

EcoTraining 19 - Day Real Schools EcoQuest



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COURSE OBJECTIVES

To provide participants with an introduction to African wildlife and the natural environment, in an enjoyable and exciting way. The course will teach ethical behaviour in natural environments as well as conservation initiatives that everyone can contribute to in their day-to-day life. The objective is for participants to understand the underlying elements that support this amazing variety of life such as geology, soils, plants and climate as well as how both small and large organisms and species interact with one another and their environment.

Arrival for the below course is 14h00 on the first day, with departure at 10h00 on the last day.

CURRICULUM

Ecology forms the basis of this course, and the basic principles of ecology are: "Study of the House" earth's ecosystem that includes both the living and non-living parts of the environment. Plants, animals, fungi, protists and bacteria as well as the rocks, water and atmosphere make up your average ecosystem. Once this is grasped it is easy to see how a change in one part of an ecosystem might very well affect all the other parts.

A typical day will include:

- Drumbeats start the early morning with tea/coffee.
- A daybreak drive or walk, focusing on the topic of the day
- Return to camp for a hearty cooked breakfast.
- Debriefing on morning activities observations/ lessons
- Midday lecture
- Free time or leisure activities
- Mid-afternoon light lunch
- Afternoon drive or walk, focusing on the day's lecture theme ended with sundowners.
- Dinner and debriefing on the evening activities' observations and lessons.

Practical Experience and Discussion Headings with sub-headings:

Basic Ecology and Geology	Basic Navigation & Orientation	Animal Tracks and Tracking	Bird ID and Behaviour	Animal ID and Behaviour	Common Trees and Shrubs	Astronomy
Geology and Soils	Basic skills including use of landmarks, sun, compass, and maps	Basic Identification of Tracks	Basic Bird Identification	Mammals	Identification and how to identify	Night Sky including Southern Cross, Milky Way, common constellations
Weather and Atmosphere				Amphibians and reptiles		
Vegetation and Habitats			How to use Bird Reference guides			
Grasses		Basic Trailing Skills				
Food Web and Energy Flow			Fish	Traditional uses		
Habitat Ecology			Understanding basic Bird behaviour		Arthropods	
Conservation						

DETAILED DAILY ITINERARY

1	Welcome to Pridelands
	14:00 Estimated Arrival Time at Pridelands.
	Upon arrival a safety briefing will be conducted, an orientation of camp as well as an introduction to the staff.
	Welcome, introductions, code of conduct, camp safety and rules.
	What this course is about and explain the schedule and the daily structure
	Participants will be shown to their accommodation, followed by time to settle in as well as time to prepare for the afternoon activity (dependent on arrival time).
	Participants meet for high tea / lunch and thereafter depart for an afternoon activity. Dependent on arrival time.
	Afternoon Activity
	A late afternoon activity which will be a game drive and night drive to introduce the participants to the reserve.

2	Introduction to Guiding in the Natural Environment
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A morning activity which will either be in the form of game drive or bush walk.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focussing on Guiding in the Natural Environment
	Noon Discussion and Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive discussion by instructor based on Guiding in the Natural Environment- Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the role and function of a professional nature guide within the tourism industry, including the aims of nature guiding and guiding ethics.
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afternoon activity which will either be in the form of game drive or bush walk.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporating general game viewing, with emphasis on Nature Guiding and guiding ethics – topics covered during the Noon Discussion.

3	Astronomy
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A morning activity which will be in the form of game drive or bush walk.
	Noon Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive discussion by instructor based on Astronomy Discussion topics and practical experiments to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to the African Night Sky including Southern Cross, Milky Way, and common constellations.
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afternoon activity focusing on the elements discussed in the lecture which will either be in the form of game drive or bush walk. Focus on the Night Sky including the Southern Cross, Milky Way, and Common Constellation

4	Ecology & Geology
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A morning activity which will either be in the form of game drive or bush walk.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the Ecology and Geology of the surrounding areas.
	Noon Discussion and Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive discussion by instructor based on Ecology and Geology - understanding the inter-relatedness and with a focus on the local area, including Geology and Soils, Weather and Atmosphere, Food Web and Energy Flow, Habitat Ecology and Conservation.
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afternoon activity which will either be in the form of game drive or bush walk.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating general game viewing, with emphasis on the Basic Ecology and Geology – topics covered during the Noon Discussion.

