



VERVET MONKEY FOUNDATION

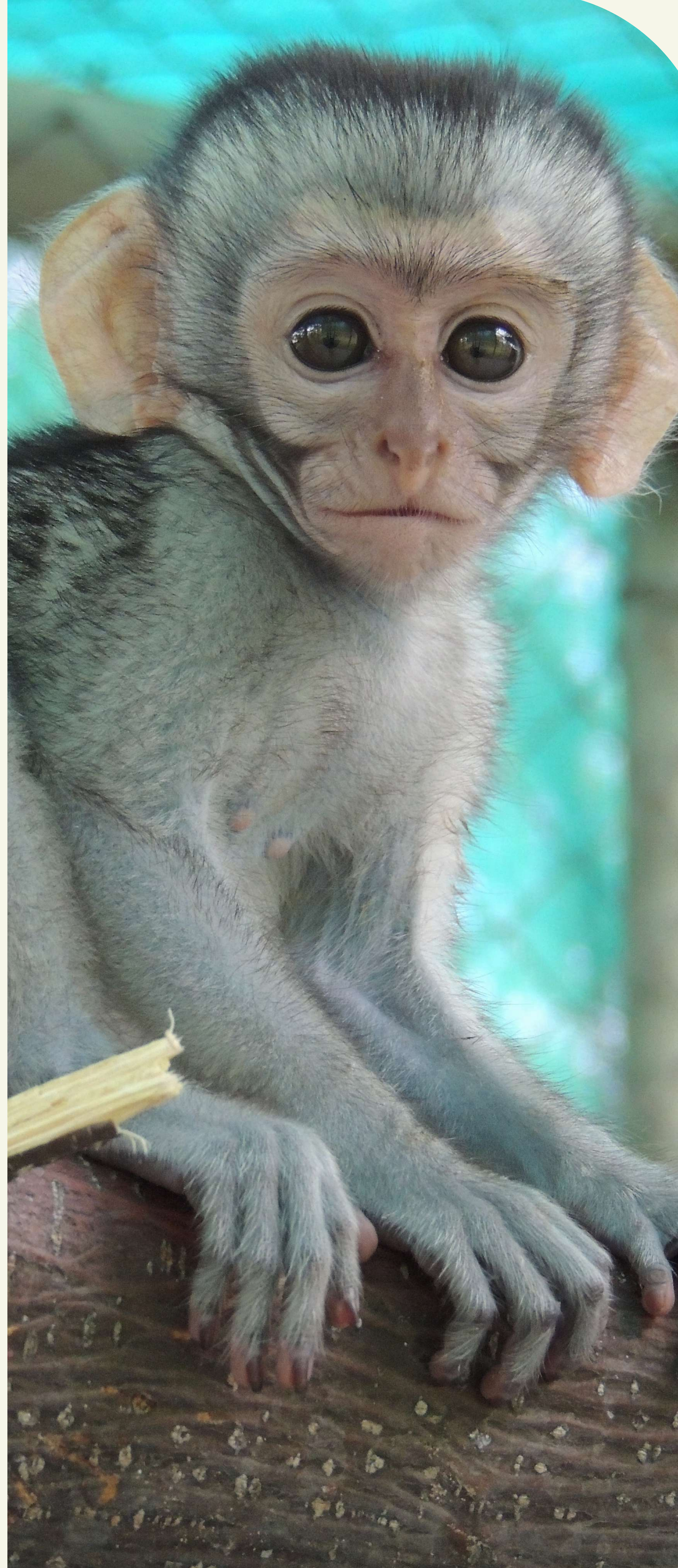
Volunteer Information Pack



Updated: March 2025

Your Guide to **VOLUNTEERING**

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"These three months opened my eyes in many ways: Learning about the background why all the monkeys live at the VMF and how easy it can be to live a little less materialistic, changes your whole mind. You're surrounded by plenty of loving and caring people who try to make your stay unforgettable."

Lorina, Germany

Dear Volunteer,



Would you like to experience living in the African bush rehabilitating the indigenous vervet monkey? The Vervet Monkey Foundation operates the largest sanctuary for vervets in the world.

In 2006 we became a member of PASA (Pan African Sanctuaries Alliance) and we are also the first sanctuary within Africa to be accredited by GFAS (Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries). We currently care for over 600 monkeys and we take in many orphans each year. You may be involved with hand-rearing orphans (in baby season) and be lucky enough to see them with their foster mums, watching them become real monkeys. Outside of orphan season is a great time to experience the troop dynamics, and juvenile and adult integrations. In addition, you will help the monkeys further by general husbandry, feeding, building new enclosures, observations and maintaining the upkeep of the foundation. Longer term volunteers may become involved with integrations of monkeys into social groups, which is very rewarding and a lot can be learned about their behaviour.

You will sleep in a wooden cabin and eat delicious vegan (cruelty free) meals. We obtain most of our power (close to 90%) through solar power. No previous experience is necessary, just care and dedication. We welcome volunteers over the age of 18. This is an ideal project for anyone who has ever dreamed of working with monkeys. Because we are situated close to the Kruger National Park, Blyde River Canyon (the third largest Canyon in the World) and other amazing places, you also have the chance to explore South Africa. Be prepared to work hard under the African sun with this intelligent and indigenous primate of Africa - the vervet monkey.

