## **WELCOME TO**

## **Volunteers Without Borders**



#### **Dear Potential Volunteer,**

Thank you for taking the time to locate our organization and we would like to personally send you a warm welcome. We are pleased to hear you will be volunteering with Volunteers Without Borders. Although there are numerous avenues for volunteering, we can assure that we offer life changing volunteering opportunities at the LOWEST possible cost to you, the volunteer. Now that you've filled out the online application and that you're on board, our goal is to take care of you every step of the way. We will ensure that you are fully prepared before you leave to the country of your choice and begin working on your first volunteer program with us. This information package was designed to serve two purposes. The first purpose is to give you more detailed information about the country you have chosen to volunteer in as well as providing some additional insight into the various types of programs we offer. The second purpose is to provide you with specific items that you will be expected to bring along with you, what types of vaccinations you will be needing before you leave, and what we recommend for your emergency/medical travel insurance. Not only do our volunteering programs benefit the organization and community you will be working with, but they also provide volunteers with an appreciation and gratitude for others, sense of fulfillment, as well as new perspectives. Our goal is to inspire volunteers to raise awareness, share their stories and continue to support or contribute to our programs in any way possible in the future. Although our programs can be quite demanding at times, we ensure that you will be given adequate time and days off to tour around the area you are working in and get the opportunity to participate in any outdoor activities or adventures you would be interested in.

It is your job to explore this information package and then reply back to us at: <a href="mailto:info@vwbinternational.org">info@vwbinternational.org</a> to let us know that you are ready for the next step of the enrollment process. If you have specific questions please our frequently asked questions page as this covers most questions that the volunteers may have. To locate this page, visit our website and click the 'About VWB' tab.

Like most developing countries in the world; political instability could arise at any given time, so we encourage you to check with your local government travel advisory just to be sure that nothing is expected to occur in the location while your over there. With that being said, we can ensure you that every country that we offer has been checked out by out team to ensure the security and safety for our volunteers.

While volunteering on any of our available programs, you will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of health, educational, community development, or wildlife and marine conservation programs. This will give you a chance to make an important contribution to the local community and while doing so, gain an in depth understanding of the country and its culture. We assure you that this experience will leave a lasting impression and stay with you for the rest of your life.

# Information to help you prepare for your trip

If it's your first time volunteering or going abroad, there are several things you will need to make sure you bring on your trip before you leave. Here is a list of the following items that we have deemed necessary to bring to make sure you can enjoy your time on the program. The list below is a general suggestion; each volunteer may prefer more specific items that we have not included in this list. Please make sure that you remember to bring any special items that you are used to having back home, that may only be purchased in your own country.

# What to Bring:

Comfortable shoes and sandals	Camera and/or IPod
Shorts and pants	Cell phone - You can buy simcard)
Rain Coat/Jacket	Rechargeable batteries w/charger
Sleeping Bag	Laptop
Sunglasses and Sunscreen	Flashlight/head torch
Travel Guide	Lock
Mosquito net & insect repellant	String
Hand Sanitizer	Eyeglasses/Contacts
First Aid Kit	Medication (Anti Malarial Tablets)
Duct Tape and/or superglue	Picture Book / Journal
Binder or notepad	Country Map
Toilet Paper	Ear Plugs
Small water heater or kettle	Clothes or Electronics for donation

### **Vaccinations:**

The World Health Organization recommends that all travelers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella, polio and hepatitis B, regardless of their destination. The consequences of these diseases can be severe and outbreaks do occur. Click here to learn more.

"As the President and Founder of Volunteers Without Borders Association, I'd like to offer you a warm welcome! I have done a lot of volunteering myself and believe it is the most fulfilling and gratifying way to give back to countries around the world that need all the help they can get. Whether you're an adventurous traveler or looking to help make a difference, we are happy to have you join us. By volunteering, you will make a difference to the local people that you come in contact with overseas. Our volunteering opportunities expose you to the often-harsh everyday realities of life for many people around the world in underdeveloped areas. We thank you for your time and consideration."