5	Common Trees and Shrubs
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning activity which will be in the form of game drive and bush walk focusing on Common Trees and Shrubs and their Traditional & Medicinal uses.
	Noon Discussion and Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive discussion by instructor based on Common Trees and Shrubs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion topics and practical experiments to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Common Tree and Shrub Identification and how to identify as well as Traditional and Medicinal uses.
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afternoon activity which will either be in the form of game drive and bush walk incorporating general game drive viewing, with emphasis on Common Trees and Shrubs.

6	Bird Identification and Behaviour
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A morning walking activity focusing on Bird Identification and Behaviour. This includes Bird Identification, understanding Bird behaviour as well as how to use Bird Reference guides.
	Noon Discussion and Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive discussion by instructor based on Bird Identification and Behaviour. Discussion topics and practical experiments to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bird Identification, Understanding Bird Behaviour & How to use Bird Reference guides.
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Game drive, combining with a walk and incorporating general game drive viewing, with emphasis on Bird ID and Behaviour. Incorporating common species found in the local area.
7	Animal Identification and Behaviour
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trail from camp focusing on Animal Identification and Behaviour. Emphasis on Mammals, Amphibians, Reptile, Fish and Arthropods.
	Noon Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive discussion by instructor based on Animal Identification and Behaviour. Discussion topics and practical experiments to include Introduction to Mammals, Amphibians, Reptiles, Fish and Arthropods.
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Game drive, combining with a walk if there are interests, and incorporating general game drive viewing, with emphasis on Animal Identification and Behaviour and extra focus on Big Game Animals.

8	Navigation and Orientation
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trail from camp focusing on Navigation and Orientation and how to use nature as a tool to navigate and orientate yourself in the bush and make your way to your midday picnic spot.
	Noon Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive discussion by instructor based on Navigation and Orientation as well as Bush Skills. Discussion topics and practical experiments to include basic practical skills including use of landmarks, sun, compass and maps for Navigation and Orientation.
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An afternoon game drive to enable participants to apply the skills they've learned in creating a natural guiding experience.

9	Creating a Guided Nature Experience
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A morning activity which will either in the form of a game drive or bush walk focussing on Creating a Guided Nature Experience.
	Noon Practical Experience:
	Interactive discussion by instructor based on Creating a Guided Nature Experience, to effectively guide a natural experience, conduct a pre-briefing, assess clients' medical needs and interests, and engage each client individually. Ensure their comfort by considering environmental factors, communicate clearly in natural settings, and research interesting sites. Approach animals thoughtfully, navigate using various methods day and night, and interpret the natural environment to enrich the client experience.
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An afternoon game drive to enable participants to apply the skills they've learned in creating a natural guiding experience.

10	Field Observations
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A morning activity which will be in the form of either a game drive or bush walk where students will be tested on trees, tracks & signs, birds, mammals and dung.
	Noon Discussion and Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback session on morning field observation
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afternoon activity which will either be in the form of game drive or bush walk where students will be tested on trees, tracks & signs, birds, mammals and dung.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoy an engaging session of storytelling by the fire after dinner.

11	Field Observations
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A morning activity which will be in the form of either a game drive or bush walk where students will be tested on trees, tracks & signs, birds, mammals and dung.
	Noon Discussion and Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback session on morning field observation
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afternoon activity which will either be in the form of game drive or bush walk where students will be tested on trees, tracks & signs, birds, mammals and dung.

12	Tracks and Tracking
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning activities which will be in the form of a bush walk focusing on Animal Track Identification.
	Noon Discussion and Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive discussion by instructor based on Introduction to Animal Tracks and Tracking. • Discussion topics and practical experiments to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Introduction to basic Tracks, basic Track Identification as well as basic Animal Trailing Skills
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afternoon activity which will be in the form of a bush walk focusing on the topics covered during the midday lecture and incorporating Animal Tracks and Trailing.

13	Hunter Gatherer Techniques
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning activities which will be in the form of game drive focusing on Hunter Gatherer Techniques
	Noon Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive discussion by instructor based on Hunter Gatherer Techniques. • Discussion topics and practical experiments to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Introduction to Tsonga (or Shangaan) Hunter Gatherer trap building (no animals are caught or harmed) ◦ Plants and their medicinal purposes ◦ Tsonga (or Shangaan) cultural associations with certain animals and plants
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afternoon activity which will be in the form of game drive game drive incorporating general game drive viewing, with emphasis on Hunter Gatherer Techniques

