



Volunteering at Cawston Wildlife Estate

Cawston Wildlife Estate (CWE) is located 60km from Bulawayo, the second largest city in Zimbabwe. Bulawayo has a population of approx. 1 million people. It's a sleepy city that loves the arts. It's also fondly known as the 'City of Kings' or 'Skies'. The native language is Ndebele. The Ndebele are descendants of the Zulu, having split nearly 200 years ago, so the two languages are very similar. The Ndebele people, ancestrally a warring tribe, are gentle, friendly and very welcoming.

What does volunteering at Cawston Wildlife Estate (CWE) entail?

Join the day to day work managing our herd of horses or work out in the bush keeping waterholes functioning and doing all the other back of house work required to keep the wildlife and habitats on the Estate healthy and happy. Keeping horses in the African bush is very different to a first world country, especially as there is no vet around the corner.

About CWE

CWE has been owned by the Johnstone family for 30 years. Originally a cattle farm, it was derelict and badly damaged when it was bought by the family. A 5 year program saw all the cattle fences, troughs and pens taken out and the land re-stocked and developed for wildlife. Today CWE is known as a place teeming with plains game and a source of wildlife for re-stocking other properties including National Parks. The ethos of the Johnstone family is ethical sustainable conservation. At a defined 32,000 acres, CWE has a finite limit to the wildlife populations living on it. Managing this requires annual population counts, careful discussions with Scouts on the ground and a scientifically based off-take quota. Excess animals are either caught live for re-stocking or are harvested through culling programs and sport hunting. This has worked for us for 60 years and the legacy left behind is the proof of highly regarded properties teeming with healthy wildlife all through sustainable management.

CWE is a multi-faceted Estate. Our main focus is tourism and our greatest enjoyment is a guest departing us feeling refreshed and rejuvenated after their time in the bush.

We believe strongly in organic field to table food and much of what we eat is produced on the farm. We also believe in holistic livestock management. This means that our domestic livestock, our cattle and horses, should be able to live alongside our wildlife and complement them.

As a volunteer, we see you as helping us as we continually strive for our vision of a holistically managed piece of paradise.



Some of the Horses for the riding safaris belong to Ride Zimbabwe – a well-established and respected horse riding safari operation. Apart from the day to day challenges of looking after horses in Africa you will learn about the intricacies of running a horse safari outfit.



A Typical Day at CWE

Equine Volunteers

At CWE there are two full time grooms and you will be assisting them in their work. Enoch has worked in a variety of stables from racing, polo-cross to general show horse and Admire became a groom in early 2017 and is passionate about the animals in his care. He has learnt an enormous amount and is always wanting to learn more. During your outrides with Enoch and Admire, we like you to be always on the look out for snares or other evidence of poaching.

Below is a typical daily program. The type and extent of schooling and outrides you do will depend on your ability and skills.

6am Breakfast

6.30am Start at the stables, feeding, grooming and checking over the horses. Sometimes this is a bit delayed if you have to go find the horses in the bush.

9am Schooling or outride or general stable work

12noon Lunch

2.30pm Afternoon outride, schooling or stable work

4.30pm Evening feed and general check over of each horse

As part of our herd we have several rescue horses and donkeys. They also need time, love and attention as they have a myriad collection of problems.

Horses are released into the bush every evening to graze as well as after breakfast. During a Horse Safari, horses may be kept in at night and the above timings changed to accommodate client riding requests. You could be feeding at 6am and only bringing the safari horses back at 6pm or later, feeding them, checking them over and checking tack before heading for your own dinner. You may also be called on to help with the guests. This may entail hosting guests in Camp on occasion or riding the horses back to Camp from a sundowner while the guests go on a night drive.

Your stay here at CWE doesn't have to be all about horses! We're more than happy to have you join the pump run or get involved in other aspects of the daily running of the Estate.



Work is highly varied on the Estate and no one day is the same. Our work day starts at 6am and finishes at 5pm and there is a two-hour lunch break. The kind of work you are involved in depends on what projects are currently underway as well as on your skills and level of desire to be involved. Below is a list of things you could be doing, all of which may teach you many new interesting and varied skills:

- Assisting on the pump run, checking waterholes and maintaining pumps
- Repairing blinds at waterholes
- Road work (grading, clearing, repairing roads from storm damage)
- Repairing the Estate boundary fence or the cattle pen
- Working with the cattle or dairy herd
- Anti-poaching patrols including learning some tracking and bush skills (but not direct involvement with poachers)
- Putting out trail cameras for carnivore studies and game counts
- Assisting at the butchery with carcass and meat preparation
- Assisting with setting up sundowners or meals in the bush for clients
- Assisting at the Lodge if we are really busy with clients
- If you're interested we'll teach you how to ride a motorbike, drive a tractor, operate chainsaw, drive a manual ('stick') vehicle & drive 4x4.
- Organizing a wildlife talk at the local primary schools.
- Helping our local University students on internship with their project data collection



Life as a Volunteer with us

Where you will be staying

At CWE, volunteers will be given their own room as far as possible. Depending on time of year and how many volunteers are in residence will also affect whether you eat in separate volunteer accommodation or at the main house with the family. If you are on your own, you will more than likely live at the main house with the family.

