



Volunteer Preparation Document

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Welcome to VulPro, the Vulture Programme. We are delighted that you are considering volunteering with us. This document is designed to help answer any questions and or expectations you may have during your planned time with us. It contains instructions and phone numbers that you will need for your journey, so you should print a copy and keep it with you during your travels. If you book with us, you will also receive **the volunteer contract with house rules.** We request that you read both these documents carefully as they contain essential information that you need to be aware of in order to make the best of your time with us. Let us know if you have any questions or if there is anything you do not understand.



Meeting us

- Fly into OR Tambo International airport in Johannesburg for the shortest international route.
- It takes about an hour to reach VulPro from OR Tambo International airport
- The facility is approximately 40 minutes driving from the center of Pretoria and 50 minutes from Fourways, Johannesburg.
- VulPro can arrange a shuttle transfer from the airport to their facility, and a return transfer for departure, at the visitor's expense (excluding accommodation costs).
- If arriving after 19:00, visitors are requested to overnight at an airport hotel at their own expense and join VulPro the following day, due to the center being locked up by 7pm daily.

- VulPro is located at the base of the scenic Magaliesberg Mountains, a 10-minute drive from Hartbeespoort town.

Volunteer Contribution

- Monthly accommodation fee: **R5550.00** per person (equivalent to R185 per day).
- A 50% deposit is needed to secure your volunteer placement.
- The remaining balance should be paid in **cash** upon arrival.
- Minimum required time at VulPro is 2 weeks.
- Fee for a 2-week stay will be adjusted accordingly, not requiring payment for the full month.

Please note: we do not offer refunds for any reasons whatsoever. We also, unfortunately, cannot accept promises of contributions being paid “later” or after the volunteer period has ended and must receive them upon your arrival. If your travel plans change due to unforeseeable circumstances (such as illness or immigration problems), contact us as soon as possible to see if we can reschedule without you losing your deposit. However, this will be subject to availability.

Included in the volunteer fee:

- Single and shared rooms available with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities.
- Accommodation includes linen, WiFi, water, and electricity expenses, as well as bathroom cleaning.
- Training and supervision provided by VulPro and project staff.
- Research and conservation activities.

Not included in the volunteer fee:

- Travel from your home country to South Africa and back.
- Airport shuttle to and back from the airport to and back from VulPro.
- Passport and visa costs – please ensure to confirm all visa requirements as stipulated for your country of origin, as well as South Africa.
- If you wish to spend more than 90 days in total in South Africa, you will need to obtain a temporary residency visa, which will be either a ‘volunteer’ or a ‘student’ visa (if enrolled with a South African university) before leaving home. Rules regarding visas vary by country of origin, so be sure to ask your nearest South African consulate.
- Insurance – you **MUST** have travel/medical and cancellation insurance, which covers you for the activities you will be carrying out with the project.
- Medical expenses - you **MUST** be vaccinated against tetanus.
- Personal expenses such as phone/airtime, internet/WiFi off site, souvenirs, shopping & excursions and personal hygiene requirements.
- All meals, alcohol and cold drinks.
- Towels or bath sheets
- Washing machine detergent
- Personal bathroom supplies

Living, kitchen and laundry facilities

Typically volunteers will have a room to themselves, but this is not always possible, for example, during busy periods, same-sex roommates may be assigned to share a room.

Smoking is not permitted in the house and on the whole property whatsoever. If anyone is found smoking, they will be asked to leave immediately, no exceptions at all with regards to our smoking policy. There is a small communal kitchen, 2 communal full bathrooms, one bedroom with bathroom on suite and an additional separate toilet/basin. There is a lovely outside sitting area with facilities to braai (barbecue). There is a washing machine and clothes washing line for laundry once a week, maximum per person.





- Volunteers are required to share household chores, such as washing up in the communal kitchen.
- It is expected that volunteers respect their housemates and keep shared areas clean and free of personal belongings.
- Each volunteer is responsible for purchasing and cooking their own food.
- The kitchen is well equipped, and volunteers are welcome to use all cutlery, pots, pans, etc.
- If something is missing and needed, volunteers should communicate their needs to the staff.
- Water and electricity should be used responsibly, and unnecessary lights, fans, and taps should not be left on.
- Heaters are not allowed, and hot water bottles are suggested for winter evenings.
- Recycling is practiced, with separate bins for compost, plastic, cans, glass, and cardboard.
- Volunteers should follow the rules for waste disposal and discard their waste responsibly.
- There are three large dogs in the main house, and volunteers should be prepared for enjoyable encounters with them.
- Close to the volunteer rooms, there are four horse stables, so volunteers with horse-hair allergies should inform the staff in advance.
- The location is near the town of Hartbeespoort, which offers grocery and pharmacy options for volunteers to obtain their own food and personal items.
- Visits to the shops will occur once a week, and recycling will be taken to the depots at the same time.
- Volunteers are invited to join the trips to the shops, but they should plan accordingly for one week's worth of groceries and necessary items.

