in partnership with
WHITE SHARK DIVING CO.
Where Adventure Meets Conservation

SHARK RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

JOIN OUR CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH INITIATIVE at White Shark Diving Company and have an experience unlike any other.

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Our Shark & Marine Research Institute is dedicated to protecting and conserving sharks and other elasmobranchs, and safeguarding the health and vitality of our oceans. We are based in Gansbaai, South Africa, roughly two hours from Cape Town up the east coast. The bay we work in is an incredibly rich ecosystem that provides a vital habitat for an array of marine life, including great white sharks.

Our programme offers a unique opportunity to be involved with groundbreaking research studying great whites, as well as the smaller shark and other elasmobranch species along our coast, many of which are data deficient. Our research is focused on gaining much-needed information about these amazing and enigmatic creatures who are so crucial to our oceans yet have reached such a critical mass. Through our work we hope to support their preservation in the long-term.

During your stay you will play a vital role in our field research, learning practical and theoretical skills including but not limited to great white shark observational data collection, great white shark dorsal fin analysis, ethical handling and angling of sharks, shark tagging and genetic sampling. You will also gain sea experience on our white shark cage diving tourist boat, and will have opportunities to enter the cage yourself. You will see and learn about a wide array of other South African marine wildlife, and be involved in exciting community and environmental outreach initiatives.

With all sharks - including our magnificent great white sharks - declining in number, our mission is to explore, discover and monitor our elasmobranch species through various scientific research projects, and in turn we hope to help protect the long term future of these species by translating this knowledge into evidence-based conservation initiatives.

Come join us and make a positive difference to the world’s oceans!

- Get up close and personal with Great White Sharks and gain sea experience on our cage diving boat
- Experience smaller local sharks on catch-and-release tagging excursions aboard our research vessel
- Explore our kelp forests and their resident creatures during snorkelling surveys
- Be involved with groundbreaking research focused on shark and marine conservation
- Get credits towards your degree or diploma (dependent on approval by your educational institution)
- Research permit awarded by the Department of Environmental Affairs - Oceans and Coasts
Included in the package

- One night’s accommodation in Cape Town
- Transfers from and to Cape Town International Airport
- Transfers to and from Gansbaai
- Accommodation whilst on the programme
- Breakfast basics and lunch on working days
- Lectures
- Welcome pack (including information about the programme, warm top, caps, t-shirt, buff and DVD of bonus white shark footage)
- Waterproof deck boots to use for the duration of your stay
- Boat trips (minimum of 4 per month if weather permits)
- Opportunity to cage dive with white sharks
- Practical training in all running projects
- White shark data collection on cage diving trips
- Studying white shark behaviour and demographics
- Data analysis
- Elasmobranch and seal surveys

Not included in the package

- Rocky shores surveys
- Marine debris surveys
- Outreach activities
- Training in boat-handling skills
- Some excursions organised on bad weather days

Flight ticket, visas (we can assist with advice if necessary), medical and travel insurance, meals (other than basics provided for breakfast and light lunch on working days), any additional lodging in Cape Town prior to the programme or on departure, if required.
Application & Costs

Prices start from USD 745

Contact us to find out about our seasonal specials, student rates and South African citizen discounts.

As we rely on good weather conditions, we recommend staying for a minimum of one month to obtain the full experience of working with us and ensure you have adequate sea time. Start dates are on the 1st of each month. In December we only run a two week programme from the 1st – 14th.

Please visit www.sharkcagedive.com/apply to apply, or for more info, contact us at institute@sharkcagedive.com. Please send us a brief paragraph of motivation as to why you would like to join us and indicate what month(s) would be preferable for you to join us. Alternatively you can refer to the contact us section on our website (www.sharkcagedive.com). Preference will be given to marine biology students or applicants involved in conservation initiatives.

Once accepted onto the programme, we will send you a letter of confirmation that everything is booked! We then ask for a 50% deposit to secure your booking, and ask you to pay the remaining 50% before your arrival or once you are here by credit or debit card (if you prefer).
Please book flights to:
Cape Town International Airport.