~ Kevin Francis President & Founder of VWB







Website: Email:

www.vwbinternational.org info@vwbinternational.org









# **SOUTH AFRICA**



South Africa is a nation of approximately 50 million people of diverse origins, cultures, languages, and religions. It is a country that has gone through numerous struggles in the past century, and faces more in the future. The spread of AIDS is an alarming problem in South Africa with up to 31% of pregnant women found to be HIV infected in 2005 and the infection rate among adults is estimated at 20%. Malaria is also a growing problem in Africa. Unemployment Issues also pose major problems, as 1/4 of the population remains unemployed, living on less than \$1.25 USD/day. Another problem in South Africa, as well is poaching. When this horrible act is carries out, it leaves both the wildlife and marine life on the brink of extinction. Off the coast of South Africa, Sharks are being killed for their fins faster than they have time to fully mature and reproduce. As it stands, there is now less than 10 % of the original population in our oceans. Due to high amounts of poaching, a lack of laws, and low levels of enforcement, the animals and marine of Africa and our world are quickly diminishing. If pressure is not put on governments to change ways, educate locals, and enforce laws, we may lose our precious wildlife in the near future. While volunteering in South Africa, the projects we offer allow volunteers unique experiences to educate themselves on these issues, get involved in the local community and learn more about the African culture and the way of life.

# **Currency Advice**

The local currency accepted in South Africa is the South African Rand (ZAR) or USD is also accepted in many places. In most places in South Africa, credit cards are accepted. Where they are accepted, it can very well be with steep commissions, which means that you will need to rely here more heavily on cash, ATMs and (in major centers) travelers checks. The best currency to bring is USD in a mixture of large and small denominations, a few travelers' checks for emergency and a Visa or MasterCard card for withdrawing money from ATMs. Euros are not accepted.

### **Travel Document Information**

To enter South Africa, a valid passport and entry visa are required. Most nationalities can obtain a visa at South African border posts or upon arrival. Please check with a travel expert from your country for requirements. A 30-day visa upon arrival costs approximately **\$70 CAD**. Alternatively, longer visas can be obtained from a South African embassy or consulate in your home country.

## **Medical Insurance and Facilities**

South Africa is a rather developed country so there are hospitals, doctors, or chemists in any major city area or even small town. Please arrange vaccinations and travel insurance in your home country before you arrive.

#### Communication

As like most of the world, mobile phones have taken over and having an international unlocked phone and a local SIM card is necessary if you wish to use your phone here. SIM cards can be purchased and registered in most areas. Internet access is also very limited in most areas.

## **Transport**

The easiest way to reach the project is to fly into Capetown and stay overnight at a local hostel/guesthouse of your choice. We can also recommend a hostel or guesthouse for you to stay at to if you request so. Transport to the project will be arranged to pick you up at your accommodation in accordance to the dates of the program start date.

# **Dangers and Annoyances**

South Africa is a relatively safe, hassle-free country and can be a relief if you've recently been somewhere like Tanzania or Kenya. With that being said, you do still need to take the usual precautions. Avoid isolated areas; especially stretches of beach, and in cities and tourist areas take a taxi at night. When using public transport, don't accept drinks or food from someone you don't know and ensure your bag or belongs is secure. Be skeptical of anyone who comes up to you on the street asking whether you remember them from the airport, your hotel or wherever. In the majority of cases, they are just trying to get money from you.

In tourist areas like Cape Town or Johannesburg there are almost always a few touts and flycatchers and they can be a bit aggressive, especially around bus stations and budget tourist hotels. Do your best to minimize the impression that you're a newly arrived tourist. If somebody is following you or you feel the need, duck into a shop if you need to get your bearings or look at a map and don't walk around any more than necessary with your luggage. While looking for a room, leave your bag with a friend or reliable hotel rather than walking around town with it. Buy your bus tickets a day in advance (without your luggage) and, when arriving in a new city, take a taxi from the bus station to your hotel. Be very wary of anyone who approaches you on the street, at the bus station or in your hotel offering tour deals or a safari package, and never pay any money for a tour in advance until you've thoroughly checked out the company.

