



LEO Africa Wildlife Monitoring & Conservation Project South Africa Brochure 2020



"The greatest danger to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it"
Robert Swan



Welcome to LEO Africa

Volunteers for Wildlife, Conservation & Sustainable Living

Limpopo Eco Operations (LEO Africa) is a Big 5 wildlife monitoring and conservation volunteer project which was established in 2005. Our mission is to provide the Park Management with relevant information about the key animal species present in the Park (such as lion, leopard, elephant, black and white rhino, buffalo, hyenas and cheetahs) as well as supporting conservation work, anti-poaching and veterinary operations when necessary.

LEO Africa also focuses on green energy, recycling and education on the meaning of conservation and sustainability for present and future generations.

Volunteers are the centre of our work, helping us in the field as well as supporting the project financially, making our vital work possible. You will learn new skills and make amazing memories whilst living a truly African experience!

Smoking Policy: Smoking is not allowed in the Park, while at base we highly encourage smokers to reduce/quit. Please note that in line with our conservation and sustainability efforts, as of 2020 LEO Africa will be a none smoking project.

Don't let language be your barrier! Our project operates in English. However, if needed we can understand: Italian, French, Dutch, German and Afrikaans.



Contents

Introduction.....p2

Why choose LEO?.....p3

Where we are.....p4

The role of LEO.....p5

Activities.....p6

The role of volunteer.....p8

Day to day.....p9

LEO base.....p10

When to come to LEO..p11

Travelling to LEO.....p12

What to bring to LEO....p13

Contacting LEO.....p14

“LEO is a great multicultural programme that is very dedicated to the conservation of South African wildlife”

– Dearbhla Holohan, 2018

Why choose LEO?

With LEO you can make a real contribution to conservation by joining a very motivated and passionate team, working in the field learning about flora and fauna, and learning about sustainable living. By joining LEO Africa, you will live a truly unique experience; admiring beautiful wildlife and breath-taking landscapes whilst making new friends from different parts of the world.

Work in a section of a National Park monitoring the Big 5 and more!

LEO is based in the beautiful Marataba Section of the Marakele National Park and is the only volunteer project to offer this unique experience of working directly within a National Park. We monitor lion, leopard, elephant, black and white rhino, buffalo, spotted and brown hyena, and cheetah. You will have the opportunity to closely observe and learn about these animals, including their behaviour and social interactions. A unique opportunity!

Spend up to 12 hours a day in the bush!

With two monitoring drives most days you will experience an abundance of wildlife whilst exploring the Park and directly contributing to the preservation of the environment. Enjoy beautiful sunrises and sunsets against the backdrop of the African bush.

Meet like-minded people from around the world

Volunteers join LEO from all over the world. We love having enthusiastic and hard-working volunteers who are passionate and want to learn more about wildlife and conservation.

Requirements

In order to volunteer at LEO Africa, you do not need to have a previous experience in this sector; however, there are some requirements and guidelines that are important to follow to ensure you safely can have the best experience with us:

- Getting on and off a 4x4 vehicle unattended
- Walk 1km unattended
- Have travel/medical insurance
- None smoking (as of 2020)
- 18+ years old
- Medium/Good level of English (the language in which the program runs) to understand the guides and the other volunteers (however some guides can assist with Italian, French and Dutch).

Actively learn about and take part in conservation work

Our daily effort is vital to the preservation of the Park. The work we do is varied and rewarding (see page 5), and is always for the benefit of the wildlife. You will get your hands dirty, work as a team and gain an understanding as to how a natural ecosystem is managed. You will learn a lot as well about the issues that conservation is facing now a days and how a nature reserve is managed to be successful.

Work with an experienced and friendly team

All staff and rangers at LEO Africa are truly passionate about wildlife, conservation and sustainable living. All of us strive to work hard to make the reserve where we operate and our planet a better place. We can't wait to meet you and share our knowledge!