We look forward to hearing from you.
Best regards,

A stylized, circular signature in black ink, likely belonging to Dave Du Toit.

Dave Du Toit
Founder and Co-Director

A stylized, cursive signature in black ink, likely belonging to Josie Cook.

Josie Cook
Co-Director and Rehabilitator



On Arrival to the Sanctuary

On arrival all volunteers will have to sign an indemnity form indicating that you accept and understand that you are working with wild animals and that your presence and all activities you undertake at the sanctuary are done so at your own risk.

You should be prepared for often challenging and hard work, based around a shift rota with other volunteers. A typical work day is 8–9 hours per day depending on the time of year as well as some overnight shifts with the babies in the orphan season. *If you would prefer shorter hours, please ask for the volunteer light package.*

You will have 1.5 days off each week that you may use to go into Tzaneen town to purchase supplies or relax at the nearby lodge & spa. Volunteering can be an altogether rewarding experience, working together with like minded individuals. You will be able to see first hand how your actions are benefiting the vervet monkey and the people striving to protect this indigenous primate of Africa.

Can't get enough

A number of volunteers now work at the Foundation after deciding to stay on to further support the monkeys in our care.

As long-term volunteers, they help by co-ordinating daily tasks and are at hand to offer assistance and experience to new volunteers.



“

"Volunteering at the VMF was a rewarding experience for me. During the 6 weeks I spend there I learn a lot about myself and about protecting wildlife."

Gaelle, France

“

"I spent 3 months working at the VMF, and can honestly say I loved every minute of it".

Ella, UK



Work and Activities

Life as a Volunteer

“Life-changing”

You will not need any prior experience as we will teach you everything you need to know – just come with enthusiasm and an interest in conservation! If you have any specific skills or interest we are happy to try and utilize them during your stay. No matter what you do, you can expect that it is hot, dirty and hands on.

Sarah, Ireland

- Collecting, chopping and delivering food for monkeys
- Hands-on care-giving of baby monkeys (October – March approx)
- Assisting in our sickbay
- Observations of orphans with their foster mums and assisting with integration by introductions and rehabilitation of new monkeys
- Cleaning monkey cages, washing feed bowls & plates and cleaning blankets
- Assisting with monitoring the health of monkeys and giving food supplements
- Clearing vegetation for fire breaks
- Taking videos for youtube and social media
- Possibility to assist with education outreach programs
- Participating in fundraising, newsletters, social media and design
- Cooking and helping out in the kitchen

Best Time to Come

When is the best time to volunteer?

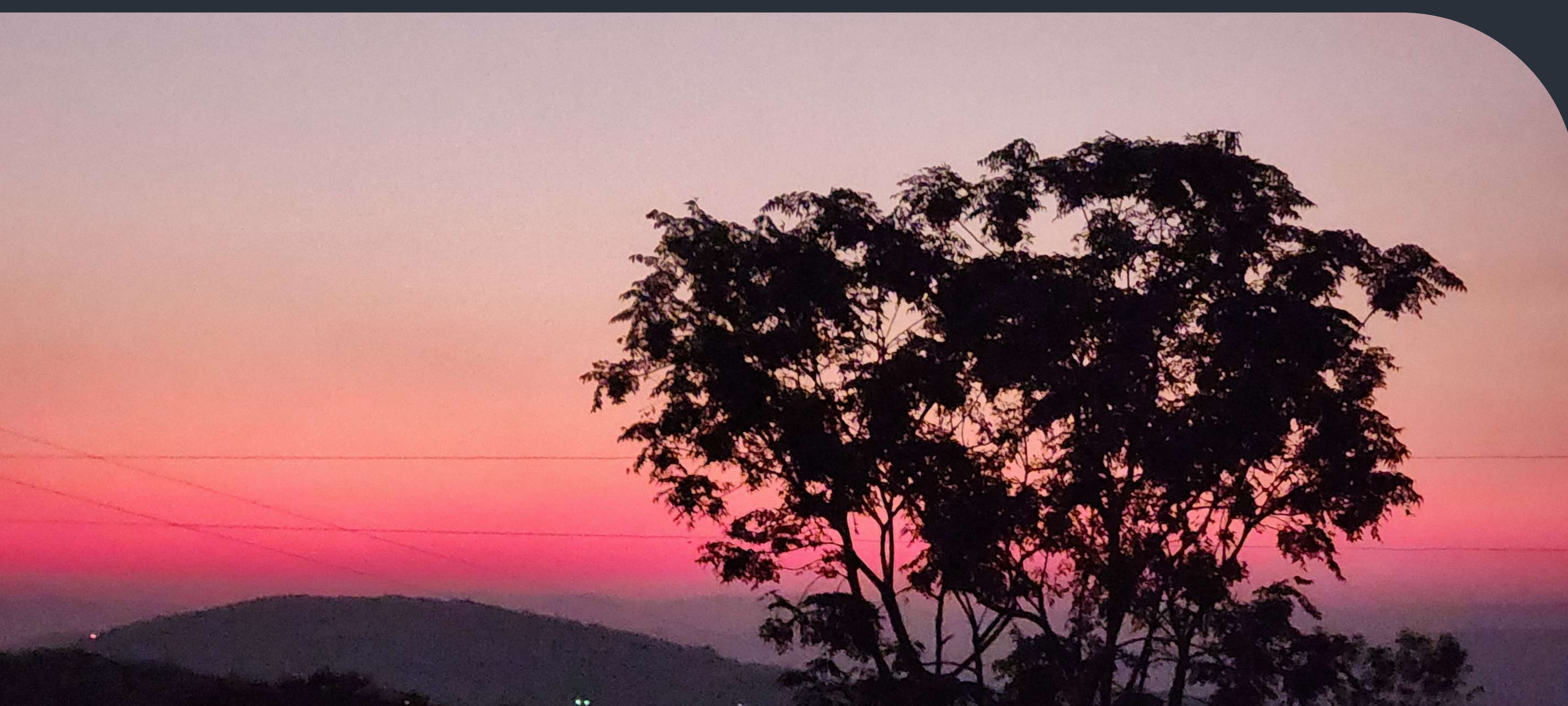
That's a great question and depends on your expectations. If you would like to work with babies, baby season (summer) is the time to be here. In winter, we focus on integration, elderly monkey and troop care, and maintenance.

