



ORCA Foundation in association with Centre for Dolphin Studies Plettenberg Bay, South Africa

Thank you for your query about the ORCA Foundation and the Centre for Dolphin Studies. This document should answer most of your questions about the programs.

The Ocean Research Conservation Africa (ORCA) Marine Foundation works in association with both the Centre for Dolphin Studies and Ocean Blue Adventures (the commercial operation branch of ORCA Foundation). **ORCA** is situated in Plettenberg Bay, along the heart of the world famous Garden Route. This location allows you to enjoy beautiful coastal scenery, marine conservation and commercial ventures all in one place. Plettenberg Bay (lovingly referred to as “Plett” by locals) is home to some of the world’s most fascinating marine species, including Southern Right Whales, Humpback Whales, Bryde's Whales, Bottlenose Dolphins, Common Dolphins, Orca or Killer Whales, and Great White Sharks, to name but a few. Your placement here gives you a unique, once in life time opportunity to observe these magnificent marine species while doing exciting conservation volunteer work. ORCA combines education, conservation, community development, science, tourism, and a viable business model into its comprehensive volunteer program.

The experienced ORCA team will help you settle in during your stay, and will show you the highlights of the area and the myriad of conservation initiatives taking place within it. ORCA’s experiential education program will allow you to learn about and explore the world of conservation from a South African perspective, and will provide you with the skills to educate others through a variety of community education initiatives.

Project Vision

A conservation model in Plettenberg Bay, embraced by the community that ensures the sustained utilization of Marine and Coastal Resources through improved education, management, and research.

Project Details

Projects you may be involved in are:

- Community development and education programmes in disadvantaged communities (e.g. Qolweni Pre-School).
- Education initiatives involving the local community.
- The organisation of provincial/national marine and coastal awareness campaigns (such as National Environment Week, National Marine Week, and Youth Day) when they occur.
- Marine eco-tourism with Ocean Blue Adventures (whale and dolphin tours).
- Monitoring and cleaning campaigns on beaches and coastal regions.
- The maintenance and cleaning of ORCA’s fish and seahorse tanks, which are used for education and conservation purposes.



- The collection of food for seahorses and turtles (if any are found stranded) in the ORCA aquariums.
- The conducting of research surveys, such as marine and coastal resource economic valuations, angling surveys within the surround estuary and coastline, fin profiling of marine mammals, and marine animal surveys.
- The sampling, tagging, and monitoring of local fish species.
- The supervised collection of aquarium species for the ORCA aquariums.
- Educational presentations on conservation topics, which will be tailored to suit and stimulate your individual interests.
- ORCA Foundation's carbon reduction program.
- Fin profiling and spatial distribution programs.

Please note all placements vary, and you may or may not be involved with the above activities. Volunteers can also expect to contribute to Ocean Blue Adventures' commercial operations. Bad weather days may delay conservation/research activities and may involve indoor activities and courses.

Location

The projects are situated along South Africa's famous Garden Route, in the lively town of Plettenberg Bay.

During your stay in Plettenberg Bay, one of the most breathtaking and serene outdoor classrooms in Southern Africa, you will be lucky enough to regularly experience the power and grace of whales, the exuberance of dolphins and killer whales, the playfulness of seals, and the majesty of mountains and forests.

Plettenberg Bay, one of South Africa's most fashionable holiday resort locations and a beach-lover's paradise, is home to long stretches of soft sand that easily give way to azure seas.

The town characterised by sweeping, unspoilt golden beaches, a dramatic rocky peninsula, intriguing lagoons and estuaries, towering indigenous forests, and unpolluted rivers and sea. With its exceptional climate, and beautiful view sites over the Indian Ocean, Plettenberg Bay is perfect for tourists, travellers and locals alike.

Leisure activities include golf, horse riding, angling, sailing, scuba-diving and surfing, as well as hiking and bird-watching in the nearby Robberg, Keurbooms River and Tsitsikamma nature reserves. Unusual but highly recommended activity options include a treetop canopy tour or bungee jumping off the 216m Bloukrans River Bridge (the highest bridge jump in the world)!

About the Project

Our program consists of many different aspects, consisting mostly of conservation and educational activities and a variety of research initiatives (such as whale and dolphin study). The volunteers will be hiking, bird watching, whale/dolphin watching, participating in beach clean ups, assisting in fish counts, analyzing river health, fishing, maintaining aquariums, collecting bait, partaking in pre-school and primary school conservation education programs, and assisting with seahorse husbandry. Though this list is comprehensive, there are many more activities available for volunteers to partake in. All activities depend on season, weather, and need, and as such may be subject to change throughout the year.



