

Cheetah Project Brochure



Serendipity Wildlife Foundation
CSIwildlife.org

January, July, August 2025
January, July, August 2026



Serendipity Wildlife Foundation conducts a cheetah project to monitor, count, and determine territory of cheetahs in Loisaba Conservancy and Mugie Conservancy, in Kenya. The program commenced on February 1st 2021 at Ol Pejeta Conservancy where twelve cheetahs were identified. Since then, we have moved up to Northern Kenya.

Four to nine people will be selected for each team, and they will be actively involved in this project through participating in online identification training prior to departure, travelling to Kenya and engaging in field activities while on-site.

Applications are now being accepted, and those interested should read the eligibility requirements before applying.



Updated: March 10, 2024

ELIGIBILITY

Participants should be at least 18 years of age on the day of travel. Team members should be studying or have studied wildlife related subjects in college/university and have a positive attitude with an understanding and respect for other cultures. **The ideal candidate will be someone who can learn from this program and take back the experience to actively benefit his/her community and his/herself. The Cheetah Project is a hands-on experience in monitoring cheetahs where team members can gain valuable field experience.**

REQUIREMENTS

- Be able to travel in a 4WD vehicle for several hours each day while travelling over rough terrain.
- Be able to speak and write in English. Report/data writing in English is mandatory.
- Have a valid passport which expires more than 6 months after your arrival in Kenya. The passport should have at least three blank pages.
- Be able to stand and sit for long hours, squat, walk for at least 2 miles at one time, climb on to the roof of your patrol vehicle, lift 30lbs if needed, and work in different weather conditions.
- Be a team player and be able to work together with the rest of your international team.
- Participate in training prior to departure, pass a certification test in cheetah identification, participate in online classroom sessions, and complete a minimum of 70% of assignments before arrival in Kenya. The initial online classroom session is "Live" and not recorded, and may be during early morning or evening hours at a time suitable to you.
- Be able to pay the deposit within **two weeks or less** of selection.
- Understand that you are a visitor in another country and respect their culture.
- Complete all online assignments in a timely manner.

YOU WILL....

- Receive training on the most up-to-date identification methods and participate in a certification exam
- Receive identification exercises online of actual observations from the field, of which you will be required to participate in 70% of the assignments online
- Participate in group exercises while in Kenya, which could include VHF tracking
- Meet experienced wildlife personnel who are presently working in the wild
- Learn to write observation reports in the field, including ethograms
- Learn to work as a team, with assigned duties and responsibilities, **IRRESPECTIVE OF WORK EXPERIENCE IN OTHER PROGRAMS OR EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE**
- Learn about the competition the cheetahs face from animals such as lions, leopards, hyenas, and jackals
- Learn about the operations of successful wildlife conservancies

- Learn and adhere to the strict protocol, Standard Operational Procedures when a cheetah is observed on patrol
- Learn the behavioral patterns of predator and prey, and be able to successfully identify the majority of the mammals that are seen inside the conservancies

THERE IS A STRICT NO SMOKING POLICY WHILE INSIDE THE ACCOMODATION AT CAMP OR IN A VEHICLE. THERE IS ALSO A NO TOLERANCE POLICY FOR ILLEGAL DRUGS OR PROHIBITED ITEMS INTO THE COUNTRY.

One of the most amazing things about the Cheetah Project is that it brings together people from many different backgrounds, from all over the world. The ability to work with, and learn from, so many amazing, intelligent people, allowed for the creation of a well-rounded team with a common goal of aiding in cheetah conservation. From the start, you are given the tools to prepare for cheetah identification, understanding paw prints and other wildlife, utilizing GPS and wildlife cameras, reporting and log keeping, and a multitude of other skills both in person and virtually. Seeing a cheetah for the first time in Ol Pejeta was amazing; we had enough time to do the identification on the spot and were able to spend a majority of the day documenting behaviors. I am so grateful to be a part of the Cheetah Project, and I love that even after being in person, I can continue to be involved in the project through virtual cheetah identifications and discussions with the team!

- Mallory R. from the US



WHAT WILL TEAM MEMBERS BE DOING?