Don't just take it from us!

All our volunteers have an amazing time, so much so that they love telling everyone! Read their reviews on our website, www.leoafrika.org and Facebook page, www.facebook.com/LEO.Africa. Follow us on social media for up to date stories and photos of our adventures!

- Flexible to life in the bush which may not always run on schedule.
- Able to be out for 10-12 hours in the field every day, sometimes with extreme heat (up to 40 degrees Celsius).
- Able to live and work in a group with international people with different backgrounds
- Open-minded and willing to contribute to wildlife monitoring, conservation and sustainability.

Where we are

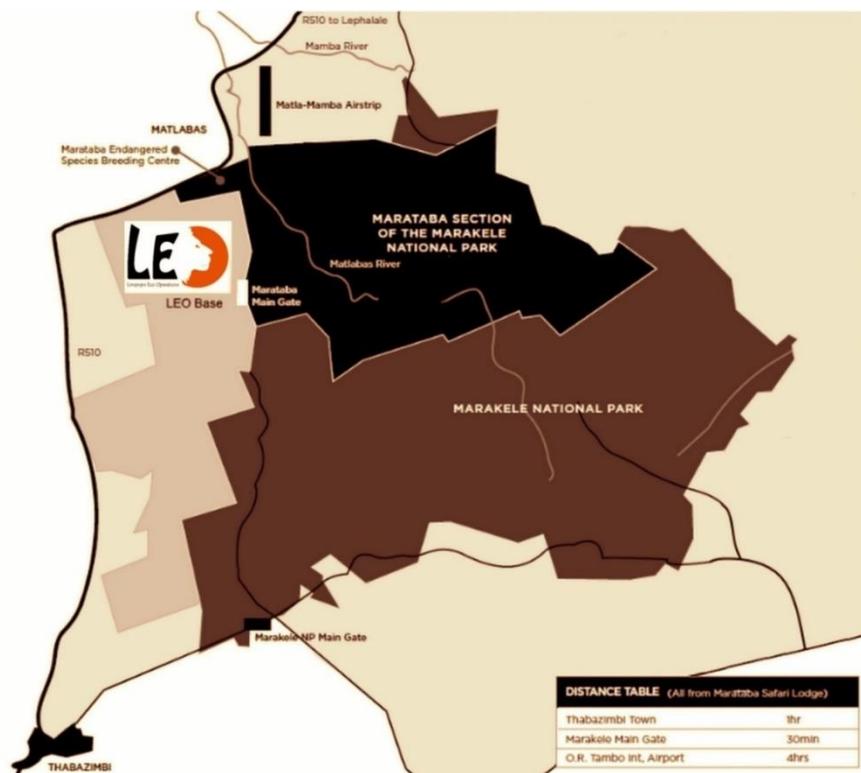
The experience at LEO is unique, special and exclusive, as we are located in the 24,000 hectares of the Marataba Section of the Marakele National Park, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

LEO's role is very important as we are responsible for all the work in the field as well as data collection and ID kits of the key animals that we monitor. We provide a free service to the Park and the operation is entirely funded by the volunteers, who have the privilege of being part of a very select group of people who can spend time in the Park and contribute towards conservation.



The stunning Park hosts a multitude of wildlife and bird species as well as different ecosystems. The Waterberg Mountains form a frame around the south and east of the Park, delighting us with spectacular views, landscapes and incredible African sunsets.

LEO Africa is 4 hours by car from Johannesburg (OR TAMBO) airport and is in a **malaria free zone**.



“LEO provides hands on work in conservation and a realistic, educational approach in managing and monitoring wildlife in a National Park section. Thank you!” - Lesley Oliver, 2018

“LEO gave is a great insight in how important and yet challenging wildlife management is”-Olivia Jossi, 2019

The Role of LEO

LEO Africa is responsible for all the wildlife monitoring of the key species present in Marataba, specifically lions, white and black rhinos, elephants, leopard, buffalos, cheetah and hyenas.

