

## **Elephant Sanctuary – The Craggs – Plettenberg bay**

*Situated in a beautiful part of The Craggs, Plettenberg Bay - in the middle of the scenic and famous Garden Route, is The Elephant Sanctuary. We are directly next to Monkeyland and the new Birds of Eden sanctuary; three world class products in one stop.*

**Welcome to the Elephant Sanctuary – The Craggs – Plettenberg Bay – an elephant experience for life!**

**The Elephant Sanctuary group has three sanctuaries – Hartebeestpoort dam just outside Pretoria and Gauteng, Plettenberg Bay in the Garden Route and Hazyview in the Lowveld.**

**The Elephant Sanctuary provides a “halfway house” or temporary home for young African elephants in need of a home. The Elephant Sanctuary is the only elephant sanctuary in South Africa that provides in this way for elephants and it is our vision to release all the elephants back into a semi wilderness area once they are older and experienced enough to fend for themselves in this type of environment.**

### **More about the Elephant Sanctuary**

**The Plettenberg bay elephant herd consists of five female elephants and one young male. This is a very well balanced family structure and forms part of the reason why we have such a happy and relaxed herd of elephants. The elephants are exercised and stimulated daily, which provides a firm foundation for trust and bonding between the elephants, their handlers and visiting guests.**

**The Elephant Sanctuary hosts a unique and fully guided educational program that sets itself apart from anything else that South Africa has previously had on offer in terms of elephant interaction and touching elephants. Guest numbers are limited to ensure personal attention and maximum elephant interaction for each guest which makes this a truly memorable and enriching experience.**

**Visitors can learn more about elephants habits, behaviour, different personalities and anatomy through up close and personal interaction. You also have the opportunity to touch, feed and walk “trunk in hand” with these magnificent animals.**

**Walking with elephants at the Elephant sanctuary is unique to the sanctuary as you are not just walking with or alongside the elephants, you actually walk trunk in hand with the elephants. It is similar to walking hand in hand with a child or a loved one – the only difference is the other hand is a trunk!**

**The main focus of the Elephant Sanctuary is educating the public about all aspects of elephants and elephant husbandry. If we discuss the elephant ear during the educational program or anatomy discussion, for example, you will get the opportunity to actually touch the elephants ear and get a close look at the smoothness of the skin on the back of the ear compared to the rough skin on the outside of the ear.**

**We also offer a short elephant back ride – a privilege historically reserved for kings and knights. The Elephant Sanctuary does their elephant back riding program in a controlled environment to make it a safe yet exciting experience. The elephant back riding is done bare back to enhance your contact with the elephant. It is a short ten to fifteen minute ride – so it is more a short experience rather than a long African elephant back “safari”. An**

**African elephant back safari is more where you use an elephant as a mode of transport (similar to a Land Rover) to view other animals in a wildlife area.**

**The Elephant sanctuary recognise the fact that if you have any animals in captivity, that it is a huge responsibility and obligation to ensure the well being and welfare of such animals. We recognise the fact that any animal in captivity should be free from pain, injury and disease. We believe that they should be able to express normal pattern of behaviour similar to what they would express through their social structures in the wild.**

**They should be stress free and their nutritional and mental needs should be fulfilled and we ensure that their cognitive stimulation is cared for. We recognise the fact that due to their size and strength, managing elephants in a captive environment is challenging and very hands on day and night. For all the above reasons we have in our employ of the most experienced, knowledgeable and dedicated staff working with the elephants.**

**Elephants in captivity have always been and will always be a controversial issue. The Elephant Sanctuary, as responsible elephant owners, constantly strive to improve the relationship between the elephants, their living environment, health and emotional conditions and also with the animal welfare organisations and other experts in the field of elephants in captivity. The Elephant Sanctuary has always had a very professional relationship with most of the various different Animal welfare organisations.**

