



VOLUNTEER WITH EHRA!

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# WELCOME TO

ELEPHANT-HUMAN RELATIONS AID

## Volunteer Project Briefing



**Thank you for your interest in volunteering for EHRA!**

This briefing is designed to answer some of the questions you might have with regards to EHRA, the work we do, and the contribution you can make to help us reach our objectives. Please also ensure you have read through the volunteer section of the web site:

[www.ehranamibia.org](http://www.ehranamibia.org)

EHRA is a Namibian registered non-profit organization that strives towards assisting the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) and other NGO's in promoting a mutually beneficial relationship between the humans and the desert-dwelling elephants of the northwestern regions of the Namib Desert.



## MAKE A CHANGE

**EHRA launched a volunteer work project in May 2003** to achieve our goal of funding our important conservation work independently from external donor funding and grants.

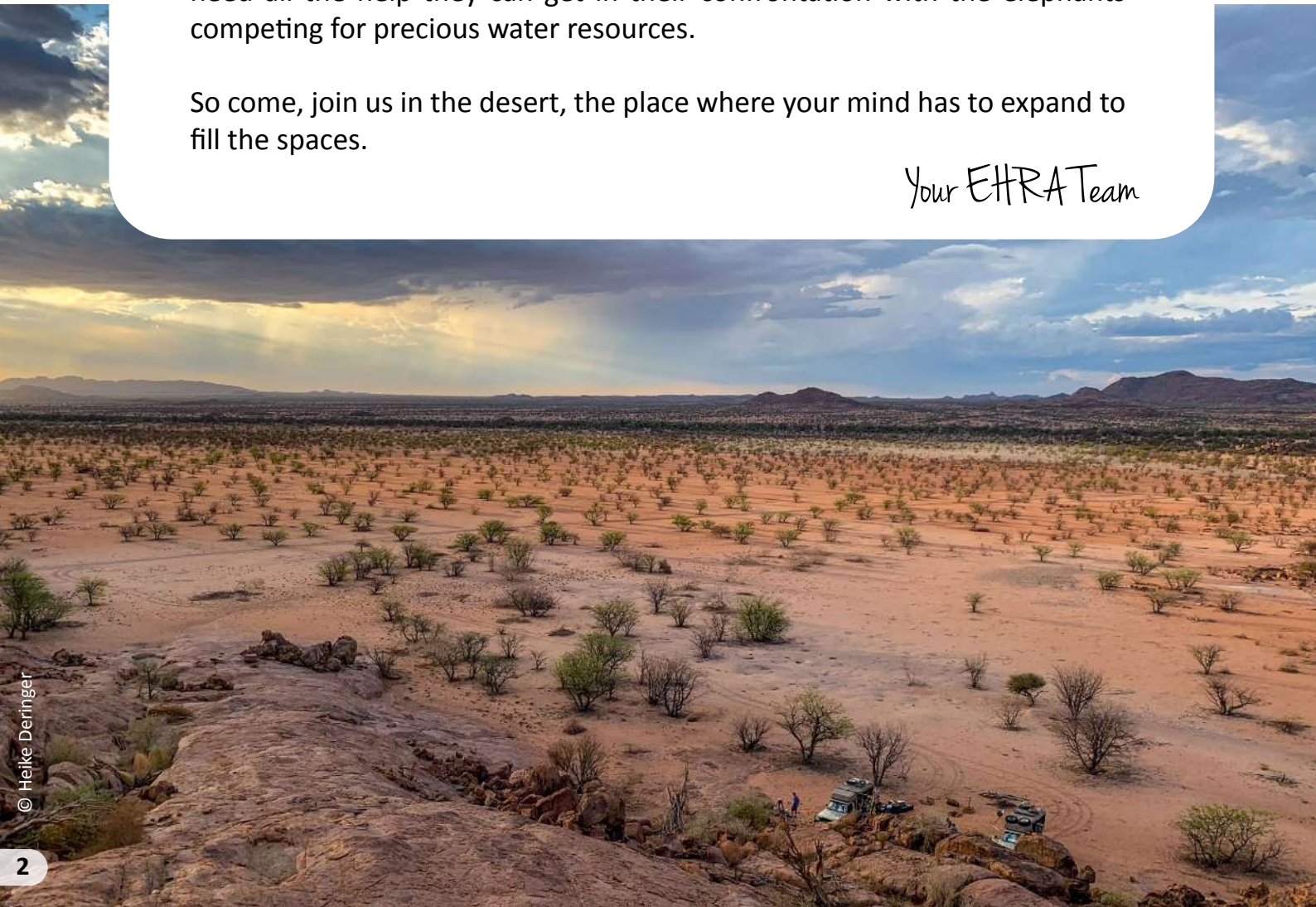
This project also gives us the opportunity to expose dedicated enthusiasts to the work we do in the field and offer a unique chance to make a personal difference and a real contribution to conservation and biosphere development in Namibia.

