



# VA32 Responsible Travel Policy

## Aims

Our mission is to provide proactive support to rural education, social transformation and conservation initiatives on the Wild Coast of South Africa, while working in partnership with existing organizations, private sector and government. We are passionate about responsible tourism and it has been at the root of our organisation since its inception. We understand the impact of tourism on the environment and the wider community, which is why we are committed to our Responsible Travel Policy and sustainable development. Working together with volunteers and local communities, we are continuously seeking different ways to increase the positive impact of our projects.

## Making a difference in Chintsa

Over the past 10 years Volunteer Africa 32 Degrees South (VA32) has worked with a number of different community partners and organisations.

The pre-arrival information provided to volunteers gives an overview of how their chosen project relates to its context in South Africa's historical and current political setting, culture. Documentation also details project portfolios, information on Chintsa as a destination and contact details of past volunteers who have experienced the project and the country. It is our intention for volunteers to look deeper into South African history and culture before departure from their home country.

Upon arrival, volunteers receive an "on the ground" orientation from our staff which includes a talk about the surrounding history and context of South Africa, a walking tour of our local projects. During their time on project volunteers are given the opportunity and encouraged to take part in community led initiatives which are well established. This includes the Youth Sports Development Project and putting time in at the community soup kitchen. The sports sessions are open to children from 3 to 18 years of age, with volunteers leading different activities such as soccer training, cricket and sports on the beach. This is a great opportunity to positively engage the young people of Chintsa who live in a challenging environment that contains many socio-economic challenges found in typically developing countries.

VA32 was the first, and is still one of only two volunteer organisations, to be Fair Trade accredited. This means we are audited on an annual basis by an external, independent best practice and standards accredited organisation, Fair Trade Tourism.

## Environmental

VA32 is committed to sustainable tourism and as part of this commitment we ensure our operations are run in a way that is sensitive to the environment. As a water scarce region, minimising water use is vital and signage and talks reinforce this with volunteers, the national energy supply is unable to deliver consistently leading us to run our house and office on energy efficient systems. In our office and volunteer house we have an active reusing and recycling system, recycled items such as plastic bottles, bottle lids, cardboard boxes and containers go directly into our schools projects as resources for arts projects. Through collaboration with partnership schools and local communities we aim for



### VOLUNTEER AFRICA 32° SOUTH

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activities that have direct or indirect environmental benefits, such as improved access to drinking water through rain water harvesting initiatives, utilisation of biogas for school kitchens and improved waste management systems for healthier living. This commitment to our environment is reinforced through our Wild Coast Schools Project where the curriculum has been developed along environmental education principles.

### **Supporting the local economy**

At VA32 we believe that local is lekker! We have a historic relationship with the community of Chintsa, and its wider area. Volunteers experience a small corner of lively South African life and culture, whilst contributing to sustainable initiatives that support development in the Chintsa village. We actively encourage volunteers to engage and support the local community and its small businesses. An established grass roots NGO is used as the vehicle to manage donations from volunteers, ensuring that these are directed to the most relevant beneficiaries. The organisation uses locally employed guides, supports local craft sellers, engages in local rural homestays and adds value to locally run restaurants which are important sources of employment in the area.

### **Traveller's code of conduct**

1. Research South Africa before you arrive, however small it will help you out, whether it is a few words in Xhosa or learning about the work of Nelson Mandela.
2. Local is lekker! Please support locally made crafts, our local soup kitchen initiative and our locally run restaurants. Investment into our little corner of paradise is key to its future.
3. Be respectful of local customs and traditions when you are here with us.
4. Be photograph sensitive - please use your initiative about whether it is appropriate to take photographs of adults or children. If in doubt ask permission.
5. Be resource aware - we are water scarce - so please take care when taking showers, washing dishes and doing laundry. Water is a precious resource!
6. Please do not give handouts. The most important gift you can give is your time. Donations are managed by the VA32 schools co-ordinator and local Non-Profit Organisation Friends of Chintsa who will ensure that any monetary or donation in kind will support a well-managed, transparent local project which benefits the local community.
7. T.I.A (This Is Africa!)...Please be open and flexible with your expectations in South Africa. At times we experience challenges such as planned electricity shortages, water shortages and other challenges. VA32 will do our best to ensure that your volunteer experience is as fulfilling as possible - it's always possible to "make a plan".
8. You are a role model for the children and young people that we work with. Please bear this mind when working on our projects. You are a professional representative of our organisation while you are here and all your actions must convey this clearly.
9. Be inquisitive - share your experience and learn from the community that you're working in.
10. Abide by our dress code – casual but with respect to our culture (no overly revealing clothing, shoes to project, neat). We are relaxed, but respectful and professional in our appearance.
11. Be enthusiastic and embrace your daily demands on project.
12. Be punctual for project.
13. Smile and make others smile with you.

“South Africa is not looking for charity. It is important for you take away more than you put in, and the more you put in, the more you will take away with you.”



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