Team members will locate and track cheetahs via vehicle patrol, monitor, and document their locations and territory. Your driver will stay with the cheetah as long as the terrain will allow. Team members will have various jobs related to individual skill sets, including but not limited to photographing the cheetahs, setting up camera traps, GPS operation and documentation, observing and confirming their territory. Teams will be going out into the field each morning, often returning to base camp for lunch, and then out in the field again in the late afternoon.

Teams will also be setting up several camera traps in the area, collecting photographs from them, and return to base to download photographs and input data. Identification and inputting data will sometimes be done during the afternoon at base camp, or while at a stationary observation station in the field. Team members will be observing and documenting any unusual behavior related to injuries, or sickness involving several other species in the conservancy as well.

While on field patrol duty, teams will have the opportunity to see other wild animals such as elephants, rhinos, lions, giraffes, zebras, antelopes, gazelles, warthogs, leopards, buffaloes, hyenas, baboons, and a variety of birds. Sometimes, animals such as hyenas and gazelle have been known to visit camp. While there is no guarantee of seeing a specific animal, you never know what you will see, as the wild is full of surprises. Team members are welcome to take as many photographs they want for their personal use provided they have fulfilled all of their Cheetah Project responsibilities first.

During your stay, you may also have the opportunity to visit other activities and projects on the conservancies. These activities are not guaranteed, and subject to change.

Evenings (after sunset) will be spent at leisure, where you will have the opportunity to relax, communicate with family at home, make phone calls or update your personal diary. Report writing, documentation, and downloading images from the trap camera is also mandatory at this time. Wi-fi is available at the camps.

Every day in the bush is different, and you never know what you will come across or what will happen. There will be certain days that we can be trying hard to locate cheetahs and certain days that we could find more than one. There could also be a day where we could find another endangered species that needs to be photographed. We are dependent on game guard reports, guide reports, visitor reports, trap cameras, and patrol observations.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS INTO KENYA

Entry requirements to countries around the world keep changing, and at the time of writing, the following applies. You are responsible to monitor updates on international travel, especially from the country you will be travelling from, and travel into Kenya.

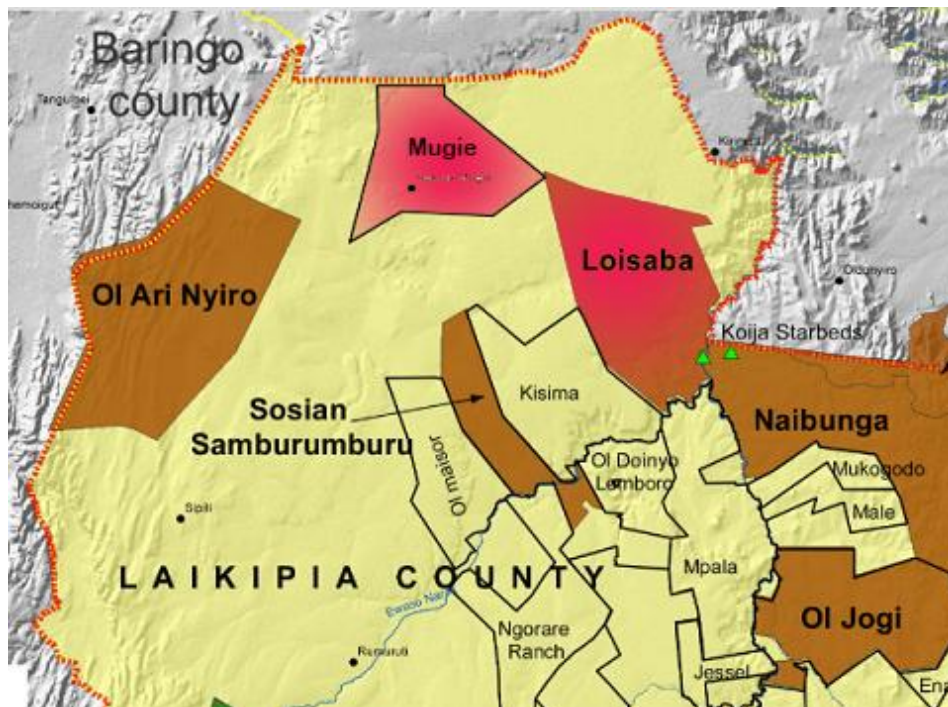
Covid vaccination is not a requirement to enter Kenya.