Contact Information

Please ensure you supply us with additional contact information for your family or next of kin, in case of emergencies. Please also provide us with your medical and insurance contact details and numbers.

Requirements

- Flexibility is crucial as plans may change due to weather, local conditions, or other factors.

- Enthusiasm, common sense, self-starters, independence, perseverance, and patience are encouraged.
- South Africa is a developing country, so expect things to be different from what you are used to at home.
- Differentiate between wants and needs, keep an open mind, and carefully consider the situation before complaining.
- Maintain a positive attitude and a sense of humor for a fulfilling experience at VulPro.
- Inform VulPro about any medical conditions, disabilities, or special needs before booking to assess facility suitability.
- The work at VulPro is physically demanding, involving lifting, pushing, and other manual activities.

You are expected to take care of any project equipment you use – loss or damage may have to be charged to the volunteer(s) account.

Data and Photographs

Please note, ALL data, photographs, etc. belong to VulPro and can only be published and used after receiving authorization by either the CEO or the research manager.

Weather

It certainly depends on the time of the year, but generally, it is hot and sunny in summer (maximum 35° C/95°F) as well as during the days in winter (average around 15°C/60°F). The mornings and evenings in winter can be chilly (down to 5°C/40°F at times), and you may want to wear long trousers and a fleece jacket. It is also vital that you pay attention to the sun and heat as you will spend many hours outdoors. Please ensure you are dressed appropriately to protect yourself from the sun and that you stay hydrated at all times. Please also ensure you have clothing suitable for rainy weather as we do experience large rainstorms in the summer.

What to bring

The following items are necessary:

- A valid passport and visa
- A photocopy of your passport to leave with us for our records
- International and valid driver's license
- **A note of your insurance policy number and emergency phone numbers**
- South African compatible (plug types M and C) electrical converter for any of your personal electrical appliances
- Warm clothing for cool days and cold nights – e.g., sweaters, fleece, gloves, hat, scarf, slippers
- Long trousers and long-sleeved shirts or tops in neutral colours. You need to be covered up to protect against insect bites, sun and cold. And tshirts.
- Walking boots and/or closed-toed shoes for fieldwork and work inside the vulture enclosures (would strongly recommend bringing/purchasing in SA, wellingtons/rubber boots for cleaning in the enclosure)
- Insect repellent
- Good torch/flashlight (with spare batteries, preferably rechargeable)
- Sunscreen, sunglasses, and hat to protect you from the sun
- Work gloves, for use when cleaning cages, etc.

- Rubber gloves, for use, when cutting meat or removing carcasses (heavy duty & a couple pairs)
- Water bottle(s)
- Any medicines you need
- Notebook and pen or pencil
- Daypack (helpful when going on rescues, groceries, etc.)
- Comfortable clothes for evening/after work (mention that work clothes get DIRTY)
- Towel /washcloth? (linen for the beds are provided)

Clothing should be conservative; you are working with dangerous animals and in a very hot and arid climate. Therefore strappy tops and short shorts are examples of items that are not appropriate here during working hours. As with all biology fieldwork, you should choose clothes in natural shades (green, beige, brown, grey, black, etc.), not bright colours.

The following are recommended:

- Binoculars (high power is better)
- Camera
- Film/memory cards
- Laptop
- Pocket knife
- Alarm clock
- Duct tape (it's always useful!)
- Comfortable, lightweight shoes to wear around the house
- Working shoes/boots for cleaning work inside enclosures
- Personal first aid kit including plasters for blisters, painkillers, cold remedies

Volunteer Activities

Husbandry

- VulPro houses over 275 captive vultures and other large birds of prey, requiring ongoing maintenance and care.
- Daily tasks vary depending on the season, workload, fieldwork, and vulture emergencies.
- Volunteers will directly work with VulPro staff.
- Duties include feeding and cleaning enclosures, usually done on a daily basis.
- Vultures are typically fed every other day, with volunteers assisting in storing and preparing the food.
- Other large birds of prey and injured animals are fed daily.
- Offloading carcasses into the cold room and cleaning delivery vehicles are also common tasks.

