The Friends Visit Quick Guide - 2013

A reference for participants of the FKMP Friends Visit
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1. Introduction

1.1 Welcome

Welcome to this Friends Visit Quick Guide.

As a Friend of the Kalahari Meerkat Project, you may join us for the Friends visit. In this experience of a life-time, join like-minded people and come to meet your favourite meerkat groups, the researchers and the project. You will get the chance to observe the KMP meerkats from eye to eye, participate in meerkat research, discuss your questions with the researchers, and learn everything you ever wanted to know about meerkat behaviour and ecology.

You will spend your days at the KMP research station in the field, greeting the meerkats when they come out of their sleeping burrow to catch the first sun rays and walking with them while they forage, play, fight or mate. You work with the researcher in establishing role calls, weighing, or performing focal and ad lib observations, and other experiments. After lunch at the farmhouse and some rest you again go out to track your meerkat group, and follow the meerkats through their evening rituals. The evenings are spent together at the farmhouse, with the researchers, or on a night-drive through the reserve.

During your time at the reserve, you will stay in your own "rondavel", a round little house with bed, table and chair, cupboard, cold water sink, electricity and heater; toilets and hot showers are shared. You meet the other Friends for breakfast, lunch and mouth-watering dinners, which are cooked by Tina, our famous local chef.

The experience will include the stay at the "Kuruman River Reserve" KMP field station, food and accommodation, and the transfer from/to Upington Airport (UTN, South Africa). The package excludes the airfare to Upington, insurances and vaccinations. It is currently exclusively available for Friends of the Kalahari Meerkat Project.

1.2 Why a Friends visit?

When the FKMP was created, we discussed what we could offer Friends that is truly unique. A visit to the KMP meerkats was very high on that list. Tim Clutton-Brock immediately suggested having a special trip for the most dedicated meerkat enthusiasts, i.e. the Friends only.

The Earthwatch Meerkat Expedition has been a hit for years, but Tim wanted to try something even more dedicated, giving a group of Friends the chance to see even more of the KMP, and the Kalahari. We also wanted to give a chance to Friends to meet each other in real life – and what better place would there be than the KMP?

The Friends Visit in October 2008 was the first of its kind, and the first to offer a combination of the KMP and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. From the March 2009
Friends visit onwards we offered Friends more time with the meerkats, and allowed Friends to participate in the research, supporting researchers with data collection.

A trip to the park is currently not planned for the upcoming Friends Visits. A trip can anyway be arranged via a tour agent, after the visit, on an optional basis for those Friends who would like to see the park, and its magnificent wildlife.

The itinerary given in this Guide includes a few cornerstones which cannot be changed easily, for logistics reasons, but it is up to you Friends to give your input what you want to see and do. You will be contacted by the FKMP so that we can learn about your expectations.

1.3 About this document

This Quick Guide intends to give participants an overview about what to expect from the Friends visit, how to prepare, and how to organise the trip. Furthermore, it gives links to other important information. Please read it carefully, and do not hesitate to contact the FKMP if you have questions.

The Friends visit is somewhat similar to an Earthwatch expedition; the Earthwatch Briefing document contains a lot of essential details for your stay at the KMP. It is a must-read, and thus an integral part of your preparation. This Friends Visit Quick Guide will give the most important facts about staying at the KMP, travel and logistics, or health requirements, but will refer to the Earthwatch Briefing in many parts. For ease of reading, certain sections of the Earthwatch briefing have been copied here. They are marked in italics.

Another useful source of information is the www.kalahari-meerkats.com website. You can reach it from the Friends website by clicking on the left-hand KMP project website link. This is the official website of the research project, and it contains information about the study site (Click on left-hand “Kuruman River Reserve”), the Research (click on “Research & Publications”). Make sure you read these websites carefully, and download the information contained there, e.g. the Field Guide, or Data Collection Protocol, as they may give you a lot of background on what to expect.
2. Your days in the field