Working from mobile base camps in the vicinity of the Brandberg in the ephemeral Ugab River, the volunteer teams immerse themselves in pioneer conservation work. This project is **not** for those interested in bottle-feeding cuddly baby elephants.

This is about real, spearhead conservation work in a harsh desert environment where small bands of secretive, desert adapted elephants roam vast wilderness areas. Where subsistence farmers eke out an existence and need all the help they can get in their confrontation with the elephants competing for precious water resources.

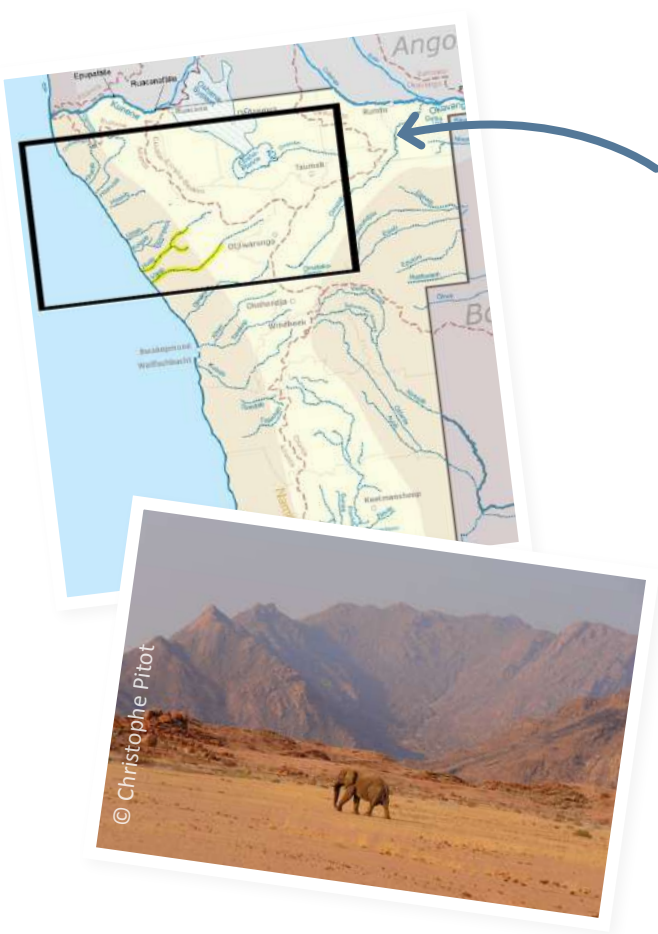
So come, join us in the desert, the place where your mind has to expand to fill the spaces.

*Your EHRA Team*



# CONSERVATION PROJECT

Where is the project?



Our project takes you to the northwestern regions of the Namib Desert, traditionally known as 'Damaraland'. This tribal wilderness area runs parallel to the Skeleton Coast national park, and is home to a small population of desert-dwelling elephants.

The first week of the project will see you working with the local subsistence farmers, building protective walls around their water points, or constructing new water points for elephants away from homesteads and farms.

The following week is spent assisting the staff of EHRA in following and monitoring the movements of the elephants on patrol, camping wild and living close to the earth, elephants and people.

## Aims and Objectives

This project is part of a long-term initiative to find solutions to the ever-growing problem of facilitating the peaceful co-habitation between the subsistence farmers and the desert adapted elephants through:

COMMUNITY  
SUPPORT

TRACK, ID,  
MONITOR

EDUCATION,  
TRAINING



The project's emphasis is on the building of protective structures around communal water points, creation of additional water points for elephants, assisting with, and teaching the farmers skills to financially benefit through tourism in the area, researching elephant movements, distribution and compiling identikits on herds and individuals.

## WHY IS EHRA HERE?

### Human-Elephant Conflict

**The EHRA project** was launched in December 2001 as a result of the escalation in competition for natural resources between the desert-dwelling elephants and human inhabitants of the northern Erongo and southern Kunene Regions.



© Hanna Peck



**Conflicts between elephants and humans** exist due to increased competition for land and water resources, and a lack of knowledge on how to live together peacefully.

**In EHRA's project region,** the main conflict is access to water. In their search for water elephants break tanks, pull pipes, push over windmills and, sometimes, break into houses that store food or water. This understandably creates fear and intolerance towards the elephants. In response to problems, the ministry issues hunting permits, causing the desert population to decline.

### Desert Elephants

Although not a subspecies, desert elephants are a high national and international conservation priority and have been designated as a top priority for protection by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature).



## Our Vision

**EHRA believes** that through assisting these communities by constructing protective structures around water points, educating community members about elephant behavior, creating alternative drinking points for the elephants and promoting tourism in the affected areas, we can assist in alleviating the current pressure facing communal farmers.

Thereby helping to promote the future of the desert-dwelling elephants in harmony with the continuous positive development of the conservancies and their ideals.



## Your role as a volunteer

**You will help us** to build the sturdy protection wall around rural water storage facilities. With a large group of volunteers we can complete one wall in two trips. You will also help us to monitor the elephants and collect important data. We provide the government with accurate info on the desert elephants and keep track of population trends.

## QUICK PROJECT FACTS



All projects run for a minimum slot of **two weeks** and you can join for multiples of that, up to 12 weeks (six slots).

We meet the night before departure to discuss the upcoming project, and meet our team members. We depart midday on the Monday from Swakopmund for the Base Camp.



Projects run continuously throughout the year departing every two weeks. Please refer to our departure dates and choose.

Your payment covers all your food, transportation and accommodation during the project. Your funds also contribute towards the project cost.



Group size is kept at 14 team members to minimize impact and maximize safety. We can only accept volunteers from 18 years old and above.



## Week 1

### BUILDING WEEK

- MONDAY** Travel from Swakopmund and arrival at EHRA's Base Camp
- TUESDAY** Packing of 4x4 cars and travel to the build site. Set up camp and start to build!
- WEDNESDAY** 8am - 10am Building; Break,  
**THURSDAY** 10:30 - 1pm Building; Lunch,  
**FRIDAY** 3pm - 5pm Building, cleaning; dinner, campfire time!
- SATURDAY** Finish, pack up and travel back to Base Camp.
- SUNDAY** Restocking with food, leisure time



Build Week is hard and satisfying work. Quickly you don't mind being completely covered in cement and dirt. It is fun and a healthy workout! For many, this is the most rewarding part of the project.



## Week 2

### PATROL WEEK

#### MONDAY

Pack 4x4 cars and start to track the elephants. Sleep out under the stars!

#### TUESDAY WEDNESDAY

Leave at 8am to continue tracking, lunch at 12-1pm. Look for a camping spot at 5pm. Dinner.

#### THURSDAY

Track the elephants one more time. Head back to Base Camp around lunch time.

#### FRIDAY

Pack the mini bus and head back to Swakopmund. Arrival at approx. 12-13pm. Goodbye dinner at a restaurant in the evening!



© Stephan

Tracking the elusive desert elephants, observing them in their natural habitat, knowing you contributed to their survival, is VERY special. Sleeping wild under the stars is another beautiful experience, that might make you want to come back for more...

# EHRA LOGISTICS

## Transport

**Everyone makes their way** to the pickup point of Swakopmund, EHRA will book your airport transfer and shuttle service through to this interesting coastal town, once we have your flight details. There are scheduled, safe and professional shuttles from Windhoek International Airport and Walvis Bay airport and the drivers will meet you in arrivals with a sign with your name on. **On the Monday** of the start of the project, the whole team will be transferred to the EHRA base camp in the EHRA bus!



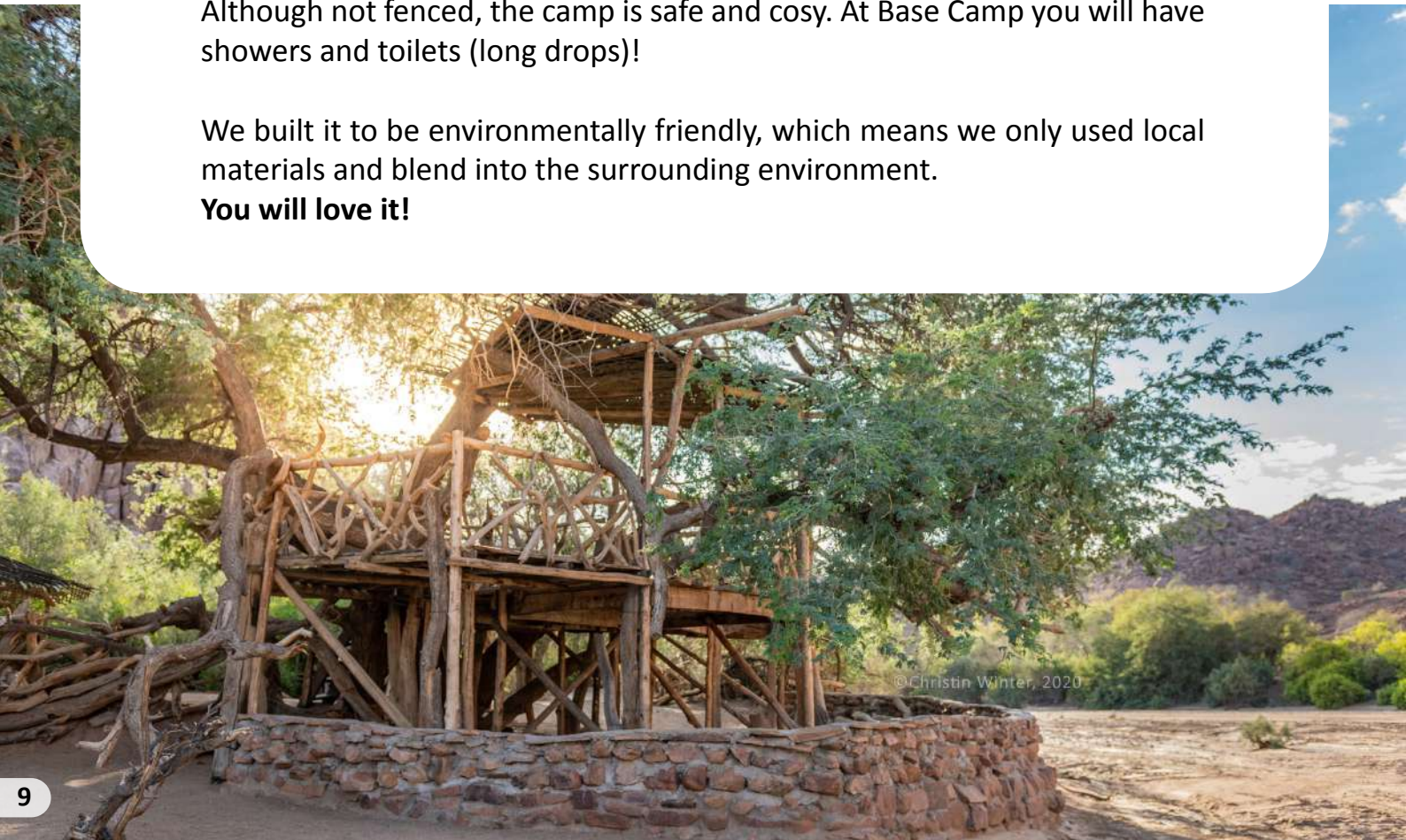
*You will be picked up by EHRA on the Monday's project start.*

## Base Camp

**You will arrive at EHRA's Base Camp** on Monday afternoon. Our camp is situated on the northern bank of the Ugab River, which is home to two herds of desert elephants. You will return to the camp after each project section: after Build Week and after Patrol Week. In Base Camp, you will sleep on a big tree platform underneath the stars and listen to the elephants walk past. Although not fenced, the camp is safe and cosy. At Base Camp you will have showers and toilets (long drops)!

We built it to be environmentally friendly, which means we only used local materials and blend into the surrounding environment.

**You will love it!**



©Christin Winter, 2020



## Build Week

**We set up a mobile camp** at each project site we work at. We have an enclosed and private long drop toilet, tents for getting changed in, and then everyone normally sleeps under the stars under shade and on a tarpaulin. We provide 'bed rolls' which are foam mattresses which roll up. Washing facilities are limited on site and we use wet wipes for cleaning!

Meals are prepared on a rotational basis, over the fire and eaten around the camp fire together. We pride ourselves on providing the most amazing camp meals with adequate vegetarian options. Examples of meals include Spaghetti Bolognese, Thai Curry and Roast Chicken. There is even an Apple Crumble cooked on the fire!



## Patrol Week

**Whilst on patrol we sleep wild and under the stars!** Toilets and showers are not available during this week.

## IS THIS FOR ME?

*Yes, if...*



... you have an open mind, a willing heart and are prepared to put in work for something bigger than yourself.

... you are looking for a wilderness adventure and HANDS OFF conservation work. We help and observe elephants from afar. We never touch wildlife!



... you speak and understand English. It doesn't need to be perfect!

... you have an average degree of fitness. A lot of the work is manual, and we could spend a lot of time in high temperatures on foot. A bit of training beforehand would make your time more comfortable.



**Anyone is capable, and we are there for you every step of the way.**



## *Meet likeminded people!*

The volunteer groups are always a mix of ages and everyone works together as a team doing as much as they are able to. There are jobs for everybody.

**This is about true adventure** with likeminded people that care. It's about teamwork and tolerance. We live close together, close to the ground, and close to the animals.

Those willing to make a personal sacrifice for a belief in the ability of anyone that cares enough to make a difference. That hunger not only for adventure and wisdom, but the satisfaction of giving something back.

This is not a package holiday, or a feel good charity case. This is real conservation. You will learn to be one with nature, awaken long-lost memories, do hard satisfying work, and walk away with a longing to be back under the desert stars.



There is nothing more rewarding than to travel with a purpose and to give back. It enriches your soul and be warned - it can be life changing...

## WHAT TO BRING

**We supply all equipment needed whilst on site and will forward you a detailed personal equipment list upon booking your volunteer trip with us.**

The project meeting point is the Namibian coastal town of Swakopmund and we will assist you with arrangements of how to get there including airport transfers. Before you book your flights please contact us for advice. Further information on planning your trip will be found in the document we send you once you have booked.



### Travel in Namibia

**Namibia is a beautiful, friendly and safe country to travel around.** If you have the time and would like to see more of this wonderful country, we are happy to help you with planning your onward journey.

Email [Rachel@desertelephant.org](mailto:Rachel@desertelephant.org) to book your adventure after or before your time at EHRA. We know secret spots and off-the-beaten tracks and would love to assist you in getting the most out of your time in Namibia.

## DESERT WILDLIFE

**Damaraland is vast**, scarcely populated communal trust land. As it is a transitional zone between the high rainfall area in the east, and the Skeleton coast in the west, it is regarded as un-farmable on a commercial basis. Therefore it has become a natural, unfenced refuge for desert adapted animals such as....



Black Rhino



Desert Lion



Dryx antelope



Kudu



Namaqua  
chameleon

Desert  
Giraffe



... and brown and spotted hyena, ostrich, springbok, steenbok, black-backed jackal, cheetah, leopard and many more!

# An Elephant Tale

A few weeks after the first volunteer group finished the first part of our old base camp under the giant acacias on the banks of the Ugab River, the camp had a visitor.

Fleeing the blazing white desert light, an old elephant bull plunged into the dappled pools of shade. He picked his way past the bohma, sniffing the newly constructed fireplace. Then he softly made his way to the tree we used as our kitchen area and stood there resting from his long desert road. His trunk probing the corners where we used to sit and talk over a steaming plate of food. Warm gusts of air, creating puffs of dust on the ground, then a deep inhale to taste the traces of scent we left behind.

It looks like he stood there for a long time thinking before he gathered his saggy old trousers and ambled off looking for water. What could he have thought, standing alone under that tree? I wonder if he knows what we do.

I don't know, but what I do know is that he did not touch one hut we built, or pushed over any of the newly constructed pole walls barring his way. He gingerly picked his way around all of the obstacles we put in his way, and only left us a steamy heap of dung as his sign of approval!

We hope to see you in the desert.

Your EHRA Team





WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU SOON!

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT  
[INFO@DESERTELEPHANT.ORG](mailto:INFO@DESERTELEPHANT.ORG)

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