14	Dangerous Game and how to approach animals on foot
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning activities which will be in the form of a bush walk focusing on the basics of Trails Guiding. • Discussions on danger zones and reading mammal behaviour.
	Noon Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive discussion by instructor based on Trails Guiding. • Discussion topics to include Rifle Handling and ballistics. How to stop a charging animal on foot, escape routes and planning your walking safari.
15	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive discussion by instructor based on Walking and approaching dangerous game on foot – Trails Guiding. A walking safari focusing on how to approach animals on foot with emphasis on dangerous animals. How to use different mammal & birds calls and their behaviour when walking in the bush.
15	Bush Skills and Conservation
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A morning activity which will either be in the form of game drive or bush walk. • Discussions on what you need and how you plan to survive in the bush (What can you use from your surroundings)
	Noon Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive discussion by instructor based on anti-poaching, the importance of conservation and the impact poaching has on the environment and the ecosystem. • Discussion topics and practical experiments to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Snare collection
15	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afternoon activity focusing on the elements discussed in the lecture which will either be in the form of game drive or bush walk culminating in and incorporating bush survival skills of locating and sourcing water (in theory), preparing a fire and ensuring location is safe etc.

16	Full day Wilderness Trails Skills
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full days Wilderness trails in the form of a bush walk • The aim of today is to connect you with the wilderness that is inside you because not many of us know it is there. • Lessons include wilderness appreciation and the MIA (Minimal Impact Approach) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minimal footprint – how to guide in the bush leaving little or no evidence of your presence. ○ Minimization is maximization. ○ Wilderness – the importance thereof ○ Mastering 'Time' ○ Sounds of Silence - facilitating a wilderness experience
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal footprint – how to guide in the bush leaving little or no evidence of your presence. • Minimization is maximization. • Wilderness – the importance thereof • Mastering 'Time' • Sounds of Silence - facilitating a wilderness experience
17	Practical Guiding Experience
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break camp with zero impact and then embark on a walk back to camp.
	Noon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to unwind after the wilderness trail and give participants a chance to prepare for their practical guiding opportunity.
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will have the chance to lead a guided experience for the group, applying the knowledge they've gained throughout the course, while the Ecotraining Guide drives the vehicle

18	Practical Guiding Experience
	Morning Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will have the chance to lead a guided experience for the group, applying the knowledge they've gained throughout the course, while the Ecotraining Guide drives the vehicle
	Noon Practical Experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time to enjoy camp.
	Afternoon Activity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will embark on a game drive with a Sundowner stop to bask in the African sunset and reflect on their course experience

19	All good things come to an end
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short activity drive with hotbox for last coffee/tea as the sun rises and provides an opportunity for students to sit in silence and just “be in nature”. Return to camp for packing and departure @ 09:00am



WHAT TO BRING

Electricity: There is no electricity at the camp – solar lamps are used for all lighting and a generator is used to charge batteries. Studying at night with solar lamps can at times be challenging so a headlamp for this purpose is recommended as well as an extra battery-operated lamp if you wish to study in your tent at night. The kitchen is equipped with gas fridges for storage of all perishable food items, thus unfortunately there's no space for personal items (drinks, water, or other things). There is, however, a full selection of affordable drinks available at camp.

Beverages: Select beverages are available for purchase (over and above the cordials, tea and coffee included in the course fee).

Water: Fresh, drinkable water is available from the taps. Bottled water is available for purchase but for sustainability we encourage you to use the purified water available at the camp to refill your own bottles.

Laundry: A hand washing laundry service is provided at a nominal weekly fee.

What to bring:

- Appropriate walking shoes (hiking boots). Thorns go straight through sport shoes!
- A pair of takkies or sneakers to serve as back up for your walking shoes (hiking boots)
- Sandals for around the camp
- Khaki (or neutral colored) clothing for activities (walks and drives)
- Warm jacket, jersey, gloves, beanie, and scarf as it gets chilly in the mornings and evenings during winter.
- Hat for protecting both the head and neck.
- Sunscreen
- Personal toiletries and towel
- A powerful torch to use in and around camp (opt for free standing for use inside the tent)
- A headlamp
- Extra batteries
- Personal pillow if preferred
- Raincoat / poncho
- Insect repellent
- Water bottles for at least 2 liters. We recommend a camelback, MTB or walking water pouch.
- Snacks/ cigarettes – no shops nearby. Include high energy snacks for walks i.e., protein bars, energy bars, nuts.
- Binoculars
- A bird book or electronic bird phone application is essential for your birding courses!
- Camera
- Daypack
- Any personal medication
- CASH (in ZAR Rands only)
- Please note radios and C.D. players are NOT allowed.