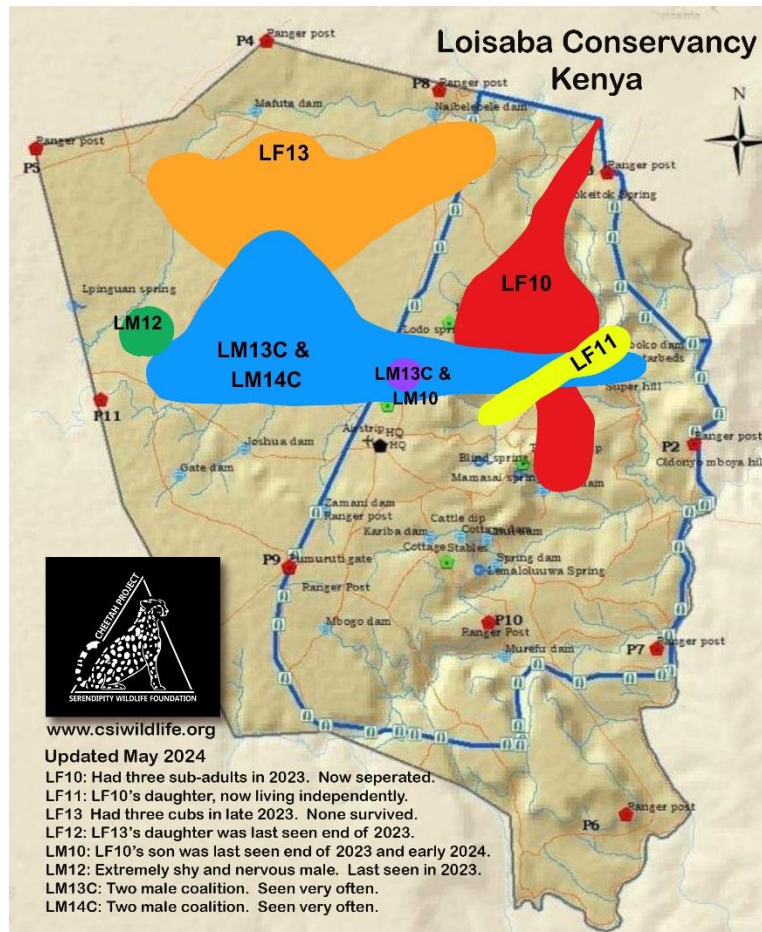
Your online visa application will cost between \$35 and \$52.

ACCOMMODATION

Base Camp for the Cheetah Project is at the HQ camp located inside Loisaba Conservancy. Accommodation is shared, with two team members assigned to a large tent that has two separate beds. There is also a desk and chair in each tent. The bathroom is en-suite and has a hot water shower and flushing toilets. Complimentary wi-fi and laundry service is available. Both complimentary services are subject to limitations and availability.

Since Mugie Conservancy is a short drive from Loisaba HQ, patrolling in Mugie will be done from Loisaba.





Our international team currently consists of team members from the following Countries:

Australia, Sri Lanka, United States, Netherlands, England, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, India, Finland, Kenya, Italy, New Zealand, and Canada.

Why do you have to pay?

Funding is almost non-existent for small non-profits to run a project such as the Cheetah Project and the project is not a profit-making venture. Our expenses are for accommodation, permits, meals, ground transportation, operating 4X4 vehicles 10-13 hours a day, drivers pay and accommodation, diesel, equipment, vehicle maintenance, and other small logistical expenses. Unlike some organizations with paid office staff and management, our organization is volunteer-based, which saves us a lot of money. The amount we charge you goes 100% directly into expenses, but still does not cover the total cost per person. Thanks to donations and sponsorships, your payment is subsidized.