We collaborate closely with the Park Management and Veterinary Services, establishing priorities for the benefit of fauna and flora. A balanced ecosystem grants a greater quality of life for the animals. All the animals living in the park are wild and completely free roaming. We are privileged to be able to monitor them in the wild, observing their behaviour, spatial movements, interactions, reproduction and food preferences.

We have a great respect for wildlife and we do not support any hands-on interaction with wildlife kept in captivity especially for touristic purposes.

LEO is very active in the anti-poaching activities and protection of the rhinos within the Park. We have many camera traps placed in the bush that are used both for ID purposes but also for security reasons, detecting any unusual activities. LEO also reports on suspicious tracks, low flying helicopters and aeroplanes, and we conduct observations from strategic points to support the work done by the anti-poaching teams.

All the work we do is recorded and used for monthly reports for the Park Manager which aid in the decision-making process concerning the management of the ecosystems within the Park.

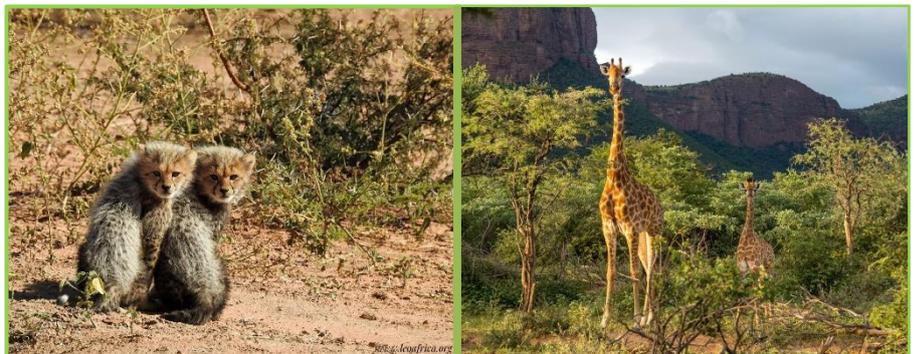


LEO Africa does not receive any funding from the government, the reserve or any other institutions and are solely reliant on the contribution from our volunteers and donors.

Activities

Wildlife monitoring, conservation and anti-poaching support are performed in the following ways:

- 1) Monitoring drives
- 2) Conservation work
- 3) Camera traps
- 4) Bush walks
- 5) Sleep outs
- 6) Microlight flights
- 7) Aerial drones
- 8) Fire control
- 9) Game capture



***“Fantastic way to see how conservation is working”-
Nicola Steel, 2019***

Activities

1) Monitoring drives

Every day our LEO guides will take you out on two monitoring drives on board a 4x4 game viewer. We observe, record data and take identification photos of the key species, in particular regarding their behaviour, location, movements, food preferences, health, reproduction and interactions with each other in their natural habitat without disturbance.



2) Conservation work

While out in the field, our work also involves taking care of the Park's ecosystem through reserve management activities such as bush clearing, road restoration, alien plant removal, erosion control, tree wrapping, fence/rubbish removal, game capture and animal darting.



3) Camera traps

Well camouflaged in the bush and placed in strategic points, camera traps are vital for our monitoring and anti-poaching efforts. Each month thousands of photos and videos are processed by LEO volunteers and staff, which, together with the data collected on drive, are used to produce ID kits.



4) Bush walks

Bush walks are a great way to experience the bush in more depth. Walking allows us to spot animal and suspicious tracks, discover new areas and dens, check existing or install new camera traps and enjoy nature.



“A life-time experience full of passion for animals and nature that I will never forget”-Marie-Therese Ragger, 2019

“Safari and beyond: the behind the scenes of a wildlife reserve, active part in conservation and amazing people”- Vittoria Sesana, 2019

Activities

5) Sleep outs

Conducting sleep outs assists the anti-poaching teams in their role against poachers: we act as a deterrent, as extra eyes and ears in strategic parts of the Park. It is also a great chance to see nocturnal animals, admire the beautiful African sky and listen to the sounds of the bush.