Cleaning and supplement provision

- Daily task: Removing unconsumed bones and skin from the vulture restaurant and disposing of them on the property.
- Dried bones are collected and crushed by authorized staff, then redistributed to the vulture restaurant and captive birds.
- Afternoon task: Checking the amount of food consumed by the birds.
- Cleaning and scrubbing pools is done every second to every third day.

Maintenance

Maintenance tasks with which volunteers may help include checking enclosure and perching structures (usually once a month) and carrying out whatever repairs or constructions are necessary.

Enrichment

Enrichment for the birds is also encouraged and we urge volunteers to assist with this on a daily basis.



Vulture rescues

Our busy season for rehabilitation is during November – April. However, we do still have injured and poisoned birds arriving throughout the year. There may be opportunities for volunteers to travel with VulPro staff to collect injured birds. Critical care and medical treatment of the birds is **NOT** the responsibility of volunteers, but feeding, husbandry, and assisting with handling may be part of the volunteers' tasks.

There may be other opportunities to join in fieldwork, such as searching for vulture mortalities via power line surveys. You will always be accompanied and instructed by VulPro staff when in the field.

Data Recording and Entry

On a daily basis, volunteers will compile the data collected each day, enter it into a digital database and email the information to the project coordinator, who will analyse it. This allows volunteers to experience components of the research at VulPro too.

Care of the captive birds is the utmost priority, but recording data about wild vulture behaviours and daily counts of birds visiting the vulture restaurant is also critical to our efforts. We have a viewing hide from which these standardized counts are done, and we

will train you on how and what to record. This is also an excellent time to get close to the wild birds, photograph, observe, and learn directly from them.



Additionally, after any task, such as cleaning, feeding, or maintenance, the volunteer must complete the **record sheet** with describes and notes activities conducted, quantities of food fed, etc., and note any relevant information, such as the vultures' reactions. However, if there is something pressing, please tell a staff member urgently and do not just write it down as this could be a matter of life and death to one of our resident birds. One of the most important tasks is collecting data as this data allows us to understand more about the resident species and their needs and most outstanding characteristics. You will receive training on how to observe the vultures and fill out the record sheets. Any unusual behaviour needs to be reported to the manager in charge **as soon as possible, without delay!**

Work Schedule

- Work schedule: Typically, you will work for 7 or 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, with 2 days off, which may not necessarily be on the weekends. The schedule will be determined in coordination with the project coordinator.
- Free time activities: During your free time, there are various activities and tour operators available for you to explore South Africa. Popular options include trips to the Pilansberg Game Reserve, The Cradle of Humankind, and the Aerial Cable Way. Please note that the costs of these excursions are the responsibility of the volunteers, but VulPro can provide contacts and assistance.
- Adherence to center hours: If you choose to participate in these activities, we kindly request that you still comply with the center hours. Either return to the site by 7pm or arrange accommodation for the evening and return the next day. It's crucial to ensure that your travel plans do not interfere with your responsibilities at VulPro.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR SOUTH AFRICA

We recommend you get a South Africa guidebook and do some research before you arrive, so you have an idea of what to expect. A bit of cultural and historical background will help you appreciate your time here more.

Tips

Tipping is usually 12% of the service charge when you are eating in restaurants.

Health

Our tap water on the farm is safe to drink, and the same is true for ice cubes in cool drinks in town. Malaria is not a concern near VulPro. However, should you visit the Kruger National Park, you will need to take Malaria tablets. Proof of a tetanus vaccine is required to volunteer.

Local Currency

South African Rand (ZAR).

Language

South Africa has 11 official languages. Communication at VulPro is done in English, and good communication skills in English are more than sufficient. Any experience with Afrikaans or Zulu is also advantageous.

Safety

South Africa is not as bad as what you might have heard if you just follow some rules:

- Never walk alone at night outside the property;
- Make sure you do not have a lot of valuable jewellery, including watches - you won't need them here;
- If somebody is robbing you, immediately hand over the valuables they want - your life is worth more than any documents, money or whatever else the person wants;
- Don't leave any cameras or valuable items in the car;
- Make sure that nobody is following you when you are using an ATM and rather go with a friend if you want to collect money;
- Never hitchhike and NEVER pick up hitchhikers;
- Avoid public transport such as local taxis

Other Animals:

There are a number of highly venomous snakes and other dangerous animals in South Africa, so for your own safety:

- Always take a torch with you when walking outside your rooms at night - some snakes love to lie on warm pathway or stones;
- Never pick up a stone or wood, without touching it first with your shoe (closed shoe!);
- Don't try to catch or pick up any snake if you are not trained!

Thank you for your interest in our volunteering program. We hope to welcome you to VulPro and our beautiful country soon to experience our amazing vultures and the work that we do to save them.