**The Elephant Sanctuary is proud that it has never removed wild elephants from out of their home bush environment for any purposes. The Elephant Sanctuary took responsibility and care for the elephants after they had been removed from their natural environment by other people for various reasons.**

**The elephant sanctuary stands against all forms of animal cruelty including the chaining of elephants... We are against and condone "chain training" methods as they are cruel and completely outdated. We do not need any form of restraint or tethering, even if we have to do veterinary care to the elephants, which indicates that our training methods are such that it does not cause stress to the elephants at all and that they have 100% trust in what we do to and around them. We do not use our guides / prodders for any other reason than to communicate direction or a command to the elephant. This is done in a gentle and soft manner. All our training is done through positive reinforcement in an ethically accepted method of the highest standards.**

**We also never separate our elephants during periods of training. Elephants are herd animals and need to be in constant communication through touch, smell, sight and sound for their emotional wellbeing and comfort.**

**The training of elephants is based on trust and positive reinforcement – a reward system that not only works very successfully with elephants, but with all other animals as well. This is very successful because elephants are such highly intelligent mammals that they can learn and adapt to routines and interactions repeated to them with plenty of rewards when successful.**

**Positive reinforcement training also provides mental stimulation to the elephant and is fun for the elephants and trainer alike. Again, trust is the main factor between an elephant and his trainer.**

**We do not deprive our elephants from sleep or water or food for whatever reason.**

**The elephant get the best available veterinarian care when ever needed. We also give them**

**a medical check up every year. We believe that prevention is better than cure and make sure that with plenty of stimulation, exercise and a well balanced diet with all the necessary trace elements, minerals and vitamins. This way an elephant require very little veterinary care.**

**The elephants are exercised and stimulated daily, which provides a firm foundation for trust and bonding between the elephants, their handlers and visiting guests. The early morning cognitive stimulation sessions also provide an intellectual challenge for the elephants and strengthen trust and bonds between the elephant and his trainer. The early morning stimulation programs are also used to observe the elephant's wellbeing.**

**Our stimulation exercises are properly researched. The exercises do not just stimulate the elephants emotionally, but also improve their physical wellbeing and bowel stimulation. They have the opportunity to bond and interact with other elephants and trainers throughout the day, have access to water, food and mud baths.**

**The elephants at the Elephant Sanctuary have a properly balanced diet. We are constantly doing research and analysing the micro organisms and enzymes in the dung of our elephants to see if they lack any nutrients and minerals. This research on the dung, once completed, will also give us a further confirmation of the elephant's emotional and physical wellbeing.**

**They have non competitive access to freshly cut browse, saplings and branches – which is not only a source of food, but also stimulate the elephant because it takes time and skill to debark the browse before they eat it. Their natural feeding time in the wild is recognised and we try and maintain a similar structure feeding pattern at the sanctuary.**

**The Plettenberg Bay / Craggs area is inundated with alien species of trees and shrubs. Some of the invader species are from Australian origin and were declared noxious weeds, like the Black Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) and Port Jackson (*Acacia saligna*) trees, both of whom are very aggressive invaders. Both these trees are favourite food for elephants and the Elephant Sanctuary cuts up to 150 saplings per day as feed for the elephants.**

**The elephants strip the bark off the branches we cut for them and the left over wood are collected daily and delivered to the local community for use as firewood.**

**As part of the constant research done at the Elephant Sanctuary, we are also busy with an elephant “body language” study. The results of this study will be published in our newsletter.**

**The Elephant sanctuary does “in house” training for all their elephant handlers, guides and reception staff. The handlers are taught to work with the elephants in a similar way you would work with young children. We use the same methods and principals you would use to raise your child. We teach the handlers that you do not have to raise your voice or use any force to get the elephants to adhere to your commands. An authoritative voice command without raising your voice will give you better all over results when working with elephants.**

**The Elephant Sanctuary has the best and most modern night stable facilities available and the stables have been designed with the elephant's health, safety and wellbeing first and foremost in mind. All the stables are designed in such a way as to provide comfort, fresh air and access to food and clean water. The night stables have enough bedding on the ground and ample space for the elephant to move freely.**

