

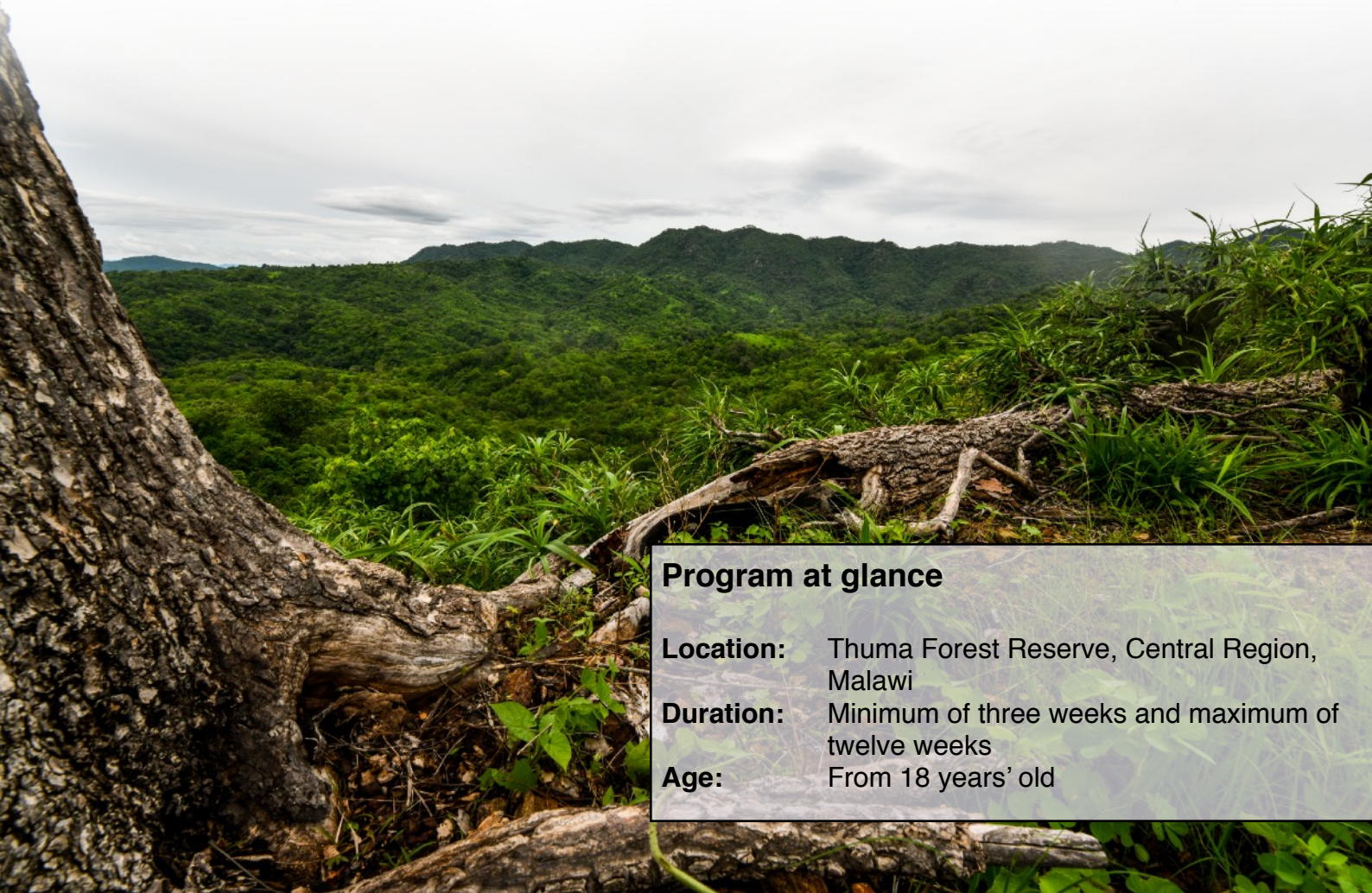
Wildlife Action Group (WAG) Conservation Volunteer Program Information pack





Malawi is a beautiful part of Africa, and within it, the two forest reserves under WAG's management, Thuma and Dedza Salima Escarpment, offers breath taking views and a home to a lot of wildlife, showing nature at its best. This volunteer project gives WAG the opportunity to expose dedicated volunteers to its field work for the mutual benefit of both you and the organisation.

