in some hours by supporting conservation projects here; supporting research and assisting with the centres daily needs for the crocs. In the afternoons, we will visit the local markets and go on a boat ride along the iSmangaliso Wetland Park estuary to spot some of the area's famous hippos & crocs!

DAY 18: WHALE WATCHING

Today we head out to explore the incredible whale season along South Africa's stunning east coast, running from June to November. Experience the awe of humpback whales as they majestically migrate to tropical waters for winter. We'll embark on an exhilarating boat ride to witness these magnificent giants up close while discovering the vital importance of protecting their ocean home from Marine Biologists.









DAY 19: FINAL EXCURSION TO CAPE VIDAL GAME RESERVE

Our final excursion day takes us to the breathtaking Cape Vidal Game Reserve, where sand dunes frame the surrounding coastline await! Don't miss the chance to visit the observation towers where you can spot humpback whales on their epic journey north. This is your chance to connect with nature like never before and become a champion for conservation!

DAY 20: FINAL REFLECTION

As the sun sets on our final day of our journey together, we'll gather around the campfire to share our reflections. From creative solutions to real-world challenges to inspiring stories of teamwork, this is a moment to celebrate our collective wins an memories made. Together, we'll reflect on our growth and look forward to carrying these experiences into our futures!

DAY 21: DEPARTURE TO KING SHAKA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Time to say Hamba Kahle—"goodbye" in Zulu—to South Africa! We'll depart for the Durban airport together, and GLA staff will make sure that everyone is checked in for their flight and ready to embark on their journey home.

NOTICE ON PROGRAM UPDATES

While this program is being planned for this season, some activities or details may change between now and the program start date. Please note that references from past participants and previously published information may not accurately reflect every aspect of this program. Refer to the sample itinerary above or to the GLA website for the most up-to-date version of program activities, and please note that further updates may be made between now and the program start date.

PROGRAM SPECIFICS

14-Day

- **Tuition:** $5,399
- **Service Hours:** 40
- **Ages:** 14 - 18
- **Student-to-Staff Ratio:** 6-to-1
- **Accommodations:** Enclosed Compound
- **Arrival and Departure Airport**
  - O.R. Tambo International (JNB) Airport Arrival
  - King Shaka International (DUR) Airport Departure

21-Day

- **Tuition:** $6,199
- **Service Hours:** 60
- **Ages:** 14 - 18
- **Student-to-Staff Ratio:** 6-to-1
- **Accommodations:** Enclosed Compound
- **Arrival and Departure Airport**
  - O.R. Tambo International (JNB) Airport Arrival
  - King Shaka International (DUR) Airport Departure

GLA HOME BASE

On this safari adventure, students will lodge in several locations. Upon arrival in Johannesburg, the group will stay in a guest lodge. For the remainder of the program, Home Base accommodations include wooden cabins, canvas cottages, and a safari camp, which is outside under the stars. Students will share accommodations with roommates and have access to bathrooms, and enjoy communal meals as a group.

GLA HOME BASE OVERVIEW

- Pool
  - GLA Home Base 1: Johannesburg- Yes
  - GLA Home Base 2: Nambiti - Yes
  - GLA Home Base 3: Howick - No
  - GLA Home Base 4: Bonamanzi - Yes
- Air conditioning
  - GLA Home Base 1: Johannesburg- Yes
  - GLA Home Base 2: Nambiti - No
  - GLA Home Base 3: Howick - No
  - GLA Home Base 4: Bonamanzi - No
- Remote
  - GLA Home Base 1: Johannesburg- No
  - GLA Home Base 2: Nambiti - Yes
  - GLA Home Base 3: Howick - No
  - GLA Home Base 4: Bonamanzi - Yes

FOOD

Staples of South African food include rice and potatoes, stew with vegetables and chicken or beef served with pap, similar to cornmeal. Braai is a traditional barbecue that is a must-try for every visitor to South Africa. As Game Reserves are remote in nature, special diets need to be arranged well in advance.

CLIMATE

South Africa will be in its winter season in June and July, Most days have fine, clear skies however nights are cold as temperatures in the bush plummet below 32F once the sun goes down. Expect to wear layers - short sleeves during the day, but wear hats, sweaters, gloves, and scarves at night! The GLA Coordination team will provide enrolled students with a packing list to navigate the temperate climate of the bush during Winter in South Africa.