2.1 Itinerary overview

Tue, day 1: Arrive at Upington, drive to KRR, settle down
Wed, day 2: Meerkat work
Thu, day 3: Meerkat work
Fri, day 4: Meerkat work
Sat, day 5: Meerkat work
Sun, day 6: Day at leisure, or informal meerkat visit, or unguided walk
Mon, day 7: Meerkat work
Tue, day 8: Meerkat work
Wed, day 9: Meerkat work
Thu, day 10: Meerkat work
Fri, day 11: Meerkat work
Sat, day 12: Meerkat work
Sun, day 13: Day at leisure, or informal meerkat visit, and sundowner
Mon, day 14: Meerkat work
Tue, day 15: Early morning drive to Upington, onwards flight or start of individual programme

2.2 Meerkat Work

2.2.1 Training

Friends will be trained to radio-track animal groups, collect organized data samples with check sheets, use focal samples to monitor habitat use and feeding behavior and carry out transect-based surveys to monitor the distribution of plants and animals. Friends will be given a safety talk by the Field Coordinator on the first day at the reserve. Project staff will provide Friends with informal lectures or onsite briefings on the evolution and ecology of cooperative breeding in birds and mammals and the breeding systems of social carnivores.

2.2.2 Assignments

Friends will be broken into groups and partnered with project staff. Each group will work together to establish meerkat group composition (essentially a sort of roll-call), take note of any signs of pregnancy, lactation, dominance interactions, aggressive encounters, etc., and keep a sharp look out for injuries or signs of disease (e.g. tuberculosis lumps). Adlib data is also routinely collected by the project, which involves recording any noteworthy behavior or activity (i.e. anything other than normal foraging behavior). Meerkat researchers are trained to recognize and interpret a wide range of behaviors, and to record them in a standardized format using handheld computers. Friends are not expected to record standard ad lib data – your staff partner will handle this. However, at busy times it can be difficult to enter accurate data and still keep an eye on the ongoing behaviours. At these times it is very useful to have an additional observer to keep track of the animals. Friends will be expected to collect additional data, independently from
project staff. Members of each team will be helping to collect data on cooperative behavior, weights and fecal samples in meerkat groups.

2.3 Day 1 - Arrival

The Friends group will be met by KMP staff at Upington airport, flight number SA 8767 from Johannesburg, late in the morning. You will have time for some shopping in Upington to stock up on goodies (it will be the last decent shop you’ll see for almost two weeks!) before you are driven to the reserve (3-4 hrs). You may see a few dassies (similar to groundhogs, but related to elephants), ostriches or springboks on your way to the farm, but it’s not too bad if you doze off for a while after the long flight... Arriving at the reserve in the afternoon, you will be shown to your rondavel, and be introduced to the farm, staff, and security and research procedures. If time permits, you can have a first stroll around the farm before dinner.

Friends will be transported to and from the study groups and around the reserve in an air-conditioned four-wheel-drive vehicle seating seven people; there is a trailer for your luggage. The journey between Upington and KRR (250 kilometers/155 miles) takes approximately 3.5 hours and consists mainly of gravel roads.

2.4 Days 2 to 13 – Meerkat work

The Friends will spend the days in the field, observing meerkats in the morning (approx. 6:00 to 11 am) and late afternoon (approx. 3 to 6 pm). In groups of two to three Friends, you join a volunteer/researcher who will take you to the meerkat group. You will participate in the research, either by working with the volunteer to support him or her with role calls, weighing procedures, GPS tracking, and above all ad-lib sampling, or else by conducting optional observation tasks like foraging of pup focals. But there will also be plenty of time to just enjoy the meerkats, take pictures, or discuss meerkat behaviour (and much more) with the volunteer.

Once the meerkats leave the burrow, you will follow them while they forage – most of the time at slow pace, but it may be that you’ll have to run to keep up with them after an IGI, or climb over a fence after they used a tunnel under the fence. Be prepared for a fair bit of walking, or even exercise!

Lunch will be back at the farm house, followed by a few hours at your leisure - you can go for wildlife walks, read, chat with other Friends or researchers, or just relax before you resume your meerkat observations in the afternoon. There is no specific programme organised for Friends in between the morning and afternoon meerkat session; your time off can be anything between 3 and up to 9 hrs – so bring a good book or two, or your laptop to sort pictures etc.