You will work with **Tracy Meintjes**, the ORCA Foundation manager, on a day-to-day basis. You will also spend much time with Luigi Lottino, the house coordinator, Carolina Lottino, the volunteer coordinator, and Teliswa, the house executive. The staff of Ocean Blue Adventures regularly assist volunteers on their placements as well. Your main contact at Ocean Blue Adventures will be Charlie Lilford, the company's general manager.

Tracy has spent most of her life involved in boating and diving activities. Having driven boats for 30 years and diving for 24 years, her love and knowledge for the outdoors is easily apparent. She is a SA Tour qualified adventure guide, and is certified to lead whale and dolphin watching and diving trips. She is also a ski boat skipper instructor, SCUBA diving Master Instructor, has her diploma in Environmental Management and NDIP Nature Conservation. Luigi has been with the program for three years and is a qualified skipper, diver, and guide. He is now working on his Bachelor of Technology in Nature Conservation. Carolina is the newest to our program, and has been with us for over a year now. She has a great love for nature, and has graduated with an NDIP in Nature Conservation

During your stay on the program, may work with Dr. Vic Cockcroft from the Centre For Dolphin Studies. He is an internationally recognised researcher on dolphins and whales, and has written many books and theses on the subject. Many of our whale and dolphin watching regulations have been implicated due to his research. He has supervised 17 Master students and 18 PhD students in their projects.

Your Training While On The Project.

You will gain experience collecting data, samples, and photographs for the various research projects currently being undertaken by the ORCA Foundation. The details will be explained with each project you are involved in on-site. As every project is seasonally dependant, the initiatives you take part in may vary depending on the time of year that you participate in the program. You may not be involved in all of ORCA's research initiatives, as some projects are only conducted only 3-4 times per year. Your training will give you a basic education on the projects that we are involved with, and will educate you to the level of a research assistant. You will be challenged to an examination after the first two weeks of your program to become a certified research assistant. If you stay longer than two weeks, you will have opportunity to complete your marine guiding course and you will be more involved in the on-going research projects.

There are two other training opportunities for volunteers. Our marine guiding program has been completely revamped and upgraded to comply with the national standards. Because of these changes, we have recently been granted permission from COMETCORP.COM, which is the national training agency for the South African Boat Based Whale Watching Association, to conduct their practical evaluations for their training programs. Our program is the entry-level theoretical course. Their theoretical course can be completed on line at the volunteer's leisure for approx R360.00. The marine guiding course requires a bit of time and is best done during a 4-week stay.

Our second course is the First Aid for Stranded Marine Animals course, which is an entry-level course for animal care that can be completed during a two-week stay. This course is geared towards those who have no knowledge of marine animal care, but would like to learn something new.

During your stay there may be opportunity to be involved in whale/dolphin presentations conducted by Dr. Vic, as well as the many short programs that the Foundation offers. These programs include, but are not limited to, marine conservation, ocean acidification, research methods, water conservation and carbon offset.



Diving courses can be organised for volunteers at an additional fee through the local dive school. Inform the Foundation staff as soon as possible if you are interested in completing any of the courses.

Getting to Plettenberg Bay

You will mostly likely fly into the country through either Cape Town or Johannesburg. From there, you will take a domestic flight to George where we can organise a transfer for you directly to the volunteer house. The cost for the transfer will be approx R450.00, depending on the company that is available to collect you. It is approximately a 1 hour and 25 minute drive from the George Airport to Plettenberg Bay.

A bus transfer can also be arranged from Cape Town or Port Elizabeth. The price is between R100 and R300, depending on the location you are travelling from and the bus company you are travelling with. The tickets can be organised through www.computicket.co.za. You can find the bus information on the left side panel of their homepage. Our staff will collect you from the bus depot in Plettenberg Bay and will transfer you to the ORCA house.

Accommodation

The accommodation for the duration of your stay will be at the ORCA volunteer house, which is situated approximately 3 kilometres from the ORCA Foundation office in Plettenberg Bay. The accommodation is self-catering, with shared bedroom and bathroom facilities. The number of volunteers can range anywhere from 1 to 12, depending on the season and number of bookings made.

Laundry facilities are available for volunteers, and Teliswa does communal washing weekly.

The house is within close proximity to a shopping centre, which has various shops, restaurants, and a cinema. Rental cars and taxis are available for hire for weekend activities.

Basic food for meals is provided for you at the house. You may be required to pack a lunch for some activities, but you will be informed of this ahead of time when such situations arise. Evening meals are prepared for you 6 nights per week, but volunteers are also welcome to eat out. The house is located near a variety of restaurants and take-away restaurants.

Our house is non-smoking and there is a zero-tolerance policy regarding use of illegal substances, excessive alcohol use, and inappropriate behaviour/language while on the project.

