



# AFRICAN LEOPARD RESEARCHERS

African leopard researchers in association with On African Soil and Dr Lourens Swanepoel has initiated a leopard study and conservation program in the coastal forests of Mozambique adjacent to the famed Gorongosa National Park.

The objective is to gather key data required to understand the ecology of this unique leopard inhabiting the rare coastal forest biome and to increase support for its conservation.

You can directly assist by participating in the darting and GPS collaring program, tracking, monitoring and data collection, and education of local inhabitants.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The contribution of recognised science to the understanding of the ecology of panthera pardus across its entire range is currently incomplete. There has historically been a focus of research in controlled areas due to the low anthropologic impact. However it is becoming increasingly apparent that protected areas are impacted on by the effects of their surrounding land use methods. Movement of large carnivores has been repetitively proven to ignore park boundaries. The importance of managing large carnivore populations outside of protected park parameters is not only important for genetic integrity but also for species distribution. A prime example is Mozambique's Gorongosa National Park and the vast wild lands to its east. Land use models on the eastern border include indigenous hard woods forestry, sustenance agriculture, sustenance hunting, trophy hunting and eco tourism. Understanding the effect of these industries on the wildlife is core to the management thereof. Modern technology permits citizen scientists to add to a knowledge cloud through submissions of valuable collected data. Under guidance of our competent scientist, volunteers have the opportunity to participate in the collection processing and distribution of credible data that can directly assist with the conservation of these wild lands and all the flora and fauna that inhabit them.

## LOCATION

The expansive wilderness north of the town Beira, Mozambique reaching up to the Southern banks of the mighty Zambezi River and incorporating all the land stretching from the ocean westwards to the boundary with the epic Gorongosa National Park is the prospective research area. Coastal sand forest is the most typical biome found in this region and this habitat shapes the ecology of the endemic leopard. Very few studies have covered the unique behaviours of these coastal leopards resulting in an opportunity to pioneer the acquisition of scientific knowledge of these distinctive cats. After landing at the Oliver Tambo international airport in South Africa you will take a short hour and a half flight on SA Airlink to the international airport in Beira followed by a 100km dust road trip by safari vehicle into the study area and its base in the Chinizuia forest. Alternatively, by previous arrangement, you can be collected from OR Tambo Int by one of the project leaders and complete the overland journey North through South Africa crossing into Zimbabwe over the perennial Limpopo River passing through her beautiful landscapes and entering Mozambique at Mashipanda border control. A tar road section until the rustic town of Dondo reveals true Africa and then its North for 100km until base camp.



## FIELD WORK

The Leopard tracking project offers to a restricted amount of volunteers the wonderful activity of spending 25 days in the life of the elusive forest Leopard. The prime data collection method is capture / recapture by means of remote camera traps as this is currently the most economically efficient to result ratio method. Additionally all adult females will be captured and fitted with a GPS tracking collar providing intricate details of the territoriality of this feline's little known ecology. All collection methods, processing and interpretation of data will be supervised by Dr Lourens Swanepoel, a highly recognised and experienced ecologist – [vhembebiosphere.org/sarchi/staffmembers/lourens-swanepoel](http://vhembebiosphere.org/sarchi/staffmembers/lourens-swanepoel), [lourensswanepoel.weebly.com/research.html](http://lourensswanepoel.weebly.com/research.html)

## SOCIAL WORK

Combined with the scientific study is an undertaking to educate the almost subsistence living locals about the value of these keystone carnivores and equally all the supporting game and their required habitat. All successful attempts to minimise human inflicted mortality and habitat destruction have direct benefits to the conservation of this important wilderness. Weekly visits to the numerous villages present you with the opportunity to interact with the locals and impress on them the global importance of conserving their forests.

## EXTRA ACTIVITIES

Indian Ocean beach trips with its perfect water temperature combined with a visit to the local market will be taken occasionally and additionally a few day trips to the famous Gorongosa national park.

## PROGRAM DATES

Each program is 25 days with specific start and end dates throughout the year.  
For confirmation of these dates please send a request via email

## RATES

Please see our website for the current rates.  
Included in the rates are food, accommodation, some excursions, contribution to the project.  
Excluded are flights, Visas and Insurance.

## TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATION

Arrival into OR Tambo International Airport with a connecting flight to Beira Mozambique  
Safari style tented forest camp

## MINIMUM AGE

18