**The stables is also designed so that the elephant have contact and access to one another during stabling, yet not in such a manner where the less dominant elephants are being bullied by the older elephants.**

**The stables are designed in such a manner to ensure proper cleaning without the build up of bacteria and also proper safe human access to elephants in a safe manner.**

**We recognise the elephant family structures and dynamics and allow for natural hierarchies and bonding to form and respect those hierarchies and matriarchal societies.**

**We maintain and abide by the “five freedoms” as prescribed in the PAZAAB Code of Ethics Of June 2007**

- 1. Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions and treatment that avoid suffering.**
- 2. Freedom from injury, disease and pain by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.**
- 3. Freedom from hunger and thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.**
- 4. Freedom to express most normal patterns of behaviour by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animals own kind.**
- 5. Freedom from thermal and physical discomfort by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.**

**The safety of our guests is also of paramount importance. The message we want to guests to take home is that of an educational experience where they learn and observe through touch, see, smell and spending up close and personal time with the elephants. The program teach our guests a broader and better understanding of elephants and elephant conservation, their dynamics and elephant anatomy and improve their overall knowledge of the history and future of elephants in Africa.**

**We are a family orientated business catering for the young and the old. We believe that the positive energy from an elephant gets transferred to people and makes a major contribution towards the wellbeing of people.**

**The sanctuary is very child friendly – relaxed yet fun and educational - and offers nappy changing facilities, a playground, jungle gym and push bikes.**

**Children are the future leaders and decision makers of tomorrow and they need to be educated about the fine balance between the eco-friendly co-existence of wildlife and human populations, conservation and at the same time about elephants and their future in Africa in general. There is no other way to make a stronger awareness as well as a long lasting memory than through up close and personal contact and interaction with an animal as majestic and impressive as an African Elephant. They will be totally fascinated by the pure size of the elephants and to be able to get close to them, learn about their habits and behavior and walk with them.**

**We regularly take school groups on educational programs and bring a strong conservation message to their attention.**

**An experience at the Elephant Sanctuary for children is not just outdoor play – it is considered “active play” and the children will make use of many much needed gross motor**

**skills and important outdoor fun time while at the sanctuary. At the same time the close encounter with the elephants will strengthen the bond and trust relationship between parent and child. The educational programs are relaxed yet fun for children of all ages.**

**In the fast living world we live in today it is important for children to get in touch with nature. The hour long educational program offered by the Elephant Sanctuary provides exactly that. It is also important for children to develop an appreciation and understanding for nature and a genuine respect for our planet, during the positive interaction with these magnificent creatures, children certainly learn that. See "Survival guide for mothers and mothers to be" magazine – April / May 2008 edition.**

**Our guests are made fully aware of the details and information of the educational programs and have to sign an indemnity before participating in the program. We always use the correct elephant handler to elephant ratio for maximum guest safety and elephant comfort.**

**The elephants are exercised and stimulated daily, which provides a firm foundation for trust and bonding between the elephants, their handlers and visiting guests.**

**We do properly researched stimulation exercises on a daily basis with the elephants. The exercises do not just stimulate the elephants emotionally, but also improve their physical wellbeing and bowel stimulation.**

**As part of the constant research done at the Elephant Sanctuary, we are also busy with an elephant "body language" study. The results of this study will be published in our newsletter.**

**The Elephant sanctuary is used often as a conference venue by animal healers and animal psychologists as an animal telepathic conference. This is held here at the Elephant Sanctuary every year specifically because of the excellent physical and emotional condition of the elephants. A conference / course of this nature would not be successful if the elephants were not relaxed, happy and properly stimulated in their controlled environment.**

**The Elephant Sanctuary is wheelchair friendly and also has wheelchairs available for any guests who may require a wheel chair. The Elephant Sanctuary also has wheelchair access bathrooms.**