There are direct flights to Cape Town from Amsterdam, London, Frankfurt and Dubai, or alternatively you can transit via Johannesburg, which has flights from most cities in Europe, connections with the US and other parts of the world.

On your departure date (the last day of the month) you will need to ensure your flight is late afternoon to ensure we are able to get you to the airport on time, as if not you may have to leave the day before to make sure your flight is not missed. Any accommodation will be at your own expense if you need to stay in Cape Town the night before your flight, or if you are extending your stay further.

On arrival in Cape Town...
Guests will be collected from Cape Town International Airport and transferred to our selected accommodation in Cape Town. You will stay one night in Cape Town and be picked up the following morning for the transfer to the project site - Gansbaai.

On arrival in Gansbaai...
You will be shown your accommodation and introduced to the team. We might head out to sea on your first day but we will let you know if this is going to be the case before you arrive. Otherwise your first day will be a welcome/induction day and a chance to settle in.

Prior to your arrival, please don’t hesitate to contact our admin manager (institute@sharkcagedive.com) if you have any questions or concerns, or if you need any advice in preparation for your trip.

The start date of the programme is on the 1st of each month, and departure date is the last day of the month, unless staying for two weeks, in which case you will be required to leave on the 15th. We will also sometimes have a 2-week slot available starting on the 15th of each month.

Please book your flight to arrive in South Africa the day before your start date so we can get you to Gansbaai for the 1st/15th. Please stay in touch with our admin team (institute@sharkcagedive.com) regarding flight arrival and departure dates.
ACCOMMODATION

Please note:
• You may need to share - we take up to 8 guests at a time (rooms will be single sex unless requested by a couple)
• Fully furnished
• Linen provided
• Emergency numbers provided
• Host and/or programme manager always available
• Vehicle with all safety permits and regulations for transport of guests to all work related activities and also for excursions organized on no sea days
• TV + DSTV
• Wireless Internet
• Domestic worker
• Laundry service provided

Our project house is located in Kleinbaai roughly a two-minute drive or a ten-minute walk from the harbour where we launch. Kleinbaai is a small, quiet town; we are just a few minutes’ walk from the ocean and there are lots of beaches, hiking trails and other outdoor activities available. The local town Gansbaai is just a five-minute drive away and has a number of restaurants and shops should you want to go out or need to buy any supplies. There are magnificent coastal and mountain views and a host of marine and mountain outdoor activities for you to explore in your free time.

Hermanus is another town (roughly 30 minutes away) that you will also have the opportunity to visit whilst you are here. It is a popular tourist destination and there are also a number of restaurants, shops, beaches and activities to do there. It is world-famous for it’s incredible land-based whale watching and is the premier spot in South Africa to view whales during the whale season.

As the Western Cape is a water-scarce area, we ask guests to be conscious of their water-usage and keep showers to a minimum time.

We also ask guests to respect our recycling policy and keep the use of plastic bags to a minimum. Our housekeeper is employed to assist with deep cleaning, maintenance, laundry and general upkeep, but we do ask that you please clear up after yourself and work together to keep the accommodation neat and tidy.

We encourage a social environment in the project house and suggest that you cook together, have movie nights, game nights and braai nights! On your first night we will organize a welcome braai with all the guests and staff so you can get to know everyone who will be around during your stay.

FOOD & OTHER EXPENSES

We will provide breakfast basics and lunch on working days but you will be responsible for your own evening meals and any other entertainment is at your own expense. You will also be responsible for your own food when out doing activities or on excursions. Whilst we provide all basics in the house and are happy for guests to help themselves, we also please ask for you to respect others in the house and regulate your usage.

We suggest that you bring along extra money for meals, souvenirs, excursions and any other trips that you might want to make.

The local currency is the South African Rand.
WHAT TO PACK...