## **A Few Tips**

Avoid external money pouches, dangling backpacks, camera bags, and leave jewellery, fancy watches, and fancy headphones at home. Carry your passport, money and other documents in a pouch against your skin, hidden under loose-fitting clothing. Or, better, store valuables in a hotel safe, if there's a reliable one, ideally inside a pouch with a lockable zip to prevent tampering. It never hurts to

- make a photocopy of your identification and cards and store it separately in another bag.
- Arriving for the first time at major bus stations can be a bit stressful. You may be hassled by touts as you get off the bus, and they may try to sell you a cheap hotel rate or packaged tour.
- Have your luggage as consolidated as possible, with your valuables well hidden under your clothes. Try to spot the taxi area before disembarking and make a beeline for it. It's well worth a few extra dollars for the fare, rather than attempting to walk to your hotel with your luggage.
- Take requests for donations from 'refugees', 'students' or others with a grain of salt. Contributions to humanitarian causes are best done through an established agency or project.
- Keep the side windows up in vehicles when stopped in traffic and keep your bags out of sight (ie) on the floor behind your legs.
- When bargaining or discussing prices, don't do so with your money or wallet in your hand.

#### Water

The water in South Africa is perfectly safe and there are no issues of drinking water from the tap. In saying so, we encourage you to avoid drinking from streams, rivers and lakes unless you've purified the water first.

#### **Cultural Awareness**

South Africa is a relatively safe country and almost all locals speak English. Female volunteers should be aware that in the towns and villages, it is normally respectful to have your knees and your mid-riff covered (and in some cases, your shoulders). Some practices in South Africa are very different to what volunteers may be used to at home. Visitors do not have to agree with all the customs around them, but should respect them and endeavor to understand the complex cultural history that shaped them.

PLEASE NOTE: There is a ZERO TOLERANCE policy in place for alcohol consumption, during volunteer work hours, while on the project. The consumption of alcohol is looked negatively upon and even <u>forbidden</u> in certain countries and it is essential that you abide by this rule. We need to ensure that you are giving the project the right impression of Volunteers Without Borders during your stay. If volunteers choose not to follow this policy, they will be removed from the project immediately, and no refund will be issued.

## **GREAT WHITE SHARK MARINE CONSERVATION**

Research, Education, Observation, Monitoring & Analyzing







**Location:** Gansbaai (100 Km East of Cape Town)

If you like to do things that will challenge your fears and have a passion to learn more about one of the most feared predators in our world, then this is the ultimate experience for you to get up close and personal with the Great white shark. South Africa has long been known for its abundance of great white sharks, making it a prime area to observe these magnificent creatures. The great white shark, which can grow up to seven meters (23 feet) in length and 4 tons in weight, is now a protected species in South Africa. Owing to massive negative media publicity over the years, sharks have become one of the most maligned, misunderstood, even hated species on our fragile planet. They have been pursued, hunted and indiscriminately slaughtered, to the point where many species are endangered. Unsustainable fishing practices, dorsal fin poaching, and environmental degradation compounded by a relatively slow great white breeding cycle are all factors contributing to the potential demise of this amazing creature.

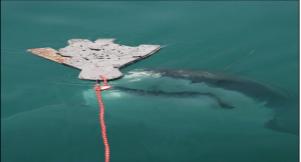
This program is dedicated to the exploration and conservation of the world's greatest predator, the great white shark, and its environment. The project works with students, eco-tourists, conservation organizations and marine resource users (subsistence fishermen, sport divers and dive operators) to gather data on Great white sharks, correct negative misconceptions about sharks, and stop the needless slaughter of over 100 million sharks annually. Current programs involve eco-tourism, public education, environmental advocacy as well as various social up- lifting programs.

This program was founded in 1989 purely as a research centre, since 1989 it has grown and broadened its services to include a commercial diving and viewing centre and a separate educational department. This organization has taken the lead to establish shark tourism as an educational experience. "Everything we do we aim to do in harmony with nature and the environment we are working in". The Program runs out of Kleinbaai, which is just outside of Gansbaai, South Africa — a seaside village located approximately two hours southeast of Cape Town on the Atlantic Ocean coast. The shark trips primarily

take place off Dyer and Geyser Islands, about 6 nautical miles (11 km) or a 20-minute boat trip offshore. The boats anchor in the 6-meter deep channel ("Shark Alley") between Dyer and Geyser Islands. Dyer Island (larger island) is a breeding ground of Jackass Penguins, Cape Cormorants and Gannets, while Geyser Rock (smaller island) is a breeding ground for approximately 60,000 Cape Fur Seals. Shark Alley is a magnet for great white sharks due to this breeding colony of seals, their favorite prey, and is a wonderful area for cage diving as there are reefs, islands and huge kelp beds which all provide protection from the open sea swell and wind. In the summer months they work offshore closer to Joubert's Dam. Please note that the cage diving location is subject to change depending on the weather conditions and location of the sharks.