Location

Two locations are involved in the Equine volunteer program:

Cawston Wildlife Estate – is one hour from Bulawayo and is where the bulk of the work takes place. Here we have approx. 16 horses which all need exercising, schooling, grooming and feeding. Daily exercise and schooling of the horses takes you out into the bush where you get to go on your own self-guided safari! Within a week or so, most volunteers have seen all the plains game found on the Estate. There is also work with our rescue donkeys. As CWE is family owned and run, there is generally someone around and if you happen to be the only volunteer the family ensures that you eat with them.

Cunningham Cottage, Umguza – is located approx. 20km from town and is situated on a beautiful dairy farm with the Umguza River running through it. Several families live here on adjacent farms and there is a wider social life. Here you will be living with James and Janine Varden in their house. There are not as many horses here but the schooling is more intense. Day structure is similar to CWE.

We are serious about the quality of experience you have with us and we aim to only take a maximum 4 volunteers at a time.

Start dates

Anytime! Please liaise with us as to what dates would work.

What is included?

We charge a monthly fee of US\$550 per person. Maximum stay is 6 months. The average stay is 1 – 2 months. The fee is really to ensure you are serious about coming to stay with us and also to cover some basic expenses. We want your skills and your time way more than we want your money! This fee covers:

- Your food
- Transfer to and from Bulawayo Airport
- Accommodation
- A local sim card with a month of data (250MB) for WhatsApp to communicate with family and us. WhatsApp is a primary communication tool in Africa. You can easily and reasonably cheaply purchase extra data for your phone. To utilize this local sim card, we ask that you bring a phone that is unlocked and enabled to accept international sim cards.

What you need to budget for

- Medical up-front payments (e.g. a visit to the doctor is US\$30)
- Transport and excursions outside of your volunteer work e.g. going away for the weekend. Nearly every volunteer goes to Victoria Falls for the weekend, so it is worthwhile to do some research before you leave home on pricing of the activities you can do and the pricing of accommodation. Most places in this tourist town accept credit cards.
- Personal items e.g. specific snacks, alcohol, toiletries

Health Insurance

Please ensure you have medical insurance so that in the event of an emergency you can be taken care of. Our medical services are reasonable and most cases can be adequately dealt with. But, as with anywhere, the costs are high and cash shortages mean that sometimes medical products can be hard to find. You will need US\$ cash to buy medicine upfront and we suggest you budget on at least US\$100 for two visits to the doctor and basic medication.

Vaccinations

It is essential you ensure your tetanus shots are up to date.

Zimbabwe has an excellent childhood program of vaccinations and children are administered with the following vaccines – mumps, rubella, polio, small pox, chicken pox and measles. It would be advisable to ensure you have had these as well.

We also recommend you have hepatitis vaccines as well. If you are travelling to other countries such as Kenya within six months of your visit to Zimbabwe, you will need to ensure that you have had your yellow fever vaccination.

Malaria

We are not in a malaria area, although we do have mosquitos. If you wish to visit a malaria area such as Hwange National Park or Victoria Falls, please consult your doctor on suitable prophylactics. Note that these can also be obtained here.

Tick Bite Fever

Mild winters and wet summers result in a proliferation of ticks. If you start to feel headachy, feverish and have swollen lymph glands or have jaundice looking eyes, it is likely you have contracted tick bite fever. This usually comes up 10 days after you have been bitten by an infected tick which leaves an angry red bite on you the size of a pound sterling coin. This is very easily and simply dealt with by a visit to the doctor to verify and to obtain a prescription for the appropriate antibiotic (doxycycline). Within a day or two you are back to normal. It is unlikely you will suffer ever again from tick bite fever.

Sexual relations

Volunteers are strictly forbidden to conduct sexual relations with any staff member or local community member. Those who do will be put on the next flight home. No exceptions.



COVID19 Protocol

We require all volunteers to follow government protocols on COVID-19. We also have our own additional protocols that we would like you to be honest and respectful enough to follow as well. Our protocols are devised to maintain our bubble as far as possible despite our business and way of life. We also understand that scientific evidence and the resulting protocol are constantly updating and changing. If you have any queries, please talk to us.

- Prior to your arrival we request that you isolate at home for 5 – 10 days. The longer the better.
- 48hours before your scheduled arrival in Zimbabwe you must take a PCR test. If your flight route means that you cannot take the test, collect the result and still arrive within 48hours, then please consider a long layover in Johannesburg so that you can be re-tested there.
- On your journey please ensure that you sanitise your hands regularly, at least every hour.
- During your stay please continue to practice social distancing and especially ensure that you are aware of standing / sitting too close to people especially indoors.
- A PCR test can be carried out in Bulawayo for \$30. So we request that if you have any thoughts that you may be infected please let us know immediately so that we can get you tested and assist you as best we can to be treated and to prevent further transmission. It is important that you understand that health care for COVID19 treatment is very limited here and that especially, should you need it, the chances of access to a ventilator is unlikely.
- We request that you sign and return our indemnity form prior to arrival in Zimbabwe.