- Windbreaker/waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Warm clothing – fleece or warm jerseys
- Other trousers suitable for boat activities – old jeans, old shorts
- Short sleeved t-shirts and vests
- Base-layers and thermals May to October
- Non-slip shoes (We will provide waterproof deck boots to use on the boat, but you will not want to wear these in summer and you will need suitable shoes for the land-based projects)
- Peak cap or wide-brim hat
- Sunblock (spf 30+)
- Hat, gloves and scarf May to October
- Sunglasses (preferably polarized)
- Bag/rucksack (for days when we are out in the field all day)
- Casual clothes for evening/weekend/travel/activity wear (bring warm clothes in winter)
- Swimsuit
- Wetsuit (if you are able/want to, we do have suits available for you to use here) – most divers in South Africa use 7mm wetsuits as our water can be very cold
- Snorkel gear e.g. mask, fins and snorkel – not including weight belt (if you are able/want to, we do also have gear available for you to use here)
- SCUBA certification (if achieved)
- Skipper’s licence (if achieved)
- Camera with spare batteries and memory card
- Laptop (if possible)
- iPod/MP3 player for travelling
- Head torch (if you like to read at night!)
- Earplugs (if you are a light sleeper!)
- Phone and charger
- Daily toiletries and towels
- Insect repellent
- Any required medication
- Basic personal first aid kit (although your programme manager will always be carrying a kit for emergencies).
WORKING HOURS
• Guests can expect to participate in every research project that is running at that time.
• As much of the work is weather dependent, the timetable/working hours are subject to change, but guests should expect to work some long days and some weekends. Outreach and educational activities may require after hour/weekend work.
• You will normally have 1-2 days off a week. It will normally be at the weekend but the off days will vary according to the weather and our opportunities to be at sea. The off-days are the chance for you to relax, plan your own activities, explore the area or perhaps take an excursion to Cape Town.

IMPORTANT RULES...
• We have a zero-tolerance policy regarding illegal substance use or failure to attend work due to alcohol consumption
• The programme manager will NOT allow you to come in the field should you be under the influence or hungover
• Failure to comply with our rules will result in expulsion without refund
• Any guests who break the law will not be supported by us, next of kin will be immediately notified to deal with the arrest or court appearances
• We are not responsible or liable for any activity you partake in after work hours or on days off. We ask that you act responsibly and respectfully in the field and after hours to make your stay as pleasant as possible, to stay safe, and to positively represent us.
PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

Travel & Medical Insurance
Travel and/or medical insurance is not included in our package, it is the responsibility of the guest. On arrival you will be required to sign liability forms, and an agreement stating that you are knowingly partaking in potentially dangerous activities. You will not be covered for accidents or illnesses so please equip yourself with relevant insurance. Insurance should also include cover for fieldwork, boat-trips and further extreme activities that you may arrange on your time off or on excursion days. SCUBA divers must be insured by the Divers Alert Network (DAN).

Visa Requirements
South African law allows visitors to enter the country on a 90 day Tourist/Visitor visa, which will be issued to you on arrival in the country. Requirements do differ from country to country and we recommend that you contact the South African Embassy or Consulate in your area to check your country of origins South African visitor visa requirements. Should you want to stay for a period exceeding 90 days, whether it be to continue the research initiative or continue your travels, you will have to apply for provisions to your visa.

Vaccination Requirements
There are no vaccination requirements as the Western Cape is far from all malaria zones and there are no strange African diseases in the area (given you respect the safety rules as anywhere else in the world). Some travel sites recommend you have your Hepatitis A, Typhoid and Hepatitis B vaccinations but this is at your discretion as it is not a specific requirement to enter the country, and is perhaps more relevant if you are travelling to other areas in South Africa or Africa. We recommend you speak to your local healthcare practitioner and decide accordingly. Please also check with your local travel agency for updates on any disease outbreaks and any precautions to take in South Africa.

We suggest you contact your South African consulate for further information, although the programme manager is available to help with basic enquiries.
AFTER HOURS ACTIVITIES

As mentioned on our website, if we have a number of consecutive bad weather days and if we have time we may organize other educational activities or excursions as an alternative to conducting onshore research projects.