6) Microlight flights

At LEO, volunteers have the unique opportunity to fly over the Park, patrolling vast areas from the air. It also offers stunning views and is a great way to spot animals.



7) Aerial drones

Diurnal and nocturnal thermal imaging drones are used as a monitoring and anti-poaching tool when needed.



8) Fire control

Volunteers help with controlled bush fires when needed. This method is used in reserve management to remove moribund grasses, excess of parasites and encourage the growth of new grass more palatable for animals.



9) Game Capture

Volunteers may have the opportunity to take part in the exciting experience of game capture. This may be done for various reasons including darting an individual for medical reasons or for sale, which contributes as an income to the Park as well as a way of controlling the excess of animal populations.

“LEO Africa is a great program to experience wildlife up close, learn everything you wanted to learn about conservation work, make new friends and experience one of the biggest adventures of your life”-Esther Luijk, 2019

The Role of Volunteers

Volunteering at LEO offers a different experience than most volunteer projects as you have the opportunity to actively contribute towards real conservation and observe and learn about animals in their natural habitat. Volunteers play an essential role in our project, supporting us on three main aspects of our work:

In the field: Data collection and ID photos for the species monitored; conservation work (bush clearing, road restoration, alien plant removal, erosion control, tree wrapping, fence/rubbish removal); camera trap checks; animal tracking; game capture and animal darting (when requested by the Park Vet). You will also take part in bush walks (to conduct conservation work and service camera traps) and sleep-outs to monitor and ID animals and support anti-poaching efforts (organised according to the weather and need).

At base: Carrying out duties on a rotational basis once or twice per week with the other volunteers such as cooking, washing up, camera trap processing, inserting data, ID kits, general house duties and camp maintenance.

Economically: LEO Africa is financially sustained only by the volunteers as we provide a free service to the Park Management. All the money from the volunteers is used to run the entire project (to buy and maintain vehicles, petrol, monitoring and research tools, computers, camera traps, batteries, salaries, food and accommodation etc.). Without the financial support of our volunteers, we could not operate and the Park would not have anyone to conduct the vital wildlife monitoring and census data records or conservation work.

Is it for me?

If you are passionate about wildlife, conservation and sustainable living, then yes! The activities are not overly challenging, but a reasonable level of physical fitness and enthusiasm for manual work will be required as the weather can become hot and humid, especially during the summer months. Game drives are between 5-6 hours long each and some observations may be upwards of one hour (that will fly!) so patience and perseverance are important. The days are long but with this comes rewarding experiences. Our volunteers come from all over the world and their ages vary from 18 to 75. We only have maximum 10-11 volunteers at one time, so you have a great opportunity to get to know and work with the team and other volunteers. Be prepared to work hard, get stuck in and have fun! LEO Africa will be the experience of your lifetime!



“Beautiful and stimulating experience, recommended for nature and animal lovers”

- Ludovica Raspanti, 2019

Day to Day

Day to day

Each day consists of two monitoring game drives. Morning drives leave at 5:30am in the summer and 6am in the winter, returning to base for lunch at 12pm. Volunteers have time to rest during the hottest part of the day which is also time to insert the data or photos collected on drive. Afternoon drives leave at 3:30pm in the summer and 3pm in the winter, returning to base for dinner at 8pm. The two daily monitoring drives can be replaced with a "full day out" (7am – 5pm).

On Sundays there are no game drives but other activities maybe take place depending on the needs of the Park. Once a week we spend an afternoon in the nearest town for shopping and enjoy the evening at a local restaurant.