Finding the great white shark is a skill, involving years of practice - the water temperature, depth, visibility, swell height, current and wind direction are all major factors. Great white sharks are surface feeders, so volunteers will be spellbound when seeing the great white lifts its head right out of the water to take the bait, and sometimes breach completely. Divers will get to experience great whites from the safety of cages, while non-divers have a great opportunity to view the sharks from the safety of the boat, where exhilarating photographs and video footage may be captured at close range. In Shark Alley, you will likely also see seals, penguins and the occasional dolphins frolicking near the islands, as well as magnificent southern right whales coming up from Antarctica to breed from May to November. These expeditions are not just thrill-seeking adventures, but they are educational experiences.





## **VOLUNTEER WORK**

The volunteer program is primarily focused on the project's cage diving eco-tourism and volunteers will enjoy regular trips to sea to view / cage dive with the great whites. The program does its best to involve volunteers in all aspects of the project, including tasks such as preparing baits, packing the boat, washing the equipment, working with the ecotourists, recording data on the sharks and even getting their hands dirty on chum! The expeditions encompass getting up early, working with great white sharks during long days at sea, and then relaxing with the crew or other volunteers at night! One of your main duties will be educating our clients about great white sharks and the need for their conservation.

#### CAGE DIVING WITH THE GREAT WHITES

Once anchored in the channel, the project makes use of a specially designed, secure, five man steel cage, which floats on the surface, with divers no more than 1m below the surface. Volunteers will be taught how to get in and out of the cage and how to remain secure and safe in the cage. Cage divers are responsible for recording observations on the great whites, including sex, size, markings and behavior. Diving takes place on a rotational basis on good diving days. The duration of each dive depends on the diver, the number of eco-tourists and the activity of the sharks, but could be up to 20 minutes per dive.

#### RESEARCH & DATA COLLECTION

Volunteers will be taught how to collect data in the field on free-swimming white sharks. At sea, you'll be focused on working with the sharks from above and below the water, observing behavior and the interactions of sharks around the boat. You will be educated in an informal environment, learning about the behavior of the great whites, their history and the urgent need for research. You will also receive lectures on their biology, shark attack, current and past research techniques and conservation of great white sharks.

#### **BASIC SEAMAN SHIP**

Volunteers will also be taught basic seaman skills including boat handling on board by the Shark Team. This includes general boat maintenance, packing and cleaning, anchor positioning (deployment and retrieval), cage deployment (attachment and retrieval), knots, general safety and good safe crewing practices. On non-sea days you will be taken on various excursions, such as wine tasting, a visit to the penguins or to the most Southern point of Africa. Upon completion of the program, the project provides volunteers with a certificate of accomplishment. The program is designed to train and educate volunteers to a level of competence of a field assistant.





As a Volunteer, you will get hands-on, practical experience in working with great white sharks in the following ways:

#### WORKING WITH THE TEAM

Viewing the great white shark is a serious activity, which should only be done with the right people, equipment and approach. This Project is one of the top shark organizations in the world and has the most experienced shark team in Africa. They have worked on and featured in over 30 white shark documentaries, including BBC, Discovery Channel and National Geographic; written articles for African Indigo, Outdoor Adventure, Dive Style, Peak Performances, Surf Magazine and Immersed; and lectured at institutions such as Cambridge University, the Royal Geographic Society, London University and the University of Stockholm. This background and knowledge, combined with an enthusiastic staff and excellent infrastructure, has resulted in an organization that produces high quality and successful expeditions. The project is a responsible tourism operation that sets a benchmark in its commitment to community development. We are deeply involved in the social, economic and environmental needs of our surrounding communities. We run tourism and environmental education programs in the Gansbaai schools – fostering pride, a sense of personal responsibility towards the environment, and teaching life skills. Our aim is to empower children in caring for their environment and themselves. If we have any out-reaches during your stay, you will be included in this.