LEADERSHIP

Global Leadership Adventures started as an educational institute, so we continue to think and act like educators—not tour operators—as we deliver life-changing programs. We intentionally weave a leadership curriculum into the daily experience on our programs. Through group discussion, meaningful service, workshops, speakers and excursions, staff guide students to reflect on program events through the lens of leadership, and celebrate outstanding examples of leaders they encounter in the local community. Lending this context to the experience creates opportunities for students to dig deep into their vision, purpose and knowledge of themselves and the world.

ABOUT GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ADVENTURES

Global Leadership Adventures was founded in 2003 by Fred Swaniker, a native of Ghana, TED Fellow and educational entrepreneur whose work has been praised by Barack Obama. Born as a global extension of the revolutionary African Leadership Academy, Global Leadership Adventures now operates programs centered around leadership, sustainable community service projects, and meaningful travel across Africa, Asia, Europe or the Americas. Through life-changing adventures, we strive to inspire the next generation to realize their potential to transform the world and their role in it.

GLA HAS BEEN FEATURED IN:

The New York Times
USA TODAY
NBC NEWS
The Boston Globe
seventeen

OUR EXPECTATIONS

BE PRESENT | Our mission at GLA is "to inspire the next generation to realize their potential to transform the world and their role in it." To that end, we expect GLA students to maintain high standards of personal behavior and to be open-minded. The culture may be different, sometimes shockingly so. GLA will challenge students as they are expected to work hard and be present physically and mentally for all activities. We also ask students to take a step back from regular use of technology - particularly their smartphones - so as to maximize their engagement with the program and their fellow participants. Students may get hot, dirty and bug-bitten along the way, but their contribution can transform the community. The goal is for each student to return home having had a life-changing experience.

NO TOLERANCE | GLA has a no-tolerance policy towards drugs, alcohol, tobacco and disruptive behavior. Those who violate or are suspected of violating this policy will be immediately dismissed from the program at the sole discretion of GLA staff.

COMMUNITY-LED EXPERIENCES | GLA makes every effort to offer thoughtfully crafted programs for teens and young adults. Detailed planning and exhaustive communications with partners are indispensable parts of our program development process. However, occasionally service and activities are adjusted from session to session, due to weather, changing needs of our local community partners and/or various cultural celebrations and customs. We expect participants to be open-minded and flexible, willing to embrace the experience when plans change. GLA makes every effort to communicate adjustments to students and families with advance notice. We expect you to be open-minded and flexible.

MENTORSHIP | GLA is not a therapy program. Our staff are highly skilled, professional, caring and fun, but they are not licensed therapists. GLA programs can be physically and emotionally demanding, and applicants should be in good physical and mental health.

ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

At Global Leadership Adventures, we welcome age-eligible teens who are excited about the opportunity to travel to apply for our programs. To ensure a safe and meaningful experience for everyone in the group, we follow essential eligibility criteria. While out intent is not to be exclusionary, it's important to note that GLA programs are not therapeutic programs and are not able to support struggling teens seeking behavior or mental health outcomes.

Applications are carefully considered and screened to align with these criteria. It is not uncommon for GLA to require supporting documentation or information in the application screening process to confirm eligibility or suitability for program participation. Failure to disclose full medical history may also result in the application not being accepted, additional fees, and/or removal from the program. Please discuss with our team for any further clarification or concerns and visit **https://www.experiencegla.com/policies/essential-eligibility-criteria/** to view the full essential eligibility criteria list.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

CONTACT US | Want to learn more about Global Leadership Adventures and our available programs? Our Admissions Team has expertise and insights into our slate of program offerings, and we're happy to answer any questions you might have. We have collectively visited or staffed many of our GLA programs around the world, and we have advice to share on everything from getting your travel documents together to what a typical day on a program is like. Call us at 1-858-771-0645 any time during office hours for assistance.

ENROLL NOW | We encourage you to enroll on your 1st choice program as early as you can! In fact, our most popular programs fill up early every year, and many students end up putting off the quick and easy application process only to end up on the waiting list. The best way to ensure that you save your spot is to place your deposit and apply early. You can easily enroll online at **www.experiencegla.com/enroll.**