**The Elephant sanctuary does "in house" training for all their elephant handlers, guides and reception staff. The handlers are taught to work with the elephants in a similar way you would work with and teach young children. We use the same methods and principals you would use to raise your child. We teach the handlers that you do not have to raise your voice or use any force to get the elephants to adhere to your commands. An authoritative voice command without raising your voice will give you better all over results when working with elephants.**

**The Plettenberg bay sanctuary sets aside one morning program per week free of charge for educational programs for schools from the area as well as a free educational program for old age homes and the elderly once a month.**

**The Elephant Sanctuary – The Crags has a well stocked curio shop and provides free teas, coffee, water and juice to all guests. We have a wheelchair access bathroom and a kiddie change room. We also have a "kiddie corner" where the children can play while mom and dad enjoy a cup of coffee.**

**You have a choice between the following elephant educational programs at the Elephant Sanctuary – Plettenberg Bay:**

**1: The one hour Trunk-in-Hand elephant educational program**

An experienced guide will introduce you to the elephants, and you will learn about their backgrounds, behaviours, personalities and more while being able to touch, feel, feed, interact and walk trunk-in-hand with the elephants. Suitable for all ages. The program lasts approximately one hour and the rate is R125, - for children (3-12yrs) and R250, - for adults.

The times for the one hour Trunk-in-Hand elephant educational programs are as follows:

am - every hour on the hour: 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12

pm - 13:30, 14:30 with the last one at 15:30

\*\*\*\*\*Please note our last program of the day departs at 15h30\*\*\*\*\*

**2: Elephant-back Ride**

This includes the full Trunk-in-Hand educational program followed up by an approximately 10 to 15 minute ride - a privilege historically reserved for kings! The Elephant Sanctuary does their elephant back riding program in a controlled environment to make it a safe yet exciting experience. The elephant back riding is done bare back to enhance your contact with the elephant. It is more a short riding experience rather than an African elephant back safari. Long pants and closed shoes are recommended. The rates are R295, - for children (8-12yrs) and R595, - for adults. Please note children have to be a minimum of 8 years old in order to ride. Also note that we do not take any responsibility for any direct or indirect injury resulting from this activity.

\*\*\*\*\*Please note our last program of the day departs at 15h30\*\*\*\*\*

**3: Early morning Elephant Brush Downs**

During this very special interactive program you take part in the morning or afternoon grooming and brush down of the elephants. Afterwards you join the training- and stimulation program the handlers do with the elephants every day. All this is followed up by the Educational Trunk-in-Hand program. The duration is approximately 75 minutes and the rates are R150, - for children (3-12yrs) and R325, - for adults. Booking essential.

**4: Afternoon Sundowner Elephant Experience**

This program includes all the other programs for the full Elephant Experience: The Trunk-in-Hand educational program, the Elephant Back Ride and followed by the elephant brush down program. The duration is approximately 90 minutes and the rate is R320, - for children (8-12yrs) and R670, - for adults. Children have to be a minimum of 8 years old in order to ride. The rate for children under the age of 8 is R150. Please note that we do not take any responsibility for any injury whatsoever caused by an elephant back riding activity.

\*\*\*\*\*Please note our last program of the day departs at 15h30\*\*\*\*\*

**How to get to the Elephant Sanctuary – The Crags – Plettenberg bay – Garden Route: -**

The Elephant Sanctuary – The Crags – Plettenberg bay on the Garden Route is two minutes from the N2. We are situated 19 km East of Plettenberg Bay (towards Port Elizabeth); take the turn-off to your right called 'Kurland Village'. There are also signs towards the Elephant Sanctuary, Monkeyland, Teniqua and Birds of Eden. Follow the signs and you will find us just down the road. ☺