If you like buzzing evenings, we usually have plenty of volunteers during summer. In winter, the sanctuary is a bit more quiet and intimate. In winter, it is also cooler and there are less insects.

What will you choose?

“I had a wonderful time here and will miss this place and the people who make it up.

Anna-Sophie, Germany



Hands on Experience

You will be helping to rehabilitate vervet monkeys into viable troops for release into protected reserves, integrating them back into their natural environment.



Understanding

Volunteers often grow attached to individuals they have rehabilitated and enjoy returning to see them grown up with their new monkey family.

A deep understanding of the monkeys welfare, conservation and their similar human emotions bonds volunteers to their world.

During the baby season (summer: Oct – Mar) there is a possibility volunteers will work with baby monkeys, nearly all orphaned and traumatised. We introduce them to monkey foster mothers ensuring each baby is stabilised, healthy and able to drink from a bottle when handling them.

During the juvenile season (winter: Mar – Oct), you may be able to see juniors being integrated into a troop within our rehabilitation programme or participate in other integrations.

Baby rehabilitation involves volunteers handling or observing the babies in their outdoor area, mixing up bottles of milk, preparing foods and administering medicine if required. You will feed and monitor them throughout the day, constantly checking their progress. Be aware these babies will defecate and urinate on you quite happily – this is unavoidable so old clothes are recommended. You must remember the vervet monkeys are wild animals so expect a few 'nips' whilst they play!

“It was really interesting watching the monkeys, seeing the differences and see how they all have their own character and differ from each other.”

Tina, Roosenboom, The Netherlands



Construction



Volunteers have helped build, fund and create the following facilities and enclosures over the past 30 years:

- Skunkey Enclosure built in 2003
- Goliath Enclosure built in 2005
- Sickbay completed April 2007
- Camelot Enclosure completed July 2009
- Skrow Enclosure revamped August 2009
- Quarantine completed 2009
- Jalamango Enclosure build in 2019
- Sickbay Rebuild completed 2021
- Groomingdale's completed 2022

Without such dedication and hard work from volunteers, the above would remain a dream.



Development

Volunteers are the life blood of the Foundation's development. You will be involved in constructing new enclosures and facilities, often painting, wire twisting, knot tying, digging, fastening or even pouring cement. Each new enclosure or facility enables the Foundation to do more for the monkeys in our care.



Work and Activities

Main Feed and Monitoring

Each “Main Feed” involves the daily preparation and distribution of food to all of the monkeys in the sanctuary. As a volunteer your duty would be to prepare the food bowls. You will cut, wash and share out the fruit and vegetables equally before distributing the food bowls to the vervets.

Seed pods and fruits are also picked from our indigenous trees and grasses collected on a regular basis.

Each and every day, volunteers and staff prepare bowls of food to feed over 600 vervets in our rehabilitation programme. The food bowls consist of fruit, vegetables, seeds, nuts and leaves, bought from local suppliers and distributors in the Letaba area.



“As volunteer, I could see the difference I was making in the life of the animals, just by looking in their eyes.”

Stephanie, Belgium

Monitoring is a crucial and important job as you will monitor and observe each monkey within the sanctuary, checking for any injuries, stress or sickness – reporting information back to staff to ensure the vervets are in the best of health. This task is done on alternate days throwing out seeds or sprouts to the troops so you can see them at a closer distance to check for signs of ill health.

Touring and Off Days



Volunteers get 1.5 days off per week; we provide a lift into Tzaneen to purchase supplies, swim in the nearby lodge pool, spa or relax over a cup of rooibos tea in the mall.

Volunteers here for 4 weeks are also invited to take one touring day per week to visit local sights. You may wish to hire a car with some friends you meet here or book with Travelbuggz for guided tours. Popular tours include the world famous Kruger National Park, only 1 hour from here. Blyde River Canyon, God's Window, stunning waterfalls and of course, wildlife viewing.

"Kruger was truly amazing! We even spotted a Cheetah!"

Alasdair, UK

Fundraising

Another great area you can help with is fundraising. A fundraising project that simply requires your enthusiasm or skill can become a reality. We also promote a vegan lifestyle and are involved with educating people how they can help the environment.