We look forward to welcoming you to Malawi's Thuma Forest Reserve, a unique chance to make a personal difference, and a real contribution to conservation in Malawi. We hope you find the following information pack helpful, and if you have any questions at all please do not hesitate to get in touch with us on:
info@wag-malawi.org



Program at glance

Location: Thuma Forest Reserve, Central Region, Malawi

Duration: Minimum of three weeks and maximum of twelve weeks

Age: From 18 years' old

Is this volunteering program for me?

When considering volunteering for a project it is very important to research not only the project, but also the country you will be living in. You should come with an open mind and be prepared to take the initiative and get involved in every aspect of the project.

Volunteering in Africa can be a life changing experience. It challenges not only your physical strength but also your mental ability, and rewards you with a huge sense of achievement. You will get to know a new country, culture and language. You will meet people from various backgrounds, sharing a passion for the African bush and its wildlife. It is a great way to explore nature and contribute to its conservation. If you love nature, the great outdoors and are happy to live simply in our bush camp, then this is the place for you!

If you would like to get in touch with a past volunteer to hear first-hand about their experience with WAG, we would be happy to put you in touch.



Skills and experience

You do not need any special qualifications to join this programme, and full training will be given on the job. However, if you do have a specific skill or specialised experience, then please let us know when applying for the programme, and we will tailor some of your tasks accordingly.

The work

You will make a long lasting impact on our work by helping us with both our day-to-day tasks, and specific projects. Tasks you may be involved in during your volunteering programme include: wildlife and ecology research, GIS data mapping, setting wildlife camera traps, solar powered electric fence maintenance, community engagement, assisting with conservation in local schools, car maintenance, removal of snares from the forest, building and maintenance of the camps, office administration in the WAG forest headquarters and assisting with the day-to-day running of a busy project. Please note that these are just examples and are subject to change depending on the demands of the project at the time of your visit.

Sometimes the working day can be long depending on the demands of the tasks that have arisen at that time, so its often necessary to be flexible. Generally, we start work at 7am, have lunch from 12-2pm, and finish at 5pm. Volunteers with a strong work ethic, who are positive, flexible and self-motivated will fit in very well.

This is hands-on rewarding conservation work that will give you a rich experience, but it's not all about hard work! While you are here with us, you could enjoy activities such as; assisted nature walks in the forest, bird watching, wildlife spotting, evening wildlife drives and assisted viewing of elephants that may visit the camp. You can enjoy getting to know staff and other volunteers while chatting around the camp fire and there will be plenty of opportunities to learn new skills about living in the bush.





The bush camp

Volunteers stay at our base camp in Thuma Forest Reserve. We live in the bush and life is simple! Thuma Forest Reserve is a stunning forest, set in Africa's Great Rift Valley, looking down to Lake Malawi. Wildlife are free to roam around camp and sometimes come to visit, we have procedures to follow to keep us safe. At night you will sit under a canopy of stars and listen to the sounds of the bush. Thuma is one of the only forests in Malawi which is still home to elephant, buffalo, kudu, bushbuck, hyenas and many other animals.

The camp is in the middle of the forest on top of a hill with several magnificent view points. We live in an eco friendly way using clean drinkable water from a nearby spring, solar power for electricity and wood used from the fallen trees in the forest for cooking.

Accommodation

You will sleep in a Malawian traditionally built mud hut, with a thatched grass roof. Each volunteer has their own room with a bed and mosquito net, bedding, chair and clothes storage. There is a communal seating and dining area with a shared kitchen. It is basic but comfortable living.



Electricity

We are proud that our camps are totally off the grid, using solar power to charge all our equipment necessary to run the project. This means we have to manage our energy supplies extremely carefully, and keep our main source of solar power solely for the project.