IS THE CHEETAH PROJECT FOR YOU?

The ideal candidate for the Cheetah Project is someone who wants to gain experience in field work and gain that upper edge when it comes to applying for employment. Very few young people get this opportunity to work with, and observe big cats in the wild, and also experience additional carnivores and herbivores. We may also select an applicant who is not studying a field in wildlife conservation to experience the Cheetah Project and gain valuable knowledge with field experience. We require every team member to be certified in cheetah identification, participate in online identification exercises prior to arriving in Kenya, and participate in all activities during the Cheetah Project.

CHEETAH PROJECT 2025 and 2026 VOLUNTEER DATES

JANUARY 2025 & 2026 TEAMS

January 31: Team members arrive in Nairobi and are provided overnight accommodation

February 1: Depart to Loisaba Conservancy

February 12: Be dropped off in Nairobi in the evening for your flight home

JULY 2025 & 2026 TEAMS

July 16: Team members arrive in Nairobi and are provided overnight accommodation.

July 17: Depart to Loisaba Conservancy

July 28: Be dropped off in Nairobi in the evening for your flight home

August 2025 & 2026 TEAMS

August 1: Team members arrive in Nairobi and are provided overnight accommodation

August 2: Depart to Loisaba Conservancy

August 13: Be dropped off in Nairobi in the evening for your flight home

COST: \$2,100

January 2025 special rate of \$1900

WHAT IS INCLUDED

- Accommodation in shared large tent (Double or triple assigned by us)
- Breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day (Starting from breakfast on the departure day from Nairobi to breakfast on the last day at Loisaba)
- Complimentary tea and coffee
- Filtered drinking water
- Complimentary accommodation in Nairobi on arrival day
- Transport from Nairobi to Loisaba Conservancy, and back to Nairobi
- Ground transportation, and ground patrol each day
- A Cheetah Project t-shirt (to be worn on certain days)

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

Airfare from your departure city to Nairobi (NBO) and back

Snacks, soft drinks, beer/alcohol (except filtered drinking water)

Travel and medical insurance

Overnight stay in Nairobi before your flight back home, if needed

Covid tests or other vaccinations for travel, if needed

Kenya visa (ranges from \$35 - \$53, and completed online)

A letter of participation will be issued to all team members that complete the project.

The Cheetah project was a life changing experience for me as a team member. The hard work and team effort blessed us with numerous sightings, helping us add to the database which in turn would be useful to conserve Africa's most endangered big cat. The skills I've gained out in the field, tracking the elusive cheetahs, observing and assessing their behaviour allowed me to expand my knowledge on Wildlife Conservation. Additionally, being a part of an amazing team helped me improve my leadership, analyzing, and decision-making skills out in the savannah. It was an unforgettable adventure and I would do it all over again in a heartbeat. Very grateful to the Serendipity Wildlife Foundation for creating such an amazing opportunity for young researchers to widen their horizons in the conservation field.

– Kithmee M. from Sri Lanka

SELECTION PROCESS

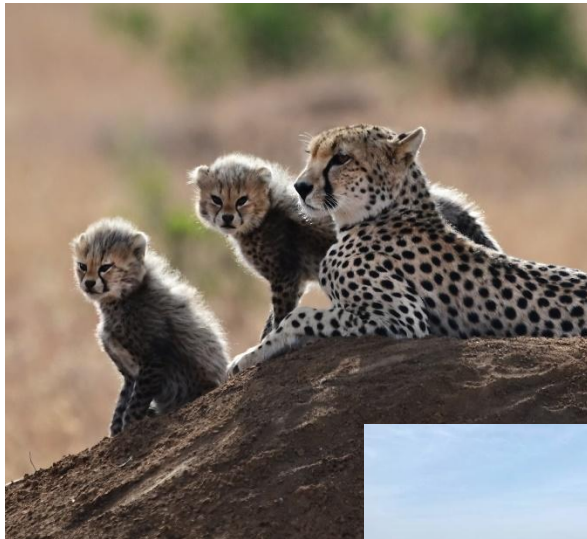
Once your application has been received, it will be reviewed by our selection committee. You will be notified via e-mail ONLY IF YOU HAVE BEEN SELECTED. This process could take from a week to three weeks. If selected, a deposit of \$700 will be required within two weeks to secure your spot. Due to the large number of applications received, we will not be notifying the applicants that were not selected.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