Volunteers are invited to develop new and exciting fundraising initiatives, backed by the Foundation's long term volunteers and staff. We are always looking for new innovative ways to raise funds to support our work.

Become involved. Join the team. Get active.

Travelling to the VMF

All our volunteers book their travel from the airport to the sanctuary through Travelbuggz which is the safest and easiest way to get to the sanctuary. Sandy who runs Travelbuggz is Dave Du Toit's (VMF Founder) sister so you can be assured she has your best interest and safety in mind at low cost. She will safely organise a meet and greet at the airport, organise your shuttle and transport you from the airport to the shuttle stop. Travelbuggz do also offer overnight accommodation in their family home if needed (approx 15mins from airport). Sandy will happily organise vegan food or other dietary requests if she knows in advance. Please contact Sandy once your flight is booked so your shuttle can be reserved well in advance (ideally min of 3 weeks in advance), there may also be other volunteers travelling the same day as you. Please do not go to Johannesburg bus station due to safety reasons. There is another shuttle that runs later in the day on specific days that Travelbuggz can organise for you if needed.

Transfer to VMF:

One of the VMF team will pick you up upon arrival in Tzaneen and transport you back to the sanctuary approx 25 mins away where you will be greeted by the Volunteer Co-ordinator or introduced to your first point of contact and shown to your 'home' for the duration of your volunteer stay.

Please contact josie@vervet.za.org to inform her the date of your arrival when you have confirmed your travel arrangements.

Travelbuggz

Travelbuggz is run by Sandy Van Zyl, the sister of founder Dave. She can pick you up from the airport, organise your shuttle and host you overnight. Best to contact her in advance!

[Sandy Van Zyl](#)

email: sandy@travelbuggz.co.za

tel. +27 82 908 7125

Did you know? Sandy also organises wonderful trips to Kruger and Panorama Route. They are definitely worth a visit!

We look forward to welcoming you :-)



Costs and Contributions

Support our Work



The work at our centre can be very challenging and requires on-the-job training so we prefer to have volunteers for a minimum period of 4 weeks and are happy to have long term volunteers and offer a discount depending on length of stay. Please enquire regarding 2 or 3 week stays. Your fees go toward food, accomodation and much needed financial support for the monkeys and the Sanctuary.

4 WEEKS: (ZAR) R20,270 (approx. £840, €980, \$1140)

EXTRA WEEKS: (ZAR) R5065 (approx. £210, €240, \$280)

USA volunteers only – up to 60% of the volunteer fees are tax deductible when paid through Paypal info@vervetforest.org or directly to the Friends of the Vervet Monkey in the USA

We offer discounts for 3 month and 6 month stays, you can check the exact amount in your currency by visiting www.xe.com. Please enquire about our longer internships.

Please deposit your contributions to the VMF account below:

Vervet Monkey Foundation

First National Bank / First Rand Bank
Account No: 62352498333
Branch Code: 250655
Swift Code: FIRNZAJJ
Tzaneen Branch
Telephone Number: 015-3071278
Physical Address: 3 First Place Bank
City Mezzanine Floor CNR Jeppe and
Simmonds Street JOHANNESBURG 2000

Credit Card payfast:

<https://www.payfast.co.za/donate/go/vervetmonkeyfoundation>

Other costs

Cellphone Coverage

All cellphone networks are available at the foundation although it is recommended that you get your phone unblocked to be able to use local sim cards for cheaper rates

Cash

Bring sufficient money and an ATM card for snacks, beverages, meals out, and touring days

Health, Vaccinations, Insurance



Health

Please inform us about any health issues prior to your stay. The local towns of Tzaneen and Letaba both have clinics and hospitals. We have a refrigerator if you need to keep medicines such as insulin cool during your stay at the Foundation.

If you get sick during your stay, you might be asked not to work with the monkeys for a couple of days to prevent cross-contamination.

Vaccines

There are no vaccines required to volunteer with us but recommend checking your immunisation for tetanus. Best to you speak to your travel doctor before coming.

Malaria

The Foundation is based in the northerly Limpopo Province of South Africa. Anti-malarials are usually only required when visiting malaria areas such as Kruger between October - May. We recommend that you bring insect repellent or buy a natural one from our gift shop and wear long sleeves in evenings.

Insurance

We require confirmation of your travel / medical insurance policy prior to your arrival. Due to the nature of your work, handling the monkeys can result in the occasional scratch or "nip" as they are still wild animals. Always be alert when travelling to and from the Foundation.

"Never forget: You can leave South Africa, but South Africa will never leave you!"