We are very relaxed here in our daily life and can only continue to do so if everyone maintains a sensible outlook and awareness on transmission and especially maintains good hygiene.

Our safaris can be severely affected by COVID19 travel restrictions, however, animals still have to be fed and cared for and exercised. Farm life doesn't stop for anything!



Arrival

Please fly into Bulawayo Airport and we will collect you from there. If you are self-drive, please contact us for details on how to get to us.

Going to town

We are an hour's drive from Bulawayo and there is no official public transport to town. There is generally a vehicle going into town once a week and with some notice, we can arrange to have you join the vehicle for a day in town.

Time off

Volunteers are given a weekend (3 – 4 days) off once a month and assisted where possible to getting to their location of choice.

Weather

From January to April, days and nights are hot, and there are regular but short lived beautiful rolling thunder storms, the rain from which cools the summer air. The farm can be very muddy with enough rain.

May to August - there is very little rain, and long sunny days.

Nights are cooler and can be very cold at times. It is not unusual June to early August for temperatures to drop below freezing in the hour after sunrise.

September to December - the hot dry months with high temperatures before the rains start again.

Food

Volunteers are provided with food to make their own breakfast and lunch. We tailor to your diet as much as possible by providing a range of bread, pastas, cereals and milk, cold meats, fruit and vegetables. We grow and source most of the food provided from our farm. For dinner, we supply you with a cooked main dish and you make up the accompaniments. Most importantly please tell us about any allergies! The nearest doctor is an hour's drive away so prompt help could be a problem!





Laundry

We have facilities to do your laundry on a regular basis so pack light. A bare minimum wardrobe would include:

- 2 pairs riding trousers
- Riding boots, hard hat, gloves
- 1 pair casual jeans
- 2 casual shirts
- 1 smart-casual shirt for evening wear
- 4 day's worth underwear / socks
- Bath Towel
- Light sweater
- 4 riding shirts
- Riding chaps
- 1 pair shorts
- 1 pair smart jeans / chinos
- sunglasses, hat, sunscreen
- Toiletries
- in winter also bring a warmer jacket



December through to March it is useful to also bring a raincoat & if possible a pair gumboots / wellingtons.

Those volunteers not working with horses should bring old clothing in the closest to safari colours that you own (beige/ brown / neutral colours). Know that they will likely get torn and stained!
Good working boots that you can walk in are essential for bush work.

We suggest that you pack a full set of clothes to change into in your hand luggage plus a set of riding kit, just in case your main suitcase is delayed.

Visas

Volunteers can get and pay for a tourist visa on arrival at the airport or apply before they depart their home country. Visa's issued are for 30 days and cost US\$30 – 55 depending on your country.

Visa's are easily renewed, for free, in Bulawayo every 30 days for an absolute maximum of six months visit. Please note that 30 days is counted from the day you arrive and get your first visa at immigration. Please check as soon as immigration has stamped you and confirm with them what the last day is on the visa if you are not sure.



How to Apply

Please email your CV and a cover letter to info@CawstonWildlifeEstate.com

You will need to include the following information:

- Do you have a driving licence? Manual or Automatic?
- Riding Ability – please include a video of you riding if possible. Also note information such as whether you have owned / part-owned a horse and how much involvement you've had in caring for horses.
- Any practical abilities for example carpentry / electrics / mechanics, and to what level.
- Sports played either team or socially
- Other volunteer positions you've held
- When you would like to visit and for how long.

What else to do in Zimbabwe

Matobo National Park

Approx. 2 hours road trip away to the south of Bulawayo. This World Heritage site has ancient San paintings, white rhino and spectacular scenery.

Victoria Falls

Approx. 5 hours road trip away. The widest waterfall in the world. The town is full of adrenaline activities!

Hwange National Park

Approx. 3 hours drive away. Full of elephants, lions and buffalo plus a host of amazing animals.

At the other end of the country

Mana Pools National Park

Bordering the mighty Zambezi river, the wildlife sightings are incredible. Canoe safari is not for the faint hearted.

Gona-re-zhou National Park

In the south east of the country. A low lying hot area with wetlands at the confluence of mighty rivers. The wildlife and views are spectacular.

Nyanga / Chimanimani

In the eastern borders of Zimbabwe. This mountainous area is cool and damp with beautiful views and perfect for the hiking enthusiast.



Interested in Volunteering at CWE?

Get in touch with us on:

info@CawstonWildlifeEstate.com

Juliet (+263) 778 486 493

www.CawstonWildlifeEstate.com