A list of these possible excursions can be seen below:

- A trip to Cape Agulhas – the Southernmost point of Africa
- A visit to Betty’s Bay to see the Stony Point penguin colony
- A visit to the local heritage site Klipgat Cave
- Kelp diving at Stanford Cove
- Hikes in the local area
- Horse riding trips in the local area
- Quadbiking
- Paintballing
- Ziplining
- Shopping excursions in Hermanus or Cape Town
- Wine farm tours and tastings
- A visit to the Shark Conservancy’s Shark Lab in Hermanus
- A visit to an abalone farm in Hermanus
- A visit to Danger Point Lighthouse
- A visit to the local cat sanctuary
- River boat cruises along Stanford River
- Surfing or SCUBA diving
- Visit to the Two Oceans Aquarium and the Waterfront in Cape Town
- Two Oceans Aquarium shark tank dives can be arranged
- Offshore dive past Cape Point to see blue and mako sharks can be arranged
- Dive to see sevengill sharks in Cape Town can be arranged
- Seal snorkelling in Cape Town
- A trip up the East Coast to visit one of the Elephant Parks
- Bloukrans bungee jump on the East Coast
- Safari Trips
Should there not be an opportunity to visit Cape Town on an excursion day, we do encourage guests to visit the Mother City at some point before, during (work dependent), or after your stay with us. There is an endless list of activities in Cape Town including SCUBA diving, surfing, sky-diving, hiking, visiting tourist attractions such as Table Mountain and Robben Island, a trip to the Two Oceans Aquarium, a trip to Cape Point, or perhaps just a tour around some superb wine farms of the Western Cape. Please see www.capetown.travel for more information regarding what to do in Cape Town.

Travelling up the East Coast of South Africa is also a popular item on the tourist bucket lists.

In this part of the world you can experience safaris, national parks, forest canopy walks, bungee jumping, secluded beaches, shark diving, prime surf spots and much more. Please note that all personal excursions to Cape Town, up the Garden Route or to other tourist attractions are at your own cost but we can suggest some tours, places to stay, and assist with your bookings. In some cases, for example trips to Cape Town during your stay with us on your off days, we may be able to assist with organising transport for a reasonable price.

Please note that if you wish to hire a car at any point during your time in South Africa, you will need a valid driver’s licence and credit card. If you wish to hire a car whilst staying with us to make a trip over a weekend off, we can assist you with organizing this with the car rental companies in the area.
SAFETY

Kleinbaai is generally a safe area but please be aware of petty crime when in town and at the project house. In the house do not leave any valuables in sight or near windows. Please make sure all windows are secured and doors locked after dark as well as when out during the day. There is an alarm that will be activated when no one is present on site, and there will be a safe available should you want to lock up any valuables.

In town and in the area, do not flash money or valuables and please **DO NOT** walk anywhere by yourself at night. This applies to Cape Town and anywhere else in South Africa. Make sure you are in a group if you have to walk, or use one of the registered taxi services. We will give you the numbers for the safe taxi services in Hermanus when you arrive, and if travelling to other parts of the country perhaps ask your accommodation for the best services in the area. Uber taxi is available in Cape Town and some other parts of the country; you can look online for more details, [www.uber.com](http://www.uber.com). If you want to travel further around South Africa, the BazBus is safe and reliable, visit [www.bazbus.com](http://www.bazbus.com) for more information. Alternatively you can try the InterCape bus, visit [www.intercape.co.za](http://www.intercape.co.za) for further details.
OUR MARINE RESEARCH PROJECTS

Sharks, and more specifically great white sharks are our focal species. Although there is still a lot to learn about white sharks, this species has been monitored and researched in Gansbaai for nearly 20 years. Whilst we contribute to the monitoring of white sharks our projects have been carefully chosen to take a more holistic approach towards shark conservation by exploring the diversity, abundance, and habitat use of a number of other shark, fish and marine species, and by identifying anthropogenic impacts that may be affecting these species as well as the white sharks. We aim to develop biological base lines so we can monitor any changes that occur and try to understand the ecosystem as a whole.