Tim, Germany

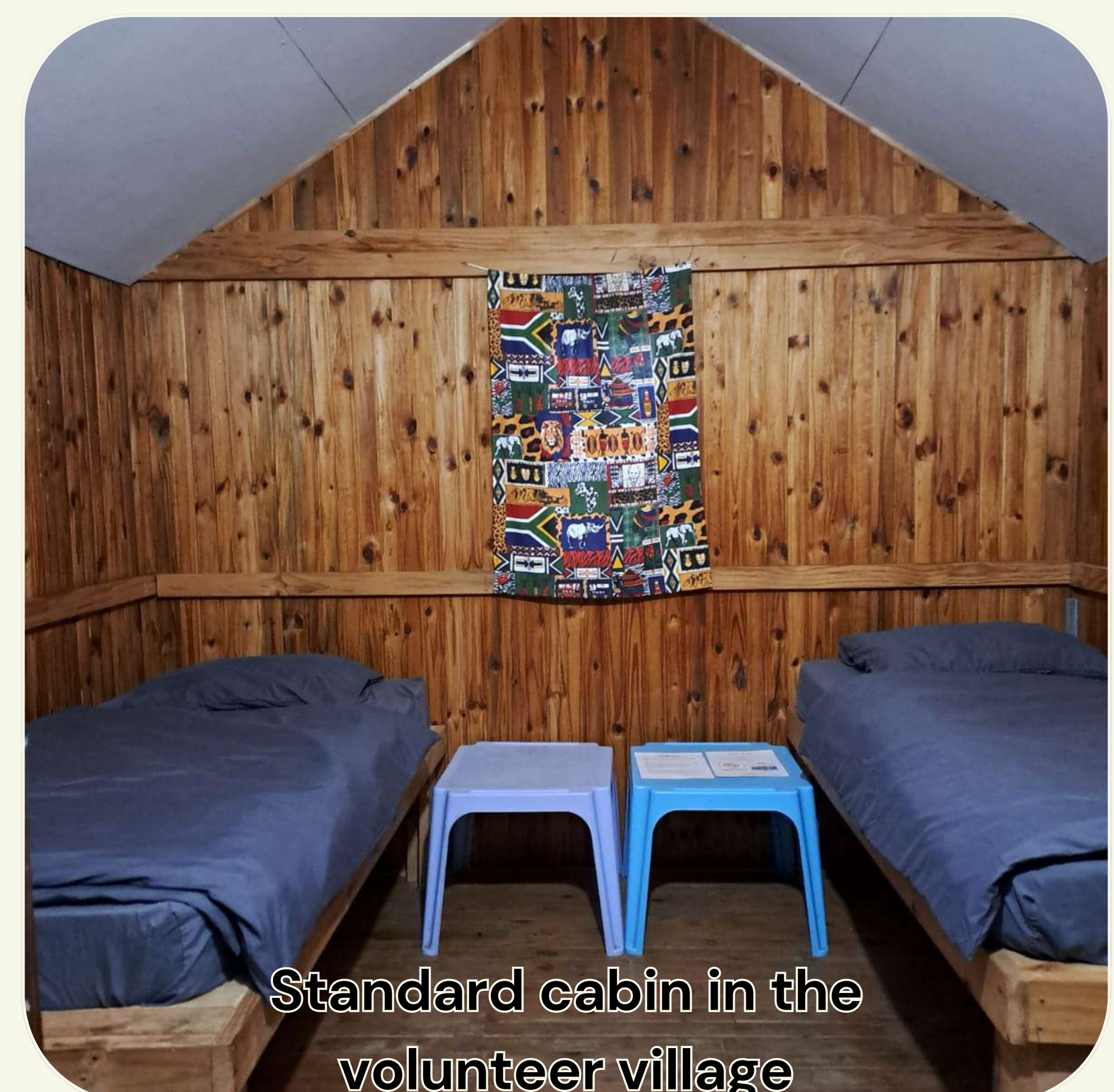
The Village and Facilities

Cabin Accommodation

You will sleep in a wooden cabin, usually shared with one other volunteer. We provide a bed including mattress, bedding and sheets, but please bring your own mosquito net. There is some solar powered electricity including a light in the cabin (and a socket with enough power to charge a cellphone / laptop). There is also wifi in the village. The plugs available are type D or USB plug and you have access to a fan to cool down your cabin. You may wish to bring a small battery powered or re-chargeable torch to light up the path when walking at night. The volunteer village houses a warm, gas-heated shower, eco-toilet (composting toilet), washing sink and a campfire, which is great for an evening under the stars or a traditional braai (South African barbecue). Laundry services are provided free of charge Mon – Fri. You can bring your own detergent for extra hand washing of small items (we also sell a natural laundry soap bar in our gift shop).



Volunteer Village



Standard cabin in the volunteer village



Rubin's Cottage – one of the private cabins

Private Cabin

We also have a couple of private accommodations available for an additional fee per week. These cabins have solar powered electricity and mostly wifi, you also get the luxury of having it to yourself.

Bedding and mosquito nets are provided in the private cabins so no need to bring with you. The showers and sink are conveniently located nearby.

Things you will need to bring

- Torch/flashlight or headlight and small battery or rechargeable camping light for walking at night.
- Your own adapter for charging equipment (3 rounded pin or 2 round pin system), power bank is very useful
- Digital camera with computer cables for downloading images & uploading videos
- Old clothes you don't mind getting dirty or torn, lots of old T-shirts, shorts, long pants
- Separate set of clothes for evening use or travelling
- Lightweight long sleeved clothes (to protect you from the strong sun)
- Work gloves and hiking boots (not essential)
- Nightwear and swimwear
- Flip-flops / sandals and trainers / sneakers
- Alarm clock / watch
- Toiletries & towel
- Water bottle, waterproof jacket, glasses or contact lenses if needed
- Sunhat, sunglasses, sunscreen, after sun, insect repellent (chemical free ones can be bought in the on site gift shop)
- Co-ordinator's phone number in case of delays etc (+27 82 725 9432, also on Whatsapp)
- First aid kit (antibiotic ointment, anti-diarrhoea tablets, rehydration drinks, headache tablets, hand sanitizer, wet wipes)
- Malaria tablets (if visiting malaria areas such as Kruger) & mosquito net
- Driving licence (for hiring vehicles)
- Optional – if you have room, we are always in need of bunny drinking water bottles, pens or e-mail us for our latest wish list.