All Friends meet again for dinner. On some evenings, you will be joined by the project manager, volunteers or independent researchers (PhD students) for short lectures about
their research subject, or to just spend the evening together. Other evening activities include sundowners on Big Dune, or night game drives through the reserve, to get a glimpse of the clandestine, but equally interesting Kalahari nightlife.

Sunday is traditionally the day off for the researchers. They will do morning and evening weights and role calls, but won’t follow the group while they forage. You can join them for the weights and be with the meerkats, but you may as well enjoy a day at your leisure, sleep in, do laundry, go for a walk, play volleyball or soccer with the researchers, etc. etc.

Excursions to the local community (school visit, library visit, basic shopping), or other activities can be arranged on demand, though it will be in stead of a meerkat visit. Other organised activities, including day trips to places of interest, can be organised.

2.5 Unguided walk at the reserve

During your time off, e.g. on a Sunday, you can go for an unguided walk. A guide to a GPS-based itinerary to famous Meerkat Manor sites, but also including local flora (and maybe fauna) is available.

2.6 Last day – Return to Upington

It's time to get used to civilisation again, far from the sands of the Kalahari. You will be brought to Upington airport in time to catch your flight home; the earliest flight you can catch on that day is the SA 8768 flight to Johannesburg. You will be informed about the exact schedule with your booking, so that you can schedule your return flight accordingly.

3. Practicalities

3.1 Before you leave

3.1.1 Passport Information

All visitors to South Africa must be in possession of a passport valid for at least six months past the date of entry and which must contain at least two consecutive blank (unstamped) pages. You may be refused entry if you do not comply with these requirements.

3.1.2 Visa Information

At the time of printing, South Africa does not require visas from tourists originating from the United States, the European Community, Japan, or Australia. Upon entry into South Africa, visitors from these countries will be granted a temporary visitor’s permit allowing them to stay (but not work) in the country for 90 days. Citizens of other countries should check with a travel or visa agency for specific visa and entry requirements.
3.1.3 Travel medical insurance

Travel medical and emergency evacuation insurance is NOT covered in the Friends visit contribution, and is at the responsibility of the participant.

For a trip to the park we strongly suggest an air rescue insurance, since road transport to the next hospital can take up to 4 hrs. If you have an air rescue insurance, please check if South Africa is covered.

Companies offering such insurance can be found by googling the terms “travel medical insurance”.

3.1.4 Cancellation insurance

Cancellation insurance is NOT covered in the Friends visit contribution, and is at the responsibility of the participant. Please review the cancellation policy in chapter 4.2.2.

Companies offering such insurance can be found by googling the terms “cancellation insurance”.

3.1.5 Packing considerations

Please refer to the Earthwatch Briefing document, chapter 12, and the expedition packing checklist in its appendix, for further details.

3.1.6 Other Advice / Information

- **Electricity**: 220/230 volts, 50 Hz, large three-prong plug
- **Time zone**: GMT +2
- **Language**: There are 11 official languages in South Africa, though the project will be conducted in English and most people you encounter will speak fluent English.
- **Local currency**: South African Rand (ZAR). See the International SOS website (above) and www.xe.com/ucc for currency information and exchange rates.
- **Personal funds**: Upington Airport does offer an ATM, but it may be out of service…. So it is better to get local currency before you arrive. Both Johannesburg and Cape Town International Airports offer foreign exchange services. Spending money is recommended for the purchase of personal drinks/snacks and last minute supplies in Upington prior to departure for the study site, although a re-supply visit to the small town of Vanzylsrus may be possible during the expedition. Cash will also be required for any out-of-pocket expenses while on the project (e.g. private phone calls). Major credit cards are accepted at many of Upington’s stores, but cash is recommended. Cash machines/ATMs are available in Upington but not at the field site or in Vanzylsrus.
- **Calling codes**: 27 (country code), 53 (Vanzylsrus city code), 54 (Upington city code), 11 (Johannesburg city code). When making calls from within South Africa, drop the country code (27) and dial 0 before the number.
- **Emergency number in South Africa**: 112
- **Checking luggage**: Note that if you will be taking an international flight that has one or more connections within South Africa, it will be necessary to collect any checked bags at the airport where you first arrive in the country. After proceeding through Customs, you will have to recheck your luggage before flying on to your final destination. Please note that the checked baggage allowance for South African Airlink is 20kg /44 lb for Economy flights – this may be lower than your international flight. The fee for excess baggage is low compared to other airports (approx. 30 ZAR per kilogram) however.
3.2 How to get there

There are daily flights by South African Airways through Johannesburg (JNB) and Cape Town (CPT) to Upington (UTN). The project site is 3.5 hrs by car from Upington Airport. You will be informed about flight details with your booking confirmation.

