

AFRICAN INSIGHT

EXPERIENCES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE



AFRICAN INSIGHT ACADEMY



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Background:

The Gumbi Tribe who lost their land during Apartheid and 2006 successfully won an ancestral land claim over a large area of prime Zululand Bushveld, including ownership of a conservation area of 12 000 hectares which is ideal habitat for white and black rhino. The game reserve is a proclaimed national park and was identified by the Wildlands Conservation Trust (WCT), WWF and the state wildlife authority KZN Wildlife as being suitable habitat for the introduction of a founder population of the rare and endangered black rhino.

African Insight in partnership with WCT and the Gumbi community manage the tourism game reserve. African Insight is responsible for the development and management of tourism over the entire reserve with the objective of developing a range of wildlife experiences that add to financial sustainability of the reserve as well as aiding in the collection of vital scientific data of the fauna and flora.

The game reserve has healthy populations of both black and white rhino and leopard. Plans are well advanced for the introduction of founder populations of elephant and buffalo to Somkhanda, which will see the reserve being home to 4 of the Big 5. The reserve has a comprehensive range of all common animal species that historically occurred in the region, including hyena and wild dog.

This unique situation affords the opportunity for a variety of experiential tourism markets. With 18 years' experience as a provider of academic fieldtrips African Insight has a well-established client base of international college and university groups. Prior to the 2009 global economic crisis African Insight was hosting an equal number of international school groups on a variety of youth development programmes. With the recovery of the global economy and the weakening of the South African Rand the time is right to re-establish a presence in this market and develop a product range based on Somkhanda, the surrounding community as well as adventure opportunities in northern Zululand and Maputaland.

Somkhanda is not suited to a traditional wildlife lodge base business model and African Insight was offered the opportunity, through Wildlands Conservation trust, to develop a tourism model based on academic and experiential youth tourism.

All the above elements converge providing synergy that is ideal for the establishment of Somkhanda Academy. To realise this into a sustainable business operation African Insight has developed the necessary on the ground infrastructure and programmes. The on the ground capacity to handle the business is in place, the next phase is to gear up and grow the market.



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Vision:

Through the establishment of Somkhanda Academy African Insight has a vision to develop a sustainable responsible tourism business that offers the following:

- Young post graduates the opportunity to gain valuable work experience which will increase their skills and employability.
- School leavers the opportunity to experience a range of wildlife industry related career option in conservation and eco-tourism.
- General youth experiences that are marketed to greater youth market that are aimed at developing an appreciation and understanding of global environmental sustainability, leadership, team building and other valuable life skills.
- Through these experiences to provide the game reserve with sufficient research, wildlife and vegetation monitoring information to inform ecological management decision making.
- Provide the reserve with practical conservation and eco-tourism support.
- Using the game reserve as an asset to facilitate valuable skills development to the community surrounding the game reserve by offer recognized courses and learnerships in environmental and tourism. Thereby providing them with recognized qualifications and experience to take advantage of the job market in wildlife and eco-tourism related industry in Zululand.



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Somkhanda Academy: This department is managed by 2 permanent staff members with ecological and environmental management backgrounds. They are able to mentor and manage the programme and are responsible for liaising with the reserve manager to develop new projects which assist the reserve and provide appropriate experience for the interns and volunteers. In 2016 the following programmes are offered:

Internships

An internship is 3 months, which is based on the duration of a standard tourist visa. We have a separate camp for interns that consists of 8 cottage tents set up for one person each. The camp has its own communal ablution block and kitchen. Interns are on a self-catering basis. Currently we offer 3 income generating internship programmes:

- (i) **Conservation Management**
- (ii) **Ecological Research**
- (iii) **Hospitality and Eco-tourism**

To save on transport costs internships have scheduled monthly arrival and departure dates that coincide with schedule trips up to Somkhanda.

The target market for these internships are students who are in the process of, or have completed a basic degree or doing a post grad degree and need to do fieldwork/project. It is an ideal opportunity to get some work experience on their resume.

Applicants need to either submit a research project that will have direct benefit to the ongoing management of the reserve or, if they do not have a specific research project, they will be involved in ongoing monitoring programmes on the reserve.



Volunteering

This is a one month programme, also based on the same scheduled arrival and departure dates as the intern programmes. The idea is that the 3 month interns, once trained and familiar with the programme and the reserve, are able to manage up to 6 additional volunteers that will spend time in all three of the above internship areas. Volunteers are accommodated at the volunteer camp in dome tents. Volunteer fees include dinner.

- (i) **Wildlife Conservation Volunteer Experience**

The target market for this programme is students currently enrolled in an appropriate academic programme. Professionals looking for an experiential volunteer opportunity. Post school students that may be considering a career in wildlife conservation or ecotourism

Applicants need to motivate why they want to be part of this programme.



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Courses

For 2016 this is the only course on the cards.

(i) 2 week Ranger Courses

This programme is offered in the college and university holidays and is aimed at students that have been on an academic field trip and would like to come back and do a more in-depth 2 week experience. It is not accredited.



Gap Year Academy

This is a brand new concept which we plan to have the first intake in September 2016. It is an 11 month programme, with one midyear break. The concept is that participants that enrol will complete 3 recognized certificates during the year that have been selected to give them a comprehensive cross-section of experiences which they could pursue further as a career. These are: Environmental Guardianship (conservation management), Field Guiding, Lodge Management.

They will be required to complete course work, evaluated practical project work, regular tests and evaluations throughout the year and a final examination and external evaluation. Those that pass will have 3 NQF level 4 qualifications.

The idea is to take in the first students in September 2016, to coincide with the overseas academic year and a further intake of South Africans in February to coincide with our academic year.