During the 2016 National Workshop on the Implementation of a Shark Biodiversity Management Plan in South Africa, it was underlined that fundamental baseline data are critically required to develop effective management and conservation initiatives for sharks. Our various research projects aim to close some of these gaps in the data to help with the development of effective management plans.

During your time here you will be involved with the following research projects:

1. White shark population monitoring
2. Elasmobranch diversity and abundance project
3. BRUVs biodiversity project

If you currently have no background or experience in the field of biology, or you do not understand something in the project descriptions below, DO NOT FEAR...! Your research and programme manager will go through everything in detail when you arrive, will provide all the training for field work, and will tailor the programme as required – going back to basics for those who have less experience than others.

Please do not hesitate to contact your programme manager in the mean time if you have any queries.

White Shark Population Monitoring

**Project aims:** To obtain a population estimate and monitor white shark populations in the area to determine, for example: How long do the sharks remain in the area for? Does it differ between each individual? Are there any correlations with any environmental parameters? Are there individuals that are returning to the Bay? How long between each visit? Do they have a chum preference?

**Project motivation & methods:** This project involves daily monitoring of white sharks. The number of sharks seen, markings on each shark, approximate size, and sex (if possible) is recorded, along with behavioural observations and environmental data. We are also building a database of all the sharks we see – our white shark photo fin ID database - so we can easily identify and closely monitor the individuals we are seeing. We can also use this database to obtain a population estimate within the next 2-3 years.

**Training & tasks:** Guests will be required to fill out the data sheet when on board the cage-diving boat. You will be trained to record observational, behavioural and environmental data, taught about dorsal fin ID, and given the opportunity to capture some fin ID shots. You will be required to enter this data into our database in the appropriate way and taught how to analyse the dorsal fin ID photographs.

At the end of each month guests will prepare a small presentation and write a short report together, analysing the white sharks they have seen in that month.
Elasmobranch diversity & abundance project

Project aim: To establish the diversity, abundance, and habitat use of elasmobranch species around Gansbaai, and determine whether their populations are changing or being affected by environmental fluctuations and exploitation, or more indirectly through trophic cascades.

Project motivation & methods: This project is currently our primary focus as we know little about the status of other shark species around Gansbaai, and it is a popular shark fishing spot with a number of species that are exploited. This project will involve five survey methods - Rock and shore based controlled angling surveys, boat-based controlled angling surveys, snorkelling and baited remote underwater video system (BRUVs) surveys. These surveys focus on both demersal and pelagic shark species in the area.

During angling and snorkelling surveys sharks are caught after which, biological data and measurements are recorded, sharks are tagged using conventional spaghetti tags, and a small genetic sample is obtained. We then safely release the animals back in the water as quickly as possible, and the abundance of each species is later calculated on shore from the data recorded.

We will often conduct our BRUVs survey simultaneously to the angling survey, so that the abundance indices for each shark species obtained by the two methods can be compared. BRUVs are lowered to the sea floor and collected after recording for a 60-minute period (see below for more information).

Training & tasks: Guests will be trained to fish with rod and reel off the boat and from shore and taught how to catch sharks by hand when snorkelling. You will be trained to record all biological data, tag the individual, how to take a genetic sample, ethical angling and handling techniques and how to input the data onto our database. You will also be in charge of preparing and deploying the BRUVs at predefined locations around Gansbaai. You will be taught how to identify and analyse species on the video, and will be required to analyse a number of videos throughout the month. At some point during the month, we will ask you to tell us about your favourite shark that you’ve seen, either through pictures, video (BRUVs or your own), or through a short presentation.
**Project aims:** To establish the diversity, abundance, species composition and habitat use of species around Gansbaai.

**Project motivation & methods:** A number of commercially important fish and invertebrate species have declined in the area due to overfishing, poaching and lack of fisheries management. This project explores the abundance and diversity of populations around Gansbaai and will assess how these populations might change over time.