3.3 Accommodation

Friends and project staff will reside on the Gannavlakte premises within the reserve. Friends will be accommodated individually in thatched, brick and mortar huts (rondavels) approximately four meters/13 feet in diameter. Each rondavel is supplied with electricity (220 volts, takes South African standard three-prong plugs) and Friends are welcome to bring adapters and chargers for cameras, etc. There are sinks with cold water in the rondavels, while flush toilets and hot showers are available in separate male and female ablation blocks. Each rondavel is equipped with bedding, towels, a fan, a small electric heater, an electric kettle, a desk and chair, and a reading lamp. It will be possible to wash laundry onsite. Although only single beds are available, rondavels can accommodate two single beds if couples so desire (please inform FKMP in advance).

3.4 Food

3.4.1 Meals on the farm

Most meals will be served at the accommodation site. In the first week a meal will be organized with the other researchers at the main farmhouse, and researchers will join volunteers for dinner throughout their stay. Breakfasts and lunches will be self-serve and dinners will be prepared by staff at the reserve. Volunteers are, however, requested to contribute to food preparation at the final barbecue. Below are examples of the foods you might expect in the field. Please bear in mind that variety depends on availability. This list is intended to provide a general idea of food types, but it is very important that volunteers be flexible.

- **Breakfast:** Muesli, toast, preserves, eggs (self-serve)
- **Lunch:** Sandwiches, salads, leftovers from previous meals (self-serve)
- **Dinner:** Pasta, fish, chicken, weekly barbecue, traditional dishes
- **Snacks:** If desired, you should purchase your own personal supply of snacks in Upington before departing for the study site. Fruit will usually be available at the farm.
- **Beverages:** Tea, coffee and juice concentrate will be freely available; if desired, personal supplies of alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and pure fruit juices should be purchased in Upington before departing for the study site.
3.4.2 Special Dietary Requirements

Please alert the FKMP to any special dietary requirements as soon as possible (e.g. diabetic, lactose intolerant, vegetarian, Halal, etc.). Accommodating special diets is not guaranteed and can be very difficult due to availability, location and local conditions.

Special note to vegans and strict vegetarians: Please be aware that it is often difficult to accommodate strict vegetarians and vegans. It will be possible to get meatless meals but vegans and strict vegetarians may have a problem avoiding animal products altogether. If this poses a problem, then participation on this Friends visit should be seriously reconsidered.

3.5 Health and safety

3.5.1 Health Statement

Important notice: Each participant is required to hand in a health statement completed by a physician, at least 30 days before the trip starts. Please contact your physician or travel clinic well in advance (about 3 months before the trip starts).

You find this health statement as attachment to this Friends Visit Quick Guide.

3.5.2 Inoculations

Routine immunisations for any travel to Southern Africa include DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus), polio, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella), hepatitis A and varicella (if you have not already had chicken pox). Please make sure that you have these up-to-date immunisations, and especially that your tetanus shot is current.

The following are recommendations only. Medical decisions are the responsibility of each participant. Note that health conditions around the world are constantly changing, so keep informed and consult your physician or a local travel health clinic for the latest health information for travelers. Please consult your physician for guidance on inoculations if you intend to travel to other parts of Southern Africa.

- Typhoid: Recommended for all travelers, as guided by your travel clinic
- Yellow Fever: Required if arriving from a yellow-fever-infected area
- Rabies*: Recommended for travelers who may have direct contact with animals and may not have access to medical care.
- Tuberculosis: If recommended by your physician. Meerkats are known carriers for bovine tuberculosis, and South Africa has one of the highest incidences of human tuberculosis worldwide; however, the risk of infection on this trip according to the itinerary is considered very low.