Team members need to arrive at Nairobi airport on their arrival date. We will arrange for ground transportation from the airport to our accommodation in Nairobi, where you will stay overnight with the rest of the team. This will give everyone a good night's sleep and be ready for the adventure ahead. Note: Meals will not be provided in Nairobi on the arrival date, and the group members will go out for dinner as a group. Cost is approximately \$10-\$12 for dinner.

We will depart Nairobi as early as possible to avoid morning rush hour traffic and to arrive at Loisaba Conservancy for late lunch.

On your return to Nairobi, please schedule your departure flight any time after 10 pm that night. You may also leave the following day and we can assist you in booking a room close to the airport for an added fee. If you stay overnight in Nairobi, please keep in mind that hotel check-out time in Nairobi is 10 am.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

IS A PAYMENT PLAN AVAILABLE?

Yes, a monthly payment plan is available after your initial registration deposit of \$700 has been paid.

I APPLIED, SO HOW DO I KNOW THAT I HAVE BEEN SELECTED?

We receive many applications. After your application has been received and reviewed by our selection committee, and you are selected, we will send you an e-mail within one to three weeks that you have been selected for an interview, or been added to the waitlist.

WILL A FRIEND OR MY FAMILY BE ABLE TO JOIN ME?

Friends and family will not be able to join you on the team unless they have been selected for the project.

WILL I BE ABLE TO GO ON SAFARI?

You will be on cheetah patrol every day you stay, observing animals more than what safari vehicles see, and travelling to every corner of the conservancy on observation patrol. You will also be accessing areas that are not visited by safari vehicles.

WHAT TYPE OF TRANSPORT DO WE HAVE FOR OUR STAY?

We use 7-seater 4WD customized Toyota Landcruisers with comfortable forward-facing seating and an open roof hatch. These vehicles are comfortable to sit in for long stationary observations, travel, and even for a quick siesta, if needed!

HOW MUCH SPENDING MONEY DO I NEED?

Since everything is included in your stay, you will only need money for any required snacks, extra drinks, any meals on the day of arrival, any meals after you have been dropped off in Nairobi, purchase of souvenirs, and any extra meals or treats that you want to purchase from the snack bars or restaurants within Ol Pejeta. You are also required to tip your Driver-Guides who work countless hours alongside you each day, and the camp staff.

WHAT TYPE OF CLOTHING DO I NEED TO BRING?

Mornings and late evenings will be cold, while afternoons will be warm. We will send you a clothing and travel checklist if you are selected.

WHAT AIRLINES DO YOU RECOMMEND FOR TRAVEL TO NAIROBI?

From the US, the three major Middle East airlines connect you to Nairobi with a stopover in the Middle East. European and US carriers will connect you through Europe, which is a slightly

shorter flight. Kenya Airways also has a direct flight from New York to Nairobi. From South Asia and other parts of Asia, flying through the Middle East is the shortest route. Sometimes, cheaper flights can be purchased flying via India. With all flights, be aware of those cheap flights that offer you a short transit time where you have to connect from one flight to another. If there are delays in your first flight, you will miss the second flight, which will result in missing your transportation from Nairobi to Ol Pejeta and having to pay for a 4.5-hour taxi ride.

WHAT TYPE OF SHOTS DO I NEED?

Kenya requires no mandatory shots to enter the country, unless you are arriving or travelling through a Yellow Fever designated country. Since everyone's health is different, we advise you to contact your doctor and seek advice several months before travel.

WILL I BE ABLE TO TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS WITH MY PERSONAL CAMERA?

We encourage you to bring along your personal camera and take as many photographs for your personal use provided you have fulfilled your Cheetah project responsibilities first.

WILL I BE ABLE TO BRING A DRONE?

No, drones are not permitted in Kenya unless a permit is issued.