Our latest project is the Recycle Swop-Shop. The school children collect rubbish and litter from the streets and in their homes. They earn points for these recyclable materials, which they 'spend' in the shop on much-needed school stationery or clothes. This project promotes recycling, environmental awareness, and self-reliance, and helps to provide for some of the basic needs of the children. The volunteers and staff involved find it an enriching experience that helps bridge the gap between different cultures and communities. On Tuesdays you will be expected to help at the Swop Shop – if you want to bring a contribution, it will be greatly appreciated.

## **ACCOMMODATION AND LIVING**

Volunteers stay in a delightful face brick house situated two minutes from the harbor, which bustles with action and boats as people head out to sea. Overlooking the Indian Ocean, the house is very comfortable with dorm rooms, a nice kitchen, a dining area, a lounge with television and video/board games, and an outside entertainment area for those hot evenings. There is a small supermarket nearby (volunteers usually buy provisions and prepare meals together) and the house is located is a very safe and beautiful area, where you can freely walk around any time of day or night. Please be aware that Kleinbaai is renowned for its shark — and not its nightlife! Nights can be a little quiet but having an enthusiastic group of volunteers that work well as a team both on and off sea provides entertainment in itself. Couples, friends or families volunteering together who wish private accommodation might reserve a double room at an additional cost.

## **TRAINING & QUALIFICATIONS**

Training will be given in different aspects of marine conservation and shark research. Students may be able to obtain university credit for their experience.

# F.A.Q. (Frequently Asked Questions)

#### What is the eligibility?

This program is aimed at assisting in the development of students, training them in the area of biological sciences, creating an awareness on great whites to Conservationist, eligibility is thus limited to exceptional naturalists who can show a 'real world' dedication to research, management or conservation of animals or ecosystems.

#### How long is this volunteer program?

Our Program runs traditionally for 21 days, but there is a minimum stay of two weeks and a maximum of four weeks (in exceptional cases this may be negotiable). The preferred date of arrival is the 1st of each month, so that coordination can more easily be arranged.

#### Where do we do our fieldwork?

There are only eight licensed shark diving companies in Gansbaai, and we are fortunate enough to work from Shark Team, a licensed cage diving vessel. It is a tourist boat, so most days we will be out with tourists, but there will be days when you have the vessel to yourselves.

#### Do I need a VISA?

No. You will not be employed by us, nor paid. Most tourists get a 3-month / 90 day Tourist / Visitor VISA upon entry in South Africa. However, we do recommend that you contact the South African Embassy or Consulate and confirm this fact. Do not leave this enquiry for too late. We recommend that you contact the South African Embassy or Consulate in your country ASAP. If your application period is for a period longer than three months, or if you plan to travel in South Africa prior or after your internship for a period extending 90 days, you will have to apply for a Tourist / Visitor VISA application.

#### Do I need insurance?

Yes. When you are accepted in this program, you will have to sign liability, copyright documents, as well an agreement that you are knowingly partaking in dangerous activity. You will not be covered for accidents or illnesses, so please do organize your own medical and health insurances. You may apply for a normal travel insurance policy. The Chances that a marine predator will injure you are non-existent if you follow the safety guidelines and do not try anything foolish, which we would not approve anyway. But you will be working on a boat in conditions, which can, at times, be less than comfortable. And

accidents on a boat may occur, so it is important to be covered in case of an emergency or accident. Be sure to have an insurance cover for your entire stay in South Africa.

#### Do I need any specific vaccination or medication?

Regardless of the destination, the World Health Organization recommends that all travelers get the following immunizations from a travel clinic in their home country before departure: Diptheri, Rubella, Tetanus, Hepatitis B, Polio, Measles and Mumps.

\* To determine specific vaccinations, please click here: https://www.myvaccs.com

#### What do I need to bring?

Some old jeans; tops and shoes/boots to use on the boat, warm clothing; a wind breaker jacket; good waterproof clothing; factor 30+ sun block and a wide brim hat. You don't have to bring any bed sheets. Comfortable, non-slipping shoes are an absolute must – you can buy a pair of Wellington's locally, or get some Crocs. Investing in some Polaroid sunglasses is also essential.

#### Do we have weekends off?

No, but yes... The weather along the Western Cape of South Africa is not stable, and the sea does not allow fieldwork every day. Nevertheless Kleinbaai is comparatively sheltered, allowing us to go out at sea very often. You will have days off whenever the weather and sea condition do not allow fieldwork, and no other work on the data or maintenance is needed. Sometimes, we have long periods during which the weather is nice and after 4-5 days at sea, we will then take a couple of days break. Why? Well, being at sea is very tiring, constantly balancing yourself, baking in the hot sun and being blown by the winds, so after a few days at sea, your body will need a rest.