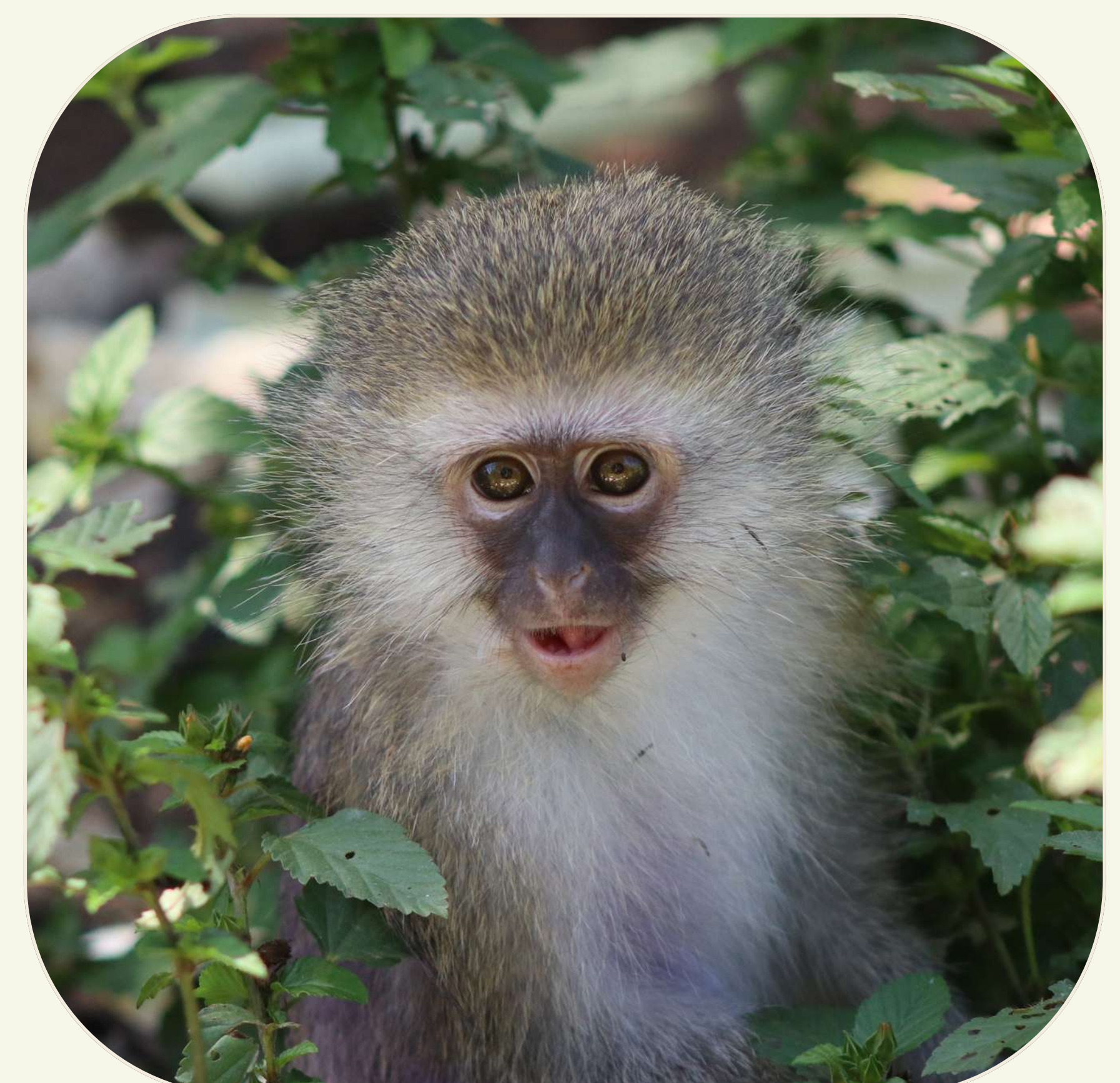
We sell cruelty free toiletries that can be worn in with the monkeys in our on site shop (not to worry, anything you forget can be purchased locally).

Don't Forget

Other items to consider are emergency contact numbers and photocopies of all important documents (such as passport, flight tickets, driver's licence, and insurance documents). Don't forget to bring spending money. You may use ATMs across South Africa and in the local town of Tzaneen, all of which accept major credit and debit cards (remember your pin#). You may also wish to bring your mobile phone and charger (handy if delays etc).

Extra trip

On occasions, you may be lucky enough to spend a weekend afternoon at waterfalls or relax at a nearby lodge and spa. Don't forget your swim wear and a towel. You can also download your digital photos at the Foundation and upload your videos for our youtube series.



History, Climate and Visa Requirements

History

In 1964, the now famous ANC party leader, Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment and sent to Robben Island, off the coast of Cape Town for his lead in a campaign of civil disobedience regarding the apartheid ruling in South Africa. In the years to follow, Nelson Mandela went on to become president, transforming South Africa into the country it is today and a member of the Commonwealth once again. Welcome to a country full of history, diverse cultures and vibrant people.