HOW MANY BAGS AM I PERMITTED TO BRING?

One soft suitcase and one cabin bag. A back pack is useful when you go out for the day, so we encourage bringing a backpack as your cabin bag. Sometimes, as we have equipment to be transported to Nairobi and back, we may request you to carry a trap camera or other electronic device.

DO YOU HAVE TO BE A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY STUDENT TO VOLUNTEER?

No, but you need to be a former or present student related to wildlife work, veterinary science, or wildlife management. We also take volunteers that want to change their career to a wildlife related occupation.

WILL I BE ABLE TO CONTACT MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY BACK HOME?

There is cell phone reception from most areas of the camp. There is also complimentary Wi-fi at camp which is subject to availability depending on weather and electricity. Purchasing a Safaricom SIM card with a data package upon arrival at the airport is recommended for your private communication

WHERE DOES MY MONEY GO?

The research program is 100% dependent on funding from volunteers. Your payment goes towards accommodation, 3 meals a day, fuel, driver's pay, equipment, and the cost of running two vehicles 13 hours a day.

WILL I BE ABLE TO TOUCH ANY ANIMALS?

As we are dealing with wild animals, you will not be able to touch any animals.

WILL I BE ABLE TO PURCHASE FOOD OR EAT FROM RESTAURANTS?

If time permits and our work takes us to that area, you can have a meal at one of the luxury camp restaurants. There are no snacks available for sale.

IS A VEGETARIAN OR VEGAN CHOICE AVAILABLE?

If you let us know once you are selected, we will accommodate your vegan or vegetarian meal request.

WHAT LEVEL OF ENGLISH IS REQUIRED?

It is an essential requirement that you have a good ability to speak and understand English. Your level of English must be adequate to understand oral information and instructions, write reports, communicate with other team members and professional staff, and handle any emergencies that could arise.

HOW DO I CHANGE MY MONEY TO LOCAL CURRENCY?

The Kenyan local currency is the Shilling. We recommend that you not carry a large amount of cash with you, and instead use a credit/debit card. Local money can be withdrawn from an ATM machine after arrival in Kenya.

I AM A WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER. WILL I BE ABLE TO JOIN TO TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS ONLY?

No. We do not have space for anyone NOT involved in team member work and duties.

DO I NEED TO PURCHASE MEDICAL AND TRAVEL INSURANCE?

Yes, if selected, medical insurance and trip insurance is mandatory. We will provide you with a link to recommended coverage, or you may purchase your own.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET SICK?

If it is something minor such as a stomach upset, fever, cough and cold, you will receive medical assistance in camp. If it is something more than that, and a visit to the emergency room is needed, this is when your medical insurance kicks in.

DO YOU OFFER SCHOLARSHIPS?

Sorry, we do not offer scholarships, but on rare occasions third parties do offer small scholarships in the amount of \$100-\$150 to deserving applicants.



I WANT TO PARTICIPATE!

If you have read the information carefully, and think that you will be a suitable participant, be able to contribute to the program, and also be able to pay your \$700 deposit within 2 weeks of selection, we invite you to submit your application to be a member of our cheetah research and monitoring team.

To submit your application for selection, go to <https://form.jotform.com/201851249387158> and complete the online application.

Within 2 weeks or less of submitting your application, you could receive an e-mail stating that you have been selected or that your application is being held for further review. Due to the vast number of applications that will be received, we will not contact you if you are not selected.

Please understand that we receive far more applications than we can accommodate, and only a maximum of 9 applicants will be selected for each month.

If you receive an e-mail that you have been selected, your deposit payment of \$700 is due within 2 weeks of receiving your acceptance e-mail. Instructions for payment, and all other relevant information regarding your trip, and information on payment plans will be sent at this time.

Questions? Please e-mail please contact us at mail@csiwildlife.org



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<https://www.instagram.com/serendipitywildlifefoundation/>

Serendipity Wildlife Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)3 foundation registered in California.

“Working together with others, so that future generations will see in the wild, what we see today”




CSIwildlife Electronic Forensics
Fighting wildlife crime with electronics