**Training & tasks:** Guests will be taught how to analyse the videos, including training in species identification and training in obtaining abundance indices. Your task will again involve inputting the data onto our database.

**FYI:** Our BRUV system comprises of a steel frame that has two steel rods extending towards the surface. One rod houses a GoPro camera, which is aimed horizontally at a bait canister positioned 1m away and 30cm off the seabed. Each rig is attached to a rope that has a surface marker buoy for easy retrieval. For each deployment, 1 kg of chopped sardine (Sardinops sagax) is used as bait. The system operates on the basic premise that fish are attracted to an area within the field of view of a remotely-controlled underwater camera using bait.

Protocol for BRUVs is as follows: BRUVs is lowered to the sea floor, retrieved after fishing for 60 minutes, video file downloaded to a computer for later viewing and analysis, and proceed to new location.

BRUVs are a relatively new method. The videos allow us to learn about the diversity and abundance of species that are not frequently caught during angling surveys, and also allow us to observe species within their habitat. BRUVs are a very useful tool to attract and record organisms. In past studies BRUVs have shown increased ability in detecting elasmobranch and fish species when compared to angling.

The non-extractive and non-destructive qualities of this technique mean that it can be used to monitor exploited species and in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), without compromising the management objectives.

The archiving of BRUVs videos provides an efficient and ongoing method of ecosystem assessment that can be used to inform fisheries management. The videos also serve as a powerful conservation tool in education and awareness programs. During your stay with us we may ask you to compile fun videos of the best BRUVs footage you have seen, for our website, for Facebook, and for educational purposes.
OTHER ACTIVITIES OR PROJECTS YOU WILL BE INVOLVED IN AS A PROJECT PARTICIPANT INCLUDE:

- Marine Debris Project
- Education, Community and Outreach Initiatives

**Marine Debris Project**

We are all aware that marine pollution, in particular plastic debris, has become a huge problem. Every year tens of thousands of marine animals die due to ingestion or entanglement in floating debris. Many people discard rubbish into the ocean without understanding the impact that it has on the ecosystem.

The aim of this project is to help with the clean up of our local beaches and ocean. We will go to a few different beach sites and conduct beach clean ups. We will then take the debris back to our project house, where it will be identified and processed.

This project is in collaboration with 7SEASROPE – a local NPO dedicated to re-using and recycling debris found on our beaches and in the ocean. They are currently making products out of rope, fishing line, nets and other debris for people to purchase around the world, and the money generated is donated towards different conservation and research initiatives that are dedicated to safeguarding the health and vitality of our oceans.

We try to do a beach clean up on a weekly basis if time allows. We also try to organise clean ups with the local community, other organisations and local schools. Guests will be involved in all clean ups whether it be just a programme activity or a community event.

**EDUCATION & OUTREACH INITIATIVES**

Education is important to us and we are passionate about sharing our knowledge and research with the public. On board the cage diving boat our crew are trained to deliver educational and interesting information on white sharks.
Once trained and comfortable you will be expected to contribute to this when on board the boat, and try to answer questions that the clients may have about the sharks or the data you will be recording.

Our marine biologist carries out weekly classes at the local school with the Marine Biology club. Guests will be requested to help out when required in the classroom and on field trips.

Working with the young local community should be expected. We try to get the young fishermen involved in our controlled angling surveys, we allow them to watch us tag the sharks, we give presentations about sharks using collected shark egg-cases, pictures, videos and sometimes dissection, we take them snorkelling, teach them how to swim, organise trips for them and more. You will be asked to help out at school visits, on field trips, at events and contribute when required.

As well as working with the young local community, we also help out one afternoon a week at the local animal rescue centre. With so many stray dogs and cats in the area and such little funding, the shelter needs assistance with walking and playing with the dogs and puppies there. Given you like animals we ask our guests to come with us to help in the shelter once or twice a week when time allows. Tasks at the centre include, playing with the puppies, playing with the kittens, taking the dogs on walks, helping clear up, taking photographs and helping with any fundraising events they may have.

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