“We are free, to be free.”

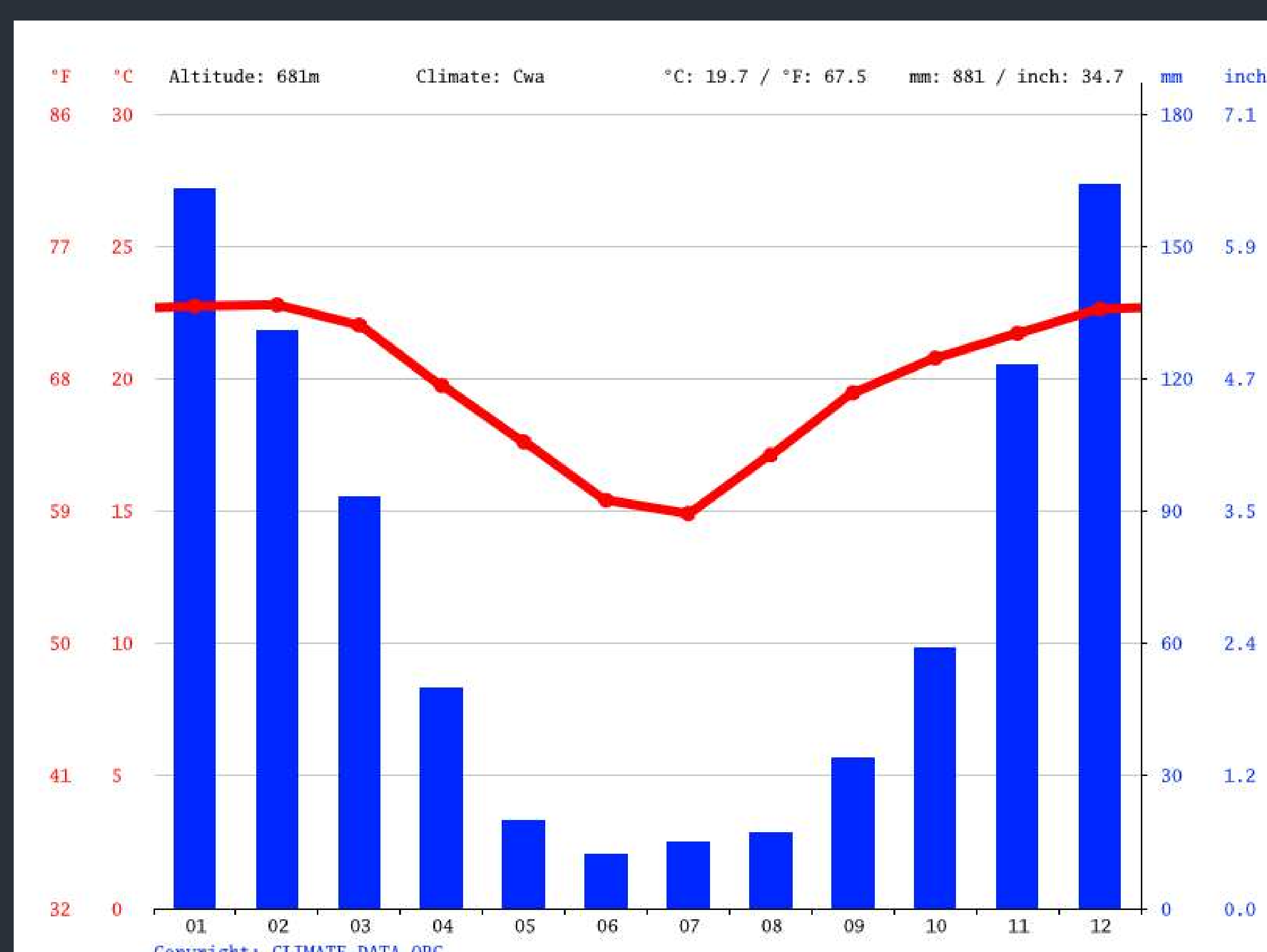
Nelson Mandela



Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung

Visa

Visa requirements depend on your nationality and the length of stay in South Africa. You can visit the South African embassy to check if you are eligible for the free 90 day tourist VISA. On entering South Africa you will be presented with a free VISA for 90 days if eligible. When stating your purpose of visit, please respond “Tourist”. Even though you are volunteering, there can be complications if you state otherwise due to the misunderstanding that you may be entering the country to be paid money for your time volunteering.



Annual weather for Tzaneen. Source: climate-data.org
red temperature; blue rainfall

South Africa is a land full of history, diverse cultures, vibrant people, fascinating wildlife and breath-taking landscapes

Summers are hot and humid, winters are dry and warm.

Further Information

Please feel free to contact us for more information about becoming a Vervet Direct volunteer:

Email: Josie Cook (VMF Co-Director)

josie@vervet.za.org with approximate dates you would like to start or other volunteering enquiries.