* Wild animals may carry infectious diseases and meerkats will occasionally bite the researchers who handle them. Volunteers will not handle the study animals, but being bitten is still a small possibility due to proximity to the meerkats. Therefore, it is recommended that volunteers be fully inoculated against rabies and tuberculosis, if recommended by your physician.
The rabies pre-exposure vaccination consists of three doses over a 28-day period. Please be sure to consult your physician or travel health clinic well in advance to ensure you have time for the full vaccination series, or a booster shot if you have been vaccinated before. Rabies is a fatal disease. Treatment after rabies exposure requires immediate care (within 24 hours), and this type of rapid response will not be available to volunteers on this project due to the remote locations. Pre-exposure vaccination does not eliminate the need for post-exposure medical attention and treatment, but it does provide additional protection against the disease in event of a delay in treatment. In addition, any bites or scratches should be immediately and thoroughly washed with soap and clean water and a topical povidone-iodine solution or ethanol.

Note: Malaria is NOT present at the research site, but it may be in other parts of Southern Africa.

3.6 A note to life at the farm

The Kalahari Meerkat Project is situated “in the bush”, a 3.5 to 4 hr drive from the next city. This seclusion, and one-ness with nature, is highly appreciated by many who come to the farm.

However, this also means that there is no other diversion than your fellows and nature. You will be part of a team with other Friends and the researchers for the full duration of your visit; there is no possibility to join later, or leave earlier. You will spend your entire days together; you will enjoy the meerkats and other highlights of your visit together, but you will also have to solve issues or problems as a team, should they arise.

Especially in the hot hours around noon, it’s usually siesta time for everyone. Researchers often spend this time with data entry and other chores, at Rus en Vrede farmhouse. Friends will spend this time back at Gannavale. There is no programme during this time, so you usually spend this time alone with a book, sorting photos, or doing your laundry, or in the company of the other Friends. Depending on the duration of your meerkat sessions, this time can sum up to up to 6 or 8 hours, on occasion. Also in the evenings, there is no set programme other than the dinner. You may be joined by one or two researchers on some of the evenings, but probably not all the time.

Furthermore, please note that life in the bush comes with a certain lack of creature comforts; a trip to the Kalahari is never a leisure luxury cruise. Bumpy roads, dust everywhere, the occasional power outage (or stolen phone lines), creepy-crawlies in your room – if this is not something you easily accept, then a Friends visit is maybe not the right thing for you.

3.7 What else to see & do before or after your visit

South Africa is a country of breathtaking beauty, for travellers interested in nature, wildlife, landscape, action sports, wine & dine, culture, history - it’s like a continent rolled into one country. Furthermore, the service standards are very high, making South Africa
a comfortable travel destination. It would be a pity to come to South Africa, and not see other parts of the country!

The area surrounding the Kalahari Meerkat Project is serviced by three major towns: Upington, Kuruman and Kathu. This area hosts many fabulous tourist attractions and activities including beautiful natural wonders such as the fresh water spring in Kuruman, Augrabies waterfalls, a raptor route for the bird enthusiasts, or the Kimberley diamond mine. In addition there are many adventure sports and tours offered by a variety of companies and game lodges. All of these attractions are accompanied by luxurious but affordable accommodation and catering set against the beauty of the Kalahari desert.

Other famous destinations in South Africa include:

• Cape Town, the Cape of Good Hope, Robben Island (the Alcatraz of Cape Town, where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated), and the winelands
• Kruger National Park, and a host of other national parks in various habitats, with their abundant wildlife.
• The Garden Route on the South-Eastern shoreline, including everything from golf courses, fresh oysters, and family hideouts to unspoilt wilderness in the Tsitsikamma forest.
• Durban and Kwa-Zulu Natal, for beach and diving holidays on the Indian ocean, with the chance to see the Big Five.
• And much more…

Please contact your travel agency to organise an extension of your stay in South Africa, or a neighbouring country like Namibia (deserts & wildlife), Botswana (wildlife), or Mocambique (beaches & diving). The FKMP is also glad to help you with suggestions.