Communications

A communal telephone line is available at the volunteer house. The phone can receive incoming calls and make outgoing calls on a world calling card (available at nearby shops). There is ADSL access to the internet at the volunteer house. Skype is available for those who have access.

Time of Year

The time of the year to join the project is mainly dependant on what kind of weather you prefer, as the research, community upliftment, and education programs vary throughout the year.

January to March tend to be our warmest months. Sun cream and hats are strongly recommended. Temperatures range from lows of 10°C to highs of 30°C. We tend to see a variety of dolphin species and the occasional Bryde's Whale on our whale watching tours at this time of year.



From **April to June** the days are still warm, but the evenings cool off nicely. Temperatures range from 8°C to 25°C. We see various species of dolphins and the occasional humpback whale on its migration north at this time of year.

July to September are the winter months. The days start off quite cool and warm up to about 20°C, but the nights can get quite chilly, down to around 5°C. Warm clothes are recommended for this time of year. Remember that we don't have central heating in South Africa. This is the beginning of our whale-watching season, and we have Southern Right Whales in the bay on a regular basis.

The **October to December** weather conditions are similar to those from April thru June. Our animal sightings are now mostly Humpback Whales and dolphins. The water warms up considerably, so diving and snorkelling can be done comfortably.

Activities

There is a great range of activities that can be done outside of the project on your off time. These include skydiving, scuba diving, game drives, horseback riding, bungee jumping and canopy tours. Volunteers receive a discount on most of these activities. Activities can be organised by the house and volunteer coordinators.

Field Conditions

An average day at the project will start at 08:30. Your accommodation is approximately 3 kilometres from Ocean Blue Adventures, and the coordinators will transfer you there. From here you will begin your day's activities, which can include anything from tank maintenance at the centre to assisting research teams out on the ocean.

The relaxed atmosphere of Plettenberg Bay and the centre will help you to settle in quickly. Some days can be very hectic and involve lots of work and assistance, while others move at a much slower pace. It all depends on the activities planned for the day.

The **ORCA** volunteer house is within walking distances from a variety of local facilities. The touristy feel to Plettenberg Bay makes it a safe haven for young travellers.

Example Weeks at ORCA Foundation

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
08h30 – Whale and dolphin data collection 13h00 - Lunch 14h30 – Aquarium maintenance at Ocean Blue, bait collection	08h30 – Carbon Neutral Presentation 09h00 – Tree Planting and Alien species removal 16h00 – Return home	08h30 – Whale and dolphin data collection 14h00 - Lunch 15h00 – Short course or presentation	09h30 - Qolweni Preschool 14h00 – Return home 14h30 – Aquarium food collection and SASS evaluation	09h30 - Whale and dolphin data collection 12h00 – presentation with Dr. Vic 14h00 - Lunch 14h00 - Clean aquariums
08h30 – Whale and dolphin data collection 13h00 - Lunch 14h30 – Various courses and presentations	08h30 – Robberg Hike and marine debris collection 14h00 – Lunch 15h00 - Tag and release fishing	08h30 – Whale and dolphin data collection 13h00 - Lunch 14h30 – Beach clean up 16h00 – Data Entry	09h30 - Qolweni Preschool 14h00 - Return 14h30 – Food collection and SASS evaluation	09h30 - Boat trip 12h00 – presentation with Tracy 14h00 - Lunch 14h00 - Clean aquariums



We offer both two and four week programs. The two-week program is an introduction to the research program, where you will learn the basics necessary to carry out many different projects. This is followed by an exam if you wish to complete the research assistant course. Weeks 3 and 4 will be spent continuing in data collection and entry, completing your guiding course, completing research documents and working at the ORCA and Ocean Blue offices. You will also have the opportunity to experience a bite size program from White Shark Africa in Mossel Bay at no extra charge.

Regardless of how long you choose to stay, you will leave ORCA with a deeper understanding of marine and coastal conservation, and the skills to educate others.

Relaxation

The working week at ORCA Foundation is generally considered to be Monday to Friday, from 0800 to 1700. Evenings and weekends are at your leisure.

The surrounding area to Plettenberg Bay has a huge variety of attractions for you to visit and experience. Some of these activities, with approximate costs (subject to change), are listed below.