You are welcome to charge your phone using our small portable solar panels, but if you need to charge other larger items then please bring your own portable solar panels with you. Past volunteers have relished the opportunity to have a break from technology and focus on the incredible surroundings they are living in. We encourage you to do the same by leaving all but absolutely essential technology at home, so you can fully immerse yourself in your African wilderness experience.

There is no TV or electric lights in our camp, so at night we use solar lights in the rooms or candles, however, a good quality head torch should be brought for your personal use.



Laundry

Your clothes will be washed by our camp staff.

Insects and other mini beasties!

We live in the bush so you will have the opportunity to see many different small creatures around camp, they can be beautiful and interesting, and as long as we treat them with respect even the harmful ones can be enjoyed from a distance!

Internet and mobile phones

It is advisable to bring your unlocked mobile phone to Malawi, so you can buy a local SIM card and mobile credit, allowing you to communicate with family and friends. You can buy a SIM and credit at the airport or we will assist you with this on arrival. You can charge your phone with a small solar panel at camp.

Local network is available in camp most of the time, so you should be able to send and receive messages using WhatsApp, however, network quality can vary.

Field staff

Our local friendly field staff are made up mainly of our rangers or scouts, along with camp staff. All scouts speak English but their first language is Chichewa, which they use amongst themselves. It is a good idea to try and learn some useful words in Chichewa before coming or while you are here. Malawians are always really pleased to hear this.



What to bring

Due to living in the bush it is best to bring clothes with natural colours such as green, brown, grey. Remember that everything you wear when out in the forest, such as a backpack and raincoat should also be in neutral colours. Even though the temperature during the day can be very high, it is recommended that you bring long-sleeved shirts and long loose fitting trousers to protect you from mosquitos in the evening.

Please remember June and July is cold in the evening and from December to April it's wet. December to April is wet, May to July is cold in the evening, August to November is very hot. please pack with this in mind.

Here is a guide to what to pack, but this will vary depending on how long you stay:

Essential items

Passport, vacc card, insurance certificates, copies of passport and driving license if you wish to hire a car

Spending money in Malawian Kwacha – you can withdraw cash from an ATM at Lilongwe Airport

US dollars for visa fees

Personal medical kit – see details in Medical matters section

Sunscreen and lip salve

Mosquito repellent – 50% deet

Sunglasses

Water bottle

Toiletries; shampoo, conditioner, soap, toothbrush, tooth paste, deodorant

Any personal medication

Long sleeve neutral coloured t-shirts – approximately 2

Short sleeve neutral coloured t-shirts – approximately 2

Long neutral coloured trousers – approximately 2

Neutral coloured shorts – approximately 2

Good strong hiking boots

Socks

Swim suit

Towel

Water proof jacket (in rainy season)

Fleece - depending on time of year

Sun hat

Good quality powerful head torch and spare batteries (please take all batteries home with you)

Sandals or flip flops

Day pack



Non-essential items:

Books to read, pack of cards or games
Power bank charger
Portable solar panels
Binoculars
Camera with spare batteries
Baby wipes
Sleeping bag or silk sleeping bag liner – we provide sheets and blankets but depending on the season you may want to bring your own.
Snacks



Medical matters

It is very important to plan well in advance before you travel to any foreign country. We advise you to have a check up with your dentist and your doctor before you travel. It is also worth organising spare contact lenses, glasses (bring a spare pair or bring your prescription with you), a first aid and medical kit, to have all the necessary vaccinations and if you take any regular medication then bring enough for the duration of your trip and a copy of your prescription. Thuma is approximately 3 hours from the nearest good hospital.



Malaria

You will be in a high-risk area for malaria so anti-malaria tablets must be taken during your whole stay with us.

Vaccinations

The following are the vaccinations that are recommended for Africa at the time of writing but please check this with your local travel clinic well in advance of travel: Diphtheria, Tetanus, Measles, Mumps, Polio, Hepatitis A-B, Yellow fever, Rabies, Typhoid.