## How often will I go to sea?

You will be able to go to sea a minimum of every other day. For example a 21-day stay enables you to go to sea at least 10 times. It can be more and we do our best to accommodate you as often as possible. When on sea it may not be feasible for you to dive in the cage every trip or you may not even want to. If you do wish to dive that day please inform one of the crew and we will do our best to accommodate you. It is important for you to communicate to your team leader and the crew what you wish to gain from your stay with us — within limits; we will try to accommodate you.

#### What will my duties be?

Please note that these duties may change from day to day, and that you will always be working in conjunction with a qualified crewmember of the project. As our project is subject to weather and tide conditions, there is no such thing as a typical day, your duties will change from day to day, as volunteers do rotate, but here is an indication of what would be expected of you.

- Boat check daily as per boat check list in office, ensure cleanliness of boat
- Make sure equipment for diving, chumming, bait, food etc. are on boat
- · Assist with anchoring
- Education of clients and general interaction with them, assist clients as needed
- Preparing and distributing wetsuits to clients
- Chumming
- Data Capturing and Recording
- Writing for our blog about your experience
- Constant and vigilant shark spotting and bait watching, point out sharks to crew, clients and fellow volunteers
- Clean boat post-trip, clean and put wetsuits away
- Tuesdays assist at Swop Shop with Recycling

#### **PLEASE NOTE:**

This program starts every month on the 1st, and the 15th. Please bear in mind that the sooner you apply, the better your chances of securing your placement! Volunteers are required to sign an indemnity form acknowledging and accepting the consequences of working in close contact with wildlife. Applicants must be over 18 years old.

#### HERE ARE THE STEPS TO COMPLETE OUR ENROLLMENT PROCESS

**Step 1)** - Review this information package and decide which country you want to volunteer in and what program you are most interested to volunteer on. Once you have done that, please fill out the online application form available on our website and click submit. Please make sure to include the necessary required information.

**Step 2)** Once we receive the application form, we will send you a temporary confirmation for your desired program. If you need to make any changes, please feel free to email us and let us know. If we do not receive any further correspondence from you, we will send you the program fee payment request via Paypal within 3 business days.

**Please note:** A \$225 CAD one-time registration/enrollment fee will also be added to your program fee.

**Step 3)** - When we receive confirmation that your program fee has been paid, you will receive a confirmation email from us. In this email, there will be a waiver/release form that will be required to fill out and send back to us at your earliest convenience. You are also encouraged to book your flights at this time. Once you have done so, please send us a copy of your flight itinerary so that airport pickup/transfer (if available) can be arranged for you upon arrival.

**Step 4)** - After we receive your waiver/release form, we will confirm your placement on the program and detailed program specific information will be provided to you at this point.

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Our enrolment and registration process begins by applying online. Once you have filled out and submitted the online application form, you will receive a confirmation email. To continue on in our enrolment process, all volunteers will be required to pay a Registration Fee of \$225 CAD, which will be added to the Program Fee. This fee helps to cover the administration and processing costs. Once we receive your payment, we will send you a confirmation email with the program details and encourage you to book your flight at that time. Our team will be readily available to correspond with you and answer any questions you might have from the time you apply until you reach the project. If you have any further questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact us at: info@vwbinternational.org

#### **OUR PROGRAM FEES INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

- Registration Fee (refundable if you choose not to go), ongoing support from VWB staff, program marketing costs, information pack, administration costs, travel costs to develop and ongoing costs to sustain programs and communication costs with volunteers.
- Program Fee airport pick-up, orientation, program supervision, accommodation (private or dormitory style depending on location) and meals during volunteer program period, in-country 24/7 volunteer support and incountry administration costs.

#### WHAT ADDITIONAL COSTS WILL I HAVE?

• Visa, flights, travel insurance (mandatory), immunizations / vaccinations, incountry trips or tours, transfer to other areas of the country, and spending money.



During this entire process, we will always be available to correspond with you to answer any other questions you might have from now until you reach the program. Thank you for choosing Volunteers Without Borders.

We can assure you that you've come to the right place!