Note: The bush gives us great fulfilment and many surprises. As each day being different, we can't expect to see all of the Big 5 every day. There can be very intense and lucky days and even on quieter days there is much to admire and see in the bush. Everything depends on the many variables which are outside of our control such as weather, animal interactions, water sources etc. Wild animals can't be controlled! They are fascinating because of this unpredictability. The only other people who can enter Marataba are the guests of the 5-star lodge located in the Park.



Free time

On Sundays there are no drives, though there will still be volunteers on duty and staff working. Often, volunteers also have the opportunity to go on excursions to the Marakele National Park and Pilanesberg National Park. If requested by volunteers LEO can organise these and provide a guide. All costs associated with excursions are split between the volunteers and are subject to the availability of a vehicle and guide. Dinner at the lodge located in the Park can also be organised.

"My time at LEO has really given me a new perspective in what can be done to protect animals. Truly an experience of a lifetime!"

***– Eleanor Kim,
March 2018***



LEO base

Accommodation

Our rustic-style house is large, bright and fully immersed in nature with a large garden. Volunteers stay in dorm rooms with shared bathrooms. A double room with a private bathroom is available on request for a small surcharge, subject to availability. Please remember to bring your own towel and sleeping bag as we provide bed sheets, blankets and pillows but no duvet.



Electricity and water

Most of our electricity comes from our solar panels as we strive to live in an environmentally friendly way. At LEO base, lights and power go off at 10:30pm in order to save energy and also for the consideration of volunteers who may want to go to bed early, therefore we recommend you bring a torch. We have hot water but encourage volunteers to limit their water usage and not waste this precious resource. The tap water at LEO is safe to drink.

Laundry

A machine wash is available two times per week at a small charge. You can reduce the price by sharing the load with other volunteers. The washing machine only runs full to avoid wasting water!

Meals and snacks

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are provided during your stay with the following exceptions: lunch on your arrival day, optional pizza takeaway on Tuesday evenings and meals on the Friday night town trip. You are able to purchase any personal snacks and items from the supermarket on the day of your arrival or on our Friday trips to town (ask us for plastic free tips). A shared fridge is available to store your food and a box will be provided to store items that do not need refrigerating.

Communication

At LEO base we have Wi-Fi access during some hours of the day. During town trips on Fridays you can access free Wi-Fi at the restaurant. You can purchase a SIM card at the airport and load it with data and/or airtime (please choose the MTN network as this has the best reception at our base). However, we suggest you focus on nature on less on your phone! Use this time to unplug!

Money

Currency can be exchanged at Johannesburg airport: alternative, you can withdraw money at any ATM using your Visa or MasterCard at the airport or when we go into town on a Friday. Supermarkets and restaurants also accept all cards.

When to come to LEO

When to come to LEO Africa

South Africa is in the southern hemisphere and consequently the seasons are opposite to that of the northern hemisphere. In all seasons there are major temperature changes between day and night, so be sure to bring many layers of clothing, the game viewer are open sided so the wind can be freezing in the winter!

Spring (September - October):	Mild and semi-rainy climate (mornings and evenings can be very cold)
Summer (November - February):	Very hot with high chances of rain
Autumn (March - April):	Mild climate tending to dry and getting cooler
Winter (May - August):	Very cold freezing mornings and evenings, mild and dry during the day.

Booking and costs

Booking your trip to LEO Africa is easy. Email us at enquiries@leoafrika.org to enquire about availability but be sure to book early to avoid disappointment! To confirm your booking, we need a 50% deposit with the balance due no later than 30 days before your arrival.

Duration	2020
	Price (SA Rand)
2 Weeks	R16,400
3 Weeks	R23,900
4 Weeks	R31,300
5 Weeks	R38,900
6 Weeks	R46,400
7 Weeks	R51,600
8 Weeks	R58,200
9 Weeks	R64,800
10 Weeks	R71,100
11 Weeks	R77,300
12 Weeks	R79,900

Your fees go straight into running the project, this includes: food and accommodation, vehicle purchase and maintenance, fuel, maintenance of the house, research material, salaries, solar panels, costs of running the house, camera traps.