4. Smallprint

4.1 What does the Friends visit contribution cover?

The cost of participation on the Friends visit, referred to as your contribution, covers the following:

• The programme and all activities at the KMP reserve led by KMP or FKMP staff.
• Transport from/to Upington airport, and all transport in between, in a Landcruiser reserved for the Friends.
• Meals and drinks (excluding alcoholic beverages and personal snacks) and accommodation at the KMP reserve.

Not included are, in addition to anything not mentioned above:

• Your travel to and from Upington.
• Visa; travel, health and cancellation insurance; vaccinations.
• Personal expenses and alcoholic beverages.
4.2 Payment and cancellation policy

4.2.1 Payment

• A down-payment of 10% of the Friends visit contribution is required to reserve your space in the team. This down-payment is non-refundable.
• Your place is confirmed once you receive the confirmation email from the FKMP.
• The full payment is due one month before the visit starts.
• All payments must be submitted in British Pounds (GBP).
• Down-payments can be invoiced via Paypal; the remainder of the contribution should be transferred by bank transfer.

4.2.2 Cancellation policy

• If you cancel your participation 60-30 days before the trip starts, a total of 50% of the Friends visit contribution will be due and retained by the FKMP, unless a stand-in participant is found.
• If you cancel your participation less than 30 days before the trip starts, a total of 100% of the Friends visit contribution will be due and retained by the FKMP, unless a stand-in participant is found.
• Any funds retained due to late cancellation will support the KMP research, and will be considered a charitable donation to the FKMP.
• If the Friends visit is to be cancelled by the FKMP or KMP, the full Friends visit contribution is reimbursed. Fees for travel arrangements or personal expenses are in the full responsibility of the participant and are not reimbursed by the FKMP.

4.3 Is the Friends visit contribution tax deductible?

Unfortunately, as the legal setup of non-profit tax-exempt organisations in multiple countries is very complex and expensive for a small venture like the FKMP, contributions are not tax-deductible as charitable contributions in all countries.

We will of course send you a receipt for your contribution, which you can use for tax matters, if tax laws in your country allow this. Such a receipt will be available after year end, or on request.

Please note however that the FKMP is organised as a nonprofit tax-exempt organisation under Swiss law and does not have to pay taxes on the money raised by contributions, thus maximizing the impact your money has for the KMP.

4.4 Can I be removed from a Friends visit?

The FKMP reserves the right to refuse reservations for the Friends visit, either if the applicant fails to meet the health requirements, or else if the Friend’s FKMP membership is terminated by the FKMP on the basis of Chapter 3 of the FKMP Terms of Use. All Friends visitors have to be active Friends of the Kalahari Meerkat Project at the time of
booking and during the visit.

The FKMP will support the right of the KMP management to send Friends away from a Friends visit, once in the field, should their behaviour compromise the safety, research objectives or general performance of the team.

Self misrepresentation in any way, including but not limited to age, health, intentions etc. will be grounds for rejection of reservations or dismissal from expeditions. In the case of self misrepresentation, Friends will not be eligible for a refund.

5. **Concluding remark**

Please feel free to contact the FKMP team under friends@kalahari-meerkats.com in case you have questions to your trip. Once you are a registered participant, you will get access to further information on the Friends site, including a small forum where you can get in touch with the other participants, to discuss your trip and preparation.
Appendix: Health Statement

Please show this section to your physician when he/she is completing your health statement. Be sure to discuss inoculation requirements with your physician well in advance of your departure date.

To the examining physician:
Your patient has volunteered to join a field research team that has specific physical demands of which you and your patient should be aware. We require your accurate evaluation of your patient’s ability to meet the conditions detailed below in order to safeguard his/her health and safety and ensure that he/she can participate fully and effectively.

Conditions of the Research Site

• Altitude 1,000 m/3,280 ft to 2,000 m/6,561 ft
• Rainfall 250 mm/14 in per year. Occasional short but strong thunderstorms in March.
• Temperature Range during the trip (March): 11°C/52°F at night to 39°C/12°F during the day. Rarely, temperatures can go up beyond 110°F during midday though.