## **2009 – 2010 RATES – THE CRAGS – PLETTENBERG BAY**

### **The 1 hour Trunk-In-Hand Elephant Educational Program**

<b>Adults</b>	<b>R275-00</b>
<b>Children (4-14 years)</b>	<b>R150-00</b>

### **The Elephant Brushdown**

<b>Adults</b>	<b>R350-00</b>
<b>Children (4-14 years)</b>	<b>R175-00</b>

### **The Elephant Back Ride**

<b>Adults</b>	<b>R650-00</b>
<b>Children (8-14 years)</b>	<b>R350-00</b>

### **The Sundowner Elephant Experience**

<b>Adults</b>	<b>R725-00</b>
<b>Children (8-14 years)</b>	<b>R375-00</b>

*We also have the Snake Sanctuary and Teniqua Wildlife awareness centre a stone throw away from us. Other interesting must see / visits close by is the Bramon wine estate restaurant, Storms river Bungie, the Tsitsikamma region with its many adventure activities and the best whale watching in the Garden route in Plettenberg bay.*

## **Did you know – 25 interesting facts about elephants?**

### **Did you know...**

- 1. The elephant's foot is constructed in such a way that the animal is virtually walking on tip-toe, with a tough, fatty pad of connective tissue for the sole.**
- 2. Elephants tusks are overgrown incisors protruding from the upper jaw, they grow at a rate of 15 – 18cm a year depending on their diet.**
- 3. Jan Van Riebeeck's first mention of ivory in his journal is a record of three tusks bartered from Hottentot hunters for 250g of tobacco.**
- 4. The skeletal frame of an elephant can allow the elephant to stand upright on its hind legs.**
- 5. Elephants wear down 6 sets of molars in a lifetime.**
- 6. Elephant herds consist of females usually related, calves and young bull calves. The herd is led by usually the eldest female which is called the Matriarch.**
- 7. Bull calves get kicked out of the herd when they reach about 12 years of age to join the bull "bachelor" herds or to become a solitary bull. Bull herds will only join a female herd when it is mating season, or at a waterhole.**
- 8. The average speed for charging elephants is about 35 – 40km per hour.**
- 9. A calf will only learn how to use its trunk properly at about 6 months of age.**
- 10. Elephants are known to display a deep sensitivity and awareness of death and will return repeatedly to carcasses and skeletons of deceased herd members, running their trunks gently over their remains as though paying their respects.**
- 11. Elephants spend as many as 18 – 20 hours a day feeding and drinking.**
- 12. An elephant generally sleeps for only three or four hours a day. Very occasionally they may lie down for an hour or so, but mostly they take short, cumulative naps, usually standing upright or leaning against a tree or termite mound.**
- 13. A fully grown adult bull's tusks can extend to 3m and weigh as much as 100kg each. The heaviest recorded tusk weighed 102.7kg.**
- 14. Like man, elephants are usually left or right "handed" and will use one tusk almost exclusively.**

15. Elephants have a highly developed social structure, with family bonds, love, loyalty and intelligence.
16. African elephants have 4 hoof nails on their front feet and 3 nails on the hind leg.
17. The elephant brain can weigh up to 4,8kg depending on the age of the elephant.
18. The small intestine is 82 feet long; the large intestine is 21 feet, and a further 13 feet for the rectum. That makes a total of 116 feet of intestine that the food has to pass through and the digestion of their food can take between 22-46 hours.
19. Elephants jaws can crack open the thickest and hardest shells of fruits, releasing the seed kernels inside.
20. Elephants use a wide range of sounds to express their moods and feelings.
21. The gestation period in female elephants is 22 months and when the calf is born it can weigh between 100kg-120kg and stand about 85cm tall.
22. Another adaptation that the elephant has is its appendix, this organ is 5 feet long and its role is to process and breakdown proteins, starches and the simple and complex sugars that are found in its food. Larger than the stomach, this organ is where the majority of the intestinal bacteria that are required to breakdown the vegetable materials are located.
23. The bone structure of an elephant is similar to that of human beings, they have the same bone structure in their front legs as humans do in their arms including a wrist joint, and the same bones in back legs as humans in their legs including knee-cap and ankle, and even the shoulder blades are positioned in the same place as humans.
24. When standing on hind legs the kidneys are in the same position as that of a human being.
25. The elephant's memory surpasses that of humans.