What is not included in costs

Price of the transfer, visa costs (IF needed), flights, travel insurance, your lunch at pickup and departure, tips and gratuities, meals bought on Friday town trips, take away order on Tuesdays.

Please note: on Tuesdays dinner is not provided: you can order pizza take away or cook for yourself.

Contact

All throughout your time at LEO, staff will always be on hand to answer any of your questions or concerns. We offer pre-departure support and information, please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions at enquiries@leoafrika.org

Travelling to LEO

**We love it when volunteers come back to join us
and as a thank you we offer a 10% discount to all returning volunteers!**

Getting here

Our weeks run from Tuesday to Tuesday so we kindly ask volunteers to arrive at Johannesburg (OR TAMBO) airport on a Tuesday. We will organise your transfer from the airport to LEO Africa; look out for one of our LEO staff members holding a LEO Africa sign. The journey from the airport to LEO will take approximately 4 hours plus time for volunteers to have some lunch and shop at the supermarket. When traveling to the airport from LEO Africa the transfer leaves LEO base at 7.00am.

**The pick-up and drop off time at Johannesburg airport is at 11:00am on TUESDAYS.
Please DO NOT book your inbound flight to arrive any later than 10:15am and your return flight any earlier than 2:00pm as you will not be at the airport in time.**

Transfers

Transfers to/from Johannesburg (OR TAMBO) airport are **not included** in the price. The cost is R1,500 one way per person on a Tuesday and R2,500 one way per person when traveling on a day other than a Tuesday.



Passport and visas

No visa is required for passport holders of EU and North American countries for a stay in South Africa of less than 90 days. Please double check with the South African embassy of your country if you need a visa. Please remember that your passport has to be valid for at least 6 months from the date you land in South Africa and will need to have 3 free pages.

Malaria and vaccinations

LEO Africa is located in a **malaria FREE** area and no vaccinations are compulsory for South Africa. Please contact your local doctor or travel clinic for advice on vaccinations.

***“LEO is an experience like
no other in the way it
brings animals and
conservation together”
– Ryan Ellis, June 2018***

Travel insurance

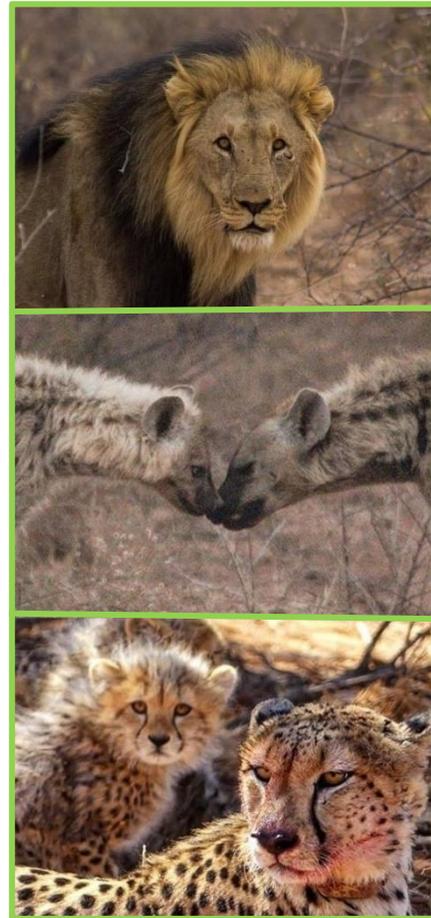
Please remember that in order to come to LEO you need to have travel insurance. We recommend World Nomads. You can obtain a quote and buy direct from our website <http://www.leoafrika.org/insurance>. **A small percentage will be donated to LEO Africa.**

***“Challenging, rewarding and truly unbelievable!”-Codie-
Anne Baxter, 2019***

What to bring to LEO

Below is a list of what we recommend you bring to LEO:

- ✓ Sleeping bag (essential)
- ✓ Head torch/torch and batteries (essential)
- ✓ Camera (also for taking ID photos)
- ✓ Battery charger/spare batteries
- ✓ Memory card(s)
- ✓ Towel
- ✓ Shirts/t-shirts
- ✓ Warm hoodies/jumpers (especially during winter)
- ✓ Winter coat (during winter)
- ✓ Shorts
- ✓ Long trousers (for walks/evening drives)
- ✓ Beanie, gloves and scarf (especially during winter)
- ✓ Sun hat
- ✓ Working/gardening gloves (for conservation work)
- ✓ Leatherman/tool (optional)
- ✓ Walking socks/thick socks
- ✓ Hiking type shoes
- ✓ Comfortable shoes (time off)
- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Waterproof Jacket (especially during summer)
- ✓ Small rucksack/bag (for bringing out on drives)
- ✓ Water bottle/camelback (at least 1L capacity)
- ✓ Sun cream (SPF 30+) and after sun lotion
- ✓ Swimming costume (yes, we have a pool!)
- ✓ Insect repellent
- ✓ Roll mat (for sleep outs – provided but you may prefer your own)
- ✓ Binoculars (8x42 or 10x42 recommended)
- ✓ Basic first aid kit
- ✓ Any medication you may need
- ✓ Mosquito net (provided but you may prefer your own)
- ✓ Plug adapter (South African three rounded pronged plug, one large and two small)
- ✓ Money (South African Rand, Visa or MasterCard)
- ✓ Shampoo/Conditioner/Soap in bars (available at LUSH and other stores)-please see the sustainability section below for more information on purchasing a Lush pack in South Africa.



In the winter, early mornings and evenings will be very cold-freezing due to wind chill; this can also be the case even in the summer. Please make sure to bring plenty of layers to stay warm. Neutral shades such as olive, brown, green, khaki and beige are best (bright colours are NOT allowed in the field).

Please note, as the house is run on solar power the outlets are not able to support items such as hairdryers or hair straighteners or curlers.

(IMPORTANT NOTE: We will provide you with 1 LEO t-shirt; the reserve requires that volunteers always wear a LEO t-shirt to be recognised in the field and to look professional. You may consider purchasing an extra LEO t-shirt once here; we also have LEO branded beanies, sun hats and more!).

Sustainable living

At LEO we are very passionate about preserving the environment and living sustainably. Our project runs with this in mind: from using solar panels to reducing water consumption and waste, we also recycle and try to reduce our usage of single-use plastic. Please, when you come to LEO do not bring any plastic bags or non-reusable plastic water bottles!

In line with our sustainability policy and anti-plastic campaign we are trying to introduce our volunteers to a plastic free and sustainable lifestyle. To start with, you can save space in your suitcase and purchase a starter pack from us for R650. This pack includes: 1 shampoo bar, 1 soap bar, 1 deodorant bar, 1 body lotion bar, toothpaste tablets and 1 cotton bag (R35 extra). There is also the possibility to purchase a bamboo toothbrush for R50. You won't have to worry about bringing liquids on the plane, and you will be helping saving the environment. Ask us for more info!

#choosetorefuse #lifeisfantasticwithoutplastic



We hope all volunteers who join us continue to think about how to live in a eco-friendlier way once they return home and will share ideas with family and friends, encouraging them to do the same! Everyone can play their part in protecting and looking after our planet. Here are some easy tips on how you can use less plastic at home.



“This was one of the most rewarding and learning experiences I have ever participated in. Highly recommend this program”-Sharon Hu, 2019



LEO Africa

Wildlife Monitoring & Conservation Project

South Africa



We look forward to hearing from you!

Physical Address: LEO Africa, Hoopdal 96 KQ, Rooiberg Road, Thabazimbi, 0380, South Africa
Postal Address: LEO Africa, Postnet Suite 93, private Bag X6625, Thabazimbi, 0380