Participants may be exposed to strong direct sunlight and either cold temperatures at night or very hot conditions at midday. People working in the reserve generally rest during the hottest time of day. Humidity is typically very low and nighttime temperatures are usually comfortable. The area gets around 250 millimeters/14 inches of rain a year, mostly falling in the summer months October to April, but occasional light showers can occur at other times of the year. The terrain consists mostly of sandy dunes covered in scrub.

Physical Demands

Participants MUST be prepared to walk with ease up to five kilometers/three miles per day across rolling, scrub-covered dune fields. Very importantly, participants MUST be able to run short distances in sandy, hilly terrain and MUST be able to climb over 3-4-meter/10-12-foot game fences in order to keep up with meerkat groups. Participants must be prepared to spend around 6-7 hours in the field per day in varying weather conditions, especially hot temperatures (above 110°F).

Below are the expected demands of the project, but please keep in mind that conditions may change and the project could potentially be more or less strenuous than the chart indicates.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Workload/Intensity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standing</td>
<td>While observing animals for up to 6 hours per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bending</td>
<td>While observing animals for up to 3 hours per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>While following animals for up to 3 hours per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>4-5 hours in the morning session and 2-3 hours in the afternoon session (5 km/3 mi total) with about 10 half-day sessions per trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying</td>
<td>6 kg/13 lb for 4-5 hours in the morning and 2-3 hours in the afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Climbing 3-4 m/10-12 ft wire fences to follow animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>Sitting in a car for up to 4 hours per day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Medical Conditions of Special Concern**

Volunteers should be in good health and physical condition, capable of walking up to five kilometers/three miles per day on sand and running after the meerkats for short periods when necessary. The degree of isolation associated with the project site along with the climatic conditions mean that volunteers with any potentially incapacitating illnesses (e.g. diabetes, heart conditions, epilepsy, depression, hemophilia, dizziness, etc.) would not be suited for this project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Concerns and Precautions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Condition that may require immediate medical attention</td>
<td>This project is not suitable for anyone with a severe or chronic condition (e.g. heart problem, diabetes, hemophilia, epilepsy, etc.) due to the remote location and distance from medical care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited mobility (e.g. knee, hip, ankle, back, etc. problems)</td>
<td>Volunteers must be able to walk on sand, climb high fences and run when necessary. Anyone who is in poor physical condition or has otherwise limited mobility may not be able to participate. Speak with your physician and take appropriate precautions (e.g. wear knee braces).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to sun/heat</td>
<td>If you have any condition that might be affected by increased sun exposure or if you are sensitive to heat, please consult a physician. Be aware that many common prescriptions can increase your sensitivity to sun and heat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Emergencies in the Field**

The medical/emergency procedure will vary according to the particular emergency situation. There will always be a fully fueled vehicle available for emergency evacuation to the closest hospital in Kuruman or Upington. Where evacuation to a hospital is required, telephone communication will be made immediately with the hospital and a rendezvous will be arranged (either with the ambulance and medical personnel en route or at the hospital itself).
At least one member of the field staff will be trained in Emergency Scene Management, CPR, and artificial resuscitation, and will deal with life-threatening situations to the best of his/her ability while attempting to get the victim to professional medical help as soon as possible. Minor injuries and ailments (such as cuts, small burns, abrasions, etc.) can be treated onsite.

**Proximity to Medical Care**
While at the farm:

- Nearest hospital: Kuruman Community Hospital, Tel: + 26 53 712 0044
- Distance: Approximately 3 hours’ drive from the farm
- Nearest doctor/clinic Vanzylsrus Clinic (basic treatment; doctor available only once a month); Distance: 25 km/16 mi (half-hour’s drive) from the reserve

**Potential Hazards**

**Transport:** As with any field project, the main risks are associated with getting to and from the study site. South African road conditions are considered good, particularly in urban areas. However, roads in the study sites and surrounding areas are dirt/gravel and may be very bumpy and either dusty or muddy and slippery depending on weather conditions. Road hazards include fast and reckless drivers, livestock and wildlife, rains, poor or no lighting and banditry. Driving at night is avoided. Traffic moves on the left side of the road. Participants will be transported to, from and within the study site by experienced project staff in a four-wheel-drive vehicle.