## **Much asked questions and answers**

Question:

**I am frankly worried by the ever-increasing amount of so-called elephant experiences.**

**Elephant Sanctuary:** Yes, it is true that since we founded the Elephant Sanctuary in 1999, the number of elephants with different operators in RSA has increased from 25 elephants to over 120 animals in different operations. In the last two years alone over 30 elephants have been removed from the wild to meet the Safari industry's demand. The demand has been created primarily by game lodges who believe that elephant back safaris are the draw card to increasing their occupancies and creating a competitive edge in the market.

We too are not happy about this explosion of elephant operations for the following reasons: one is obviously that many new elephant operators don't understand the magnitude of their newly acquired "Safari edge with elephants" and secondly the concern for the long term welfare of these elephants as they become more and more challenging and as the elephants physiological and social needs change.

A large percentage of the elephant operators have bought the "already trained" elephants from animal trainers/dealers and have not been part of the training process and therefore are not always totally familiar with what they are dealing with or how to adapt and re-strategise management their as and when required.

The Elephant Sanctuary has rescued 12 elephants from pending exports and hunts over the last 9 years. We have brought in each elephant into our sanctuaries and lived amongst them and got to understand them over 'time and built a relationship of trust. This does take a very long time and cannot be done overnight nor can it sped up without a negative long term effect on the elephants.

The Elephant Sanctuary does not sell, hire, rent or loan out any elephant irrespective of the price or size of the carrot.

Our animals are all destined to wild release

Question:

**Elephants are wild creatures. They should surely be experienced in the wild, in their wild state.**

**Elephant Sanctuary:** I certainly agree that elephants should be experienced in a wild environment; First and foremost we are passionate about elephant and agree that there is nothing more magnificent than an elephant in the wild. Unfortunately some elephants have been taken out of the wild for reasons beyond our comprehension or control and find themselves in undesirable situations or captive environments.

Where ever possible and with the funds we have been able to access we have been able to rescue elephants from exports to overseas zoos and elephant hunts or culls. We have got involved wherever it was not possible to release the animals back into the wild.

It is however our full intention and vision to release all our elephant back to the wild where and when possible. This is the one thing that sets us apart from most (if not all) other elephant owners in South Africa.

One of the most important factors of our management is the environment the elephants are kept in. We have three sanctuaries; each one has been carefully selected so that its natural environment is unspoilt and befitting elephants. Aesthetically correct but more so the climate, ecology needs to be right. All areas where we have established sanctuaries are areas that historically were home to elephants and where elephants have naturally occurred and roamed previously. All our elephants have access to large areas where they are able to be exercised and stimulated in an open and natural environment where natural food is readily available.

One of the most important aspects of our elephant management is elephant social structures. We have been careful to maintain natural herd structures and hierarchal structures and have left it to our animals to group and create cohesive groups according to their natural and personal selection. We have only moved elephants out of our original Sanctuary in Hartbeespoort Dam where strong natural bonds were well defined and where the animal's social needs had been met by the group they had bonded in.

Question:

**What's the difference between offering these elephants for us to have rides on and feed and touch, and watching them do tricks in a circus ring?**

**Elephant Sanctuary:** Elephants are incredibly intelligent and highly social animals. Our interaction with our elephants is a very natural one; our management is based only on natural elephant behaviours and occurs in a natural and wild environment. All guest interaction is strictly on elephant terms and elephants are always given the option of choice i.e. to come closer or to move away. Our elephants at the Sanctuary are never forced to perform unnatural behaviours or tricks, we find this demeaning and unnatural.