• Walk with Elephants	R250
• Ride with the Elephants	R450
• Horse Back Safaris	R280
• Buffalo Hills game drive	R350
• Plettenberg Bay Game Reserve	R350
• Bridge Walking	R100
• Bungee Jumping	R750
• Sky Diving	R1500
• Tree Top Canopy Tours	R450
• Monkeyland	R100
• Birds of Eden	R100
• Lawnwood snake park	R100
• Tenikwa Wildlife Reserve	R100
• Adventure land water park	R150
• 3D Walking Maze	R100
• Dive Courses	R2100-3500
• Surfing Lessons/per lesson	R250
• Deep Sea Fishing	R500
• Adventure boat rides	R250
• Seal swim/dive	R450

Volunteer Requirements

Previous knowledge or experience is not required to become a volunteer with ORCA Foundation. The Foundation seeks to place those with a passion for conservation in a diverse and environment, giving them a life changing experience while providing the foundation with much needed conservation assistance.

If you wish to complete a project for your studies during your placement, special arrangements can be made. Student volunteers will work directly under the supervision of Dr. Vic Cockcroft. These types of projects generally require a minimum stay of eight weeks.



Booking

If you have now made the decision that you want to become a volunteer at **ORCA Foundation**, then these are the next steps in the lead up to your life changing experience.

- Confirm placement with 25% deposit (full payment if under 4 weeks to departure).
- Placement will then be confirmed to you by the ORCA Foundation team.
- Four weeks prior to departure, a full payment must be made to ORCA Foundation.
- Transport to ORCA Foundation after arriving in South Africa will be at the volunteer's expense, although the team will assist you in finding the least expensive and safest way to Plettenberg Bay.
- Travel insurance, personal insurance, and extra luggage is at the volunteers expense.
- **ARRIVE at the Foundation!**

Payments can now be made by credit card online or by direct deposit. Your fees includes 3 meals per day, all activities on project, transfers during working hours on the program, room and board, a t-shirt, training manual, and a cap. If you stay 4 weeks or longer, then you will get the choice of a rucksack or a polar fleece, and will be able to participate in the marine guide program and/or the competent crew program.

The cost of the program does not include any insurance, out of project activities, equipment hire, diving activities, car hire, taxis, airport transfers, out of house meals, snacks, cigarettes, alcohol, etc. The bank account details for the Foundation are as follows: First National Bank, Plettenberg Bay, Account #62031316856, Branch code 210514, Swift code FIRNZAJJ. You can also pay on our website with credit card. Just click on the donate tab and follow the link for a donation to the donation page.

It is strongly recommended that volunteers purchase medical, travel, and personal insurance against things like theft, cancellation of flights or illness. Although there has never been a problem in the past, we would rather you be safe than sorry.

General Information

- Summer months in South Africa: November – April.
- Winter months: May – October (morning and evenings are chilly +/- 7 degrees Celsius).
- Project does some community work at under privileged schools, thus any old clothes, stationery, and the like would be well appreciated as donations.
- Currency in South Africa is South African Rand.
- A full driving licence is required when hiring or driving vehicles. There is a minimum age of 21 required to hire vehicles.
- A large majority of your placement will be spent at sea. If you suffer from motion sickness, please remember to bring appropriate medication. Kwell is the best treatment, but is hard to find in South Africa.
- Voltage is 220v, and there are round three pin plugs. International adaptors are required.
- Immigration into South Africa now requires two completely empty pages in your passport alongside each other. Visas are typically valid for 3 months.
- Immunisation: Tetanus is highly recommended. Please consult your GP for advice on immunisation requirements.
- Remember to check the baggage limits for the airlines you are travelling with, as overweight charges are annoying when starting off your trip.

For further information please visit www.southafrica.net



Packing List

You will almost certainly need (* denotes gender-specific items):

- A waterproof (and windproof if possible) coat/jacket.
- Long trousers for evenings and cool days (winters can be quite chilly).
- Shorts for sunny days.
- T-shirts, both long and short-sleeved.
- Old jeans or work-trousers and shirts.
- Jumper or fleece jumper.
- Comfortable walking shoes, old trainers, or sandals.
- Swimming trunks/costumes/suits.
- Pyjamas. Remember that winter evenings are cold (July-September).
- Underwear and socks.
- A day rucksack/backpack.
- A hat or cap for the sun (and for winter a beanie or woollen hat).
- Sunglasses (preferably good, polarized ones).
- Sunscreen and mosquito repellent.

You will probably also want:

- A camera (worth bringing a nice digital one).
- Binoculars.
- A torch or flashlight.
- Some books to read in the evenings.
- Work gloves (can also be purchased fairly cheaply in town).

There are a number of banks in the town centre, and almost all shops and restaurants accept international credit cards. Keep in mind that American Express and Discovery are not always accepted.

Most things are a fair bit cheaper in SA than they are in the UK or the USA. Anything you don't bring with you can be easily purchased locally from the shopping mall located near the volunteer house.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me on bookings@orcafoundation.com

Hope to see you soon!

ORCA Foundation Team