**Walking/Hiking/Climbing:** Extended periods are spent in the field with the meerkats, and participants will be expected to walk with the groups for a minimum of 5 hours every day. Sometimes neighboring groups cross paths, and during these interactions, participants will more than likely have to run to keep up with the meerkats. Fence-climbing is also not uncommon, as the meerkats do sometimes move through the game fences and onto the roads. The terrain you will be working in is often hilly and sandy, so participants must be fit enough to maintain a brisk pace in these sorts of conditions.

**Snakes and scorpions:** When out in the field, it is not unusual to encounter various species of venomous and non-venomous snakes. The most common venomous species are the Cape cobra and the puff adder; the bites of both can be fatal and require hospitalization. Participants are briefed on the correct procedures for dealing with bites, and measures are in place to deal with such emergencies. Four species of scorpion also occur here, two of which are dangerous. Scorpions are often seen when walking around the farmhouse in the evenings, though you’ll see meerkats eating them by day. It is a project rule that closed-toe shoes must be worn at night, which greatly reduces the chances of being stung or bitten. Snakes and scorpions are far less abundant in winter months.

**Climate/Weather:** The Kalahari is hot in the summer and heatstroke and dehydration are risks, especially since participants will be spending a good deal of time outdoors. You are encouraged to take at least two liters of water into the field and to make sure to stay hydrated. A sun hat, sunscreen and sunglasses are also strongly recommended. In winter, mornings spent waiting at the burrow for the meerkats to emerge can be very
chilly. Participants will also do a night drive in an open vehicle on one evening. A wool hat and warm jacket are a must.

**Disease:** Diseases found in South Africa include malaria, dengue fever, typhoid, rabies, polio, trypanosomiasis, schistosomiasis, hepatitis, tuberculosis, and a relatively high incidence level of HIV/AIDS. Diseases associated with meerkats include rabies, tetanus and tuberculosis.

**Personal security:** While most visits to South Africa are trouble-free, crime can be a problem, particularly in cities such as Johannesburg. If you travel into downtown Johannesburg or Cape Town, use sensible precautions: avoid carrying money conspicuously (e.g. in bulging wallets or bum-bags/fanny packs); avoid walking alone whenever possible and ignore persons who approach to solicit for donations; avoid wearing jewelry, “tourist outfits” such as safari shorts, jackets, cameras and binoculars, and very short skirts or shorts, tank tops, etc. (more conservative clothing is recommended); always take a taxi when going out after dark; and select and use ATMs with caution.

The project area and the park are generally considered secure, though incidents of petty crime occur in the region.
Physician’s statement

To the examining physician:
You herewith confirm that you have evaluated your patient’s

(Patient’s name) _____________________________________________________________

ability to meet the conditions detailed in this Health statement, in order to safeguard
his/her health and safety and ensure that he/she can participate fully and effectively.

☐ The patient meets the conditions set forth in this statement, and can participate from
medical viewpoint.
☐ The patient does not meet the conditions set forth in this statement, and should not
participate from medical viewpoint.
☐ The patient does not fully meet the conditions set forth in this statement, but can
participate from medical viewpoint. He/she can participate under the following
conditions/precautions:

Name of Physician: _______________________________________________________

Location of Physician: ____________________________________________________

Date of examination: _______________ Signature: ____________________________

Please insert your initials on each page of this Health Statement.
This table needs to be filled in by the physician in case the patient does not travel with an official vaccination certificate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Immunization status</th>
<th>Last inoculation date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus)</td>
<td>□ ok □ not ok</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Polio</td>
<td>□ ok □ not ok</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)</td>
<td>□ ok □ not ok</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hepatitis A</td>
<td>□ ok □ not ok</td>
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<tr>
<td>Varicella</td>
<td>□ ok □ not ok</td>
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<td>Typhoid</td>
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<td>Yellow Fever</td>
<td>□ ok □ not ok</td>
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<td>Rabies</td>
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<td>Tuberculosis</td>
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Other comments by the physician:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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