Personal medical kit check list:

Plasters
Antibiotics - i.e. ciprofloxacin
Anti-diarrhoea drugs
Acetaminophen – (Paracetamol)
Anti-inflammatory drugs – Ibuprofen
Antihistamine tablets and cream
Antibacterial cream
Anti-malaria pills
Bandages, gauze, plasters
Scissors, safety pins, tweezers, pocket knife
Oral rehydration salts
Iodine tablets for water purification



Money matters

You can exchange most currencies at Lilongwe Airport as soon as you arrive in Malawi. There are many banks in Lilongwe and Salima to withdraw cash from ATMs or change money if needed. Please note, some ATMs only allow Visa and not MasterCard. In most places you cannot pay for goods with your credit card unless it is a high-end hotel or restaurant.

Malawi Kwacha (MK) is the local currency in Malawi. You will need local money to buy snacks, drinks, gifts in town, and to cover any onward travel you would like to do after your volunteer programme. Please check the exchange rate before you come as this is likely to change on a regular basis

Cost of volunteering programme

Current price of volunteering programme (2019): €40 Euro (2020): €45 Euro per day to be paid via bank transfer or PayPal, alternatively you can pay in cash when you arrive.

What's included in this fee?

- Collection and drop off at the airport
- Accommodation while in camp
- Three meals per day while in camp
- Drinking water

What is not included in the price:

- Flights
- Vaccinations, travel and medical insurance
- Visa fees
- Optional extras such as additional food, drinks, souvenirs or excursions.





Where does my money go?

All of the money raised through our volunteer programme, after costs goes towards our core project operations costs. The funds contribute to local salaries, vehicle maintenance, camp maintenance and development, our educational projects, community development, wildlife and forest protection. The volunteer project is an important source of income to keep our conservation projects running, thank you for your support.

Getting here and away

Thuma Forest Reserve is in a great location in the central region of Malawi, and 80km from Lilongwe's international airport and 1 hour from the nearest shop in town.

The best way to get to us is to fly into Lilongwe Airport and we will arrange a private transfer to and from the airport and our forest camp. Our set arrival and departure day is Thursday, so please ensure you plan your dates with this in mind. There are several airlines flying from Europe to Malawi, including Ethiopian Airways, Kenya Airways and South African Airways.

Visas

British, Australian, Canadian or American Nationals and people traveling from most EU countries are required to obtain a \$75 visa valid for 30 days, with the option to extend it for an additional 30 days at roughly \$10, up to a maximum of 90 days. For other nationalities, please check online.

You can buy your visa at the airport when you arrive, and if you are staying longer than 30 days you can get an extension in Salima or Lilongwe during your stay. Please check latest visa information and fees before travel.

Weather

Malawi has two seasons; rainy and dry. Rainy season starts in November until April when the days are warm and humid. It may rain several times a day but there are also some days without any rain. The dry season lasts from May to October (June and July a fleece is required). It is very hot with strong sun. You will need to bring appropriate clothing depending on the time of year you visit.



Donations

If you have any space in your bag, then donations are always gratefully received. Useful items include; information books about animals, trees, insects, flowers in Malawi or southern Africa, tracking techniques, bush craft and conservation. Items for staff such as; torches, rechargeable batteries, old digital cameras, old binoculars, old t-shirts, old mobile phones, tents, sleeping bags, socks, long laces, trousers, clothes and hats are also extremely helpful.

We also work closely with local schools who are always looking for different coloured large marker pens, colouring pencils, crayons, paints, writing books, paper, rubbers, rulers, netballs, footballs, pencils, any educational materials.

Onward travel

We are also well positioned for onward travel to explore the wonders of Malawi. The list of places to visit is endless but to give you an idea; we are only a one and a half hours drive to stunning Lake Malawi and three hours drive to Liwonde National Park. You can easily explore more of this beautiful country after your volunteering experience, and we are happy to advise you on things to do and places to stay.

How to apply for the WAG Conservation Volunteer Programme:

You can apply for our conservation volunteer programme in three easy steps:

1. Read this information pack giving you all the details of the programme
2. Complete and return the application form – download from our website
3. Once your dates are confirmed, complete and return the booking form – download from our website

If you have any questions at all, we are happy to help just email us on: info@wag-malawi.org

We look forward to welcoming you to our volunteering programme for what could be one of your most rewarding life experiences so far!