Question:

**I have some questions regarding (a) the sourcing and (b) the training of these elephants. When you say you rescued these elephants, where from exactly, and under what circumstances? What are the ages of the elephants?**

**Elephant Sanctuary:** I understand your concern regarding the sourcing of elephants as this has been highlighted in the media recently. Elephants to be continually removed from the bush, trained for the safari industry and then sold to different safari operators. There are a couple of people/organisations who participate in this trade. The Elephant Sanctuary is opposed to removing elephants from the wild for the purposes of elephant tourism.

National Conservation Policy has existed where it was permitted that elephants be captured from the wild and sold to international zoos and circuses.

In 1999 The Elephant Sanctuary rescued its first 5 elephants from an Export to a Chinese Zoo. (ages at rescue 5-6 years today they are 14 and 15 years old)

In 2002 The Elephant Sanctuary rescued a baby elephant from a Mexican Zoo export (age at rescue 2 years today Temba is 7 years old)

In 2003 Mpumalanga Parks Board gave permits for 4 juvenile elephants to be integrated into our existing elephant herd at The Elephant Sanctuary-Hartbeespoort as a last reprieve AFTER the adults were destroyed in a problem animal exercise. (ages at rescue 4-5 years today they are 7 -8 years old) We were not involved in the orchestration or the initiation of this and were called in to assist after its execution.

2004 An unwanted elephant cow was sold to the elephant sanctuary from a filming company. (Age now 15 years) We took her on because she needed as stable herd structure.

2005 Kasper a 19 year old bull that was to be hunted in Namibia was rescued after 3 and half years of wrangling with nature conservation and Cites authorities. (21 years old)

One thing that clearly differentiates us in the elephant fraternity is that all the elephants at The Elephant Sanctuary have been rescued at great expense, with a huge amount of passion, personal sacrifice, energy and time, all with one goal to put them back into a wild environment as soon as the time is right!!

Question:

**And how exactly are they trained? Is there an accepted way of doing this, or does it happen on an ad hoc basis? What are the credentials of the people offering this "experience"?**

**Elephant Sanctuary:** It's amazing how quickly an African elephant learns and fast it can be taught.

The critical factors in working and teaching any animal is 'Time and Desire'

The time it takes to build up relationships with the elephants. And the desire for the elephants to learn.

All our elephants are "relationship trained." What that means is that we establish a relationship of trust before we test their desire to learn.

We must remember that whenever an elephant is taken out of the bush there is a huge amount of related stress. Family bonds have been broken, there is a complete change being in a new environment, and then there is the added dynamic of people around them who they certainly don't trust after going through the capture ordeal.

Our approach revolves around one factor and that is time. No amount of expertise and knowledge can replace time.

Time gives elephants the chance to re-socialise, familiarize themselves in the new environment, Time give them a chance to build trust and time lets **them** make choices.

One has to evaluate what is the purpose of the training before one set out training elephants. Every trainer has his own methodology and approach.

It is not my place to comment on how other people train elephants but I can tell you from the information and research I have accumulated over the years, there is a lot of work that needs to be accomplished to ensure the long term welfare of elephants in captive environments.

I can tell you that the Elephant Sanctuary does not have (nor has it ever had) a training centre or a behind the scenes area where the elephant get trained.

All our work with elephants has always taken place in full view of the public. This is not the case for all elephant/trainers operators.

There is new legislation that controls who may train elephants and what the minimum experience required is for those doing the training. It is however difficult to manage and to regulate.

For the record we have expertise ranging from 15 years down to 3 years for some of our recent elephant handlers.

Thank you for taking the time to care. I have attached a letter from the NSPCA for your interest.

We encourage the tourism trade and operators to come to The Elephant Sanctuary - Hazyview that they can make informed decisions of whether to support our efforts in rescue and education.

## **More about us**

### **Craig Saunders**

**Craig Saunders always had a passion for elephants and nature and because of this passion Craig ended up working in the Sabi Sands Game Reserve in the early 80's where Craig and Chris Kruger were work colleagues.**

**Craig's passion for elephants and working with elephants strengthened when he met Dougie Groves and his elephants in the Okavango delta.**

**Craig started the Hartebeestpoort Dam Elephant sanctuary in the late nineties and his elephant husbandry methods are known to be of the best and most animal friendly in the country.**

**His latest elephant training methods are revolutionary and Craig's knowledge of working with and keeping elephants in captivity are of the highest standards.**

**Craig and Chris started the Elephant Sanctuary in Plettenberg bay in 2004.**

### **Chris Kruger**

**Chris has been fanatical about wildlife and the bush since a very young age and spent most of his school holidays in the Kruger national park and on his grandfather's farm in the Magalies Mountains.**

**Chris started working in the Sabi Sands game reserve in the early 80's and it was during this time that he met Craig Saunders, who also worked in the Sabi Sands Game reserve with Chris. During this time Chris also helped the Kruger National Park officials looking after young elephants in holding pens while they were waiting to be transported to smaller game reserves and private farms.**

**Chris then moved to the Okavango delta in Botswana where he spent 16 years guiding in the delta, Linyanti and Chobe districts, managing lodges and observing wildlife and in particular elephants. Chris met with and got to know elephant experts like Randall Moore and Dougie Groves and was always fascinated by their incredible relationships with elephants.**

**Chris and Craig changed the farm in Plettenberg bay into a sanctuary in 2004 and moved the six elephants to the sanctuary in February 2005.**

**Chris has a Masters MSc degree through Buchinghamshire University in Tourism Development and Management and his dissertation was on Minimum Environmental Standards of photographic lodges in the Okavango delta.**

## **What guests have to say about the Elephant sanctuary:**

**10/11/07 Dineo Makibelo South Africa**  
**Fantastic, home-brewed educational experience**

**11/11/07 Natalie Jayes England**  
**The highlight of my 2 months in Africa. It was wonderful to see these beautiful animals so relaxed and happy in their environment. An awesome ride. A fantastic experience. Loved it.**

**11/11/07 Ben Stevens England**  
**An awesome experience and a fantastic project. We've done and seen so much in Africa and this is definitely one of the best. Thank you.**

**13/11/07 Phil Beck China**  
**What a wonderful educational experience. Magical! Beautiful elephants and fantastic staff. Many thanks! We will remember this day for many years to come and always have fond memories.**

**14/11/07 Richard Fogarty Ireland**  
**Thanks for the memories! Will be back. Our children learnt so much in a short space of time.**

**16/11/07 Kent V. Jones Michigan, USA**  
**Awesome! Feeling the breath of the Elephant on my hand was amazing- I felt a connection and will now look at elephants in a different light.**

**04/12/07 Matthew Godfrey South Africa**  
**A highlight of my life! The very best day of my holiday. Jabu was my favourite elephant.**

**05/12/07 Mischka South Africa**  
**Was really awesome!! Jabu is my new best friend.**

**15/12/07 Repter Family South Africa**  
**What a great experience!! Thanx. May you go from strength to strength.**

**17/12/07 Bev Porter South Africa**  
**We are blessed to be African! Thank you for the informative, passionate sharing of your knowledge! It was pure magic to get that close.**

**20/12/07 Kobus South Africa**  
**Life is not about the breath you take but about the moments that take your breath away! This was a breath- taking experience!!Thanx a lot and good luck with releasing them back into the wild. God bless.**

**31/12/07 David Wright England**  
**Thank you for this tour. It was such an experience that I will never forget! Once again thanx. Best end of year present ever!**

**22/01/08 Julie Weston England**  
**I had tears in my eyes. I will remember this forever. God bless Africa!**

**31/01/08 Fossey Family England**  
**Will never forget this wonderful sanctuary –an amazing and truly unspoilt experience with such beautiful Elephants. Very knowledgeable guides**

**02/02/08 Vasloo Family South Africa**

**This is a very special day for me as I have wanted to meet Elephants like these ones for a long time. Thank you for a fantastic experience and for making my dreams come true!**

**13/02/08 Helen Pugsley England**

**The most