General info: info@vervet.za.org

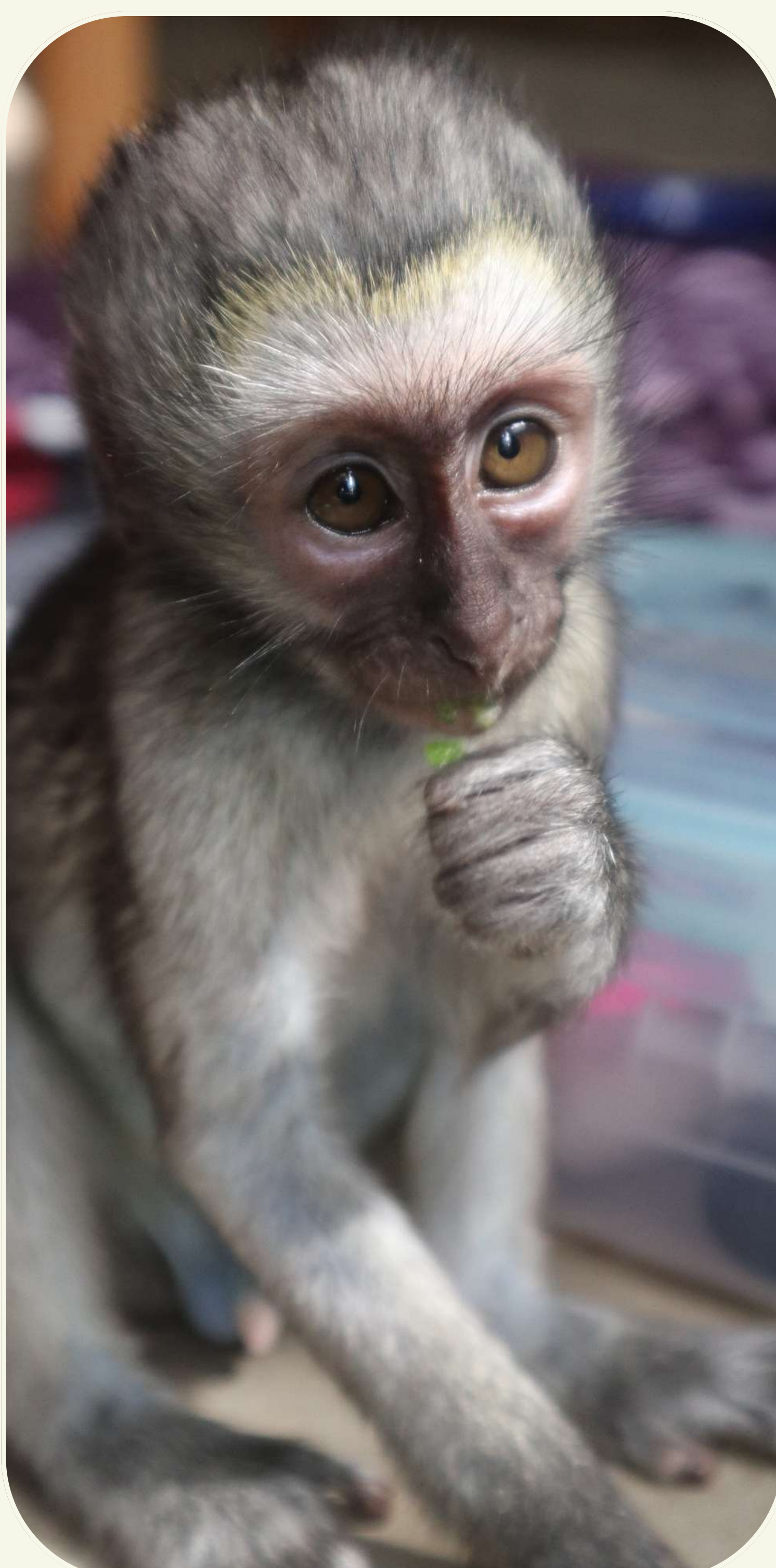
For all enquiries about our projects, how to become involved, sponsorship etc.

Dave Du Toit (Co-Director & Founder)

Tel: +27 (0)83 4545 381

Josie Cook (Co-Director / Rehabilitator)

Tel: +27 (0)78 1954 215



Online

For more information on the Vervet Monkey Foundation, volunteering and our latest campaigns and programmes please visit our website, listed below:

www.vervet.za.org

You can find on our homepage...

- Vervet monkey information
- Info about Volunteering & internships
- Long-term voluntary staff opportunities

Read about our rehabilitation programme, integrating rehabilitated vervet monkeys into a natural environment.

The Vervet Monkey Foundation is a registered non-profit charity established in 1993 dedicated to rehabilitating and providing sanctuary for orphaned, injured and abused vervet monkeys.

Reg # 020-694-NPO

We are looking forward to seeing you

On behalf of the Vervet Monkey Foundation, we look forward to meeting you as a Vervet Direct volunteer.

We hope that your experiences, helping to rehabilitate vervet monkeys under the African sun, remain with you always.

Direct Volunteering

Volunteering directly means 100% of your contribution benefits the Vervet Monkey Foundation. However, we do also have a number of volunteer organisations that promote our programme for which we are thankful to.



Your experience doesn't have to end in South Africa, you can read about all the latest news on our social media pages, watch the weekly youtube episodes & livestreams after returning home. You may wish to get involved with some events or fundraising in your country. You can also choose to virtually adopt or name a monkey or write an article about your visit. Many volunteers make lifelong friends at the VMF and return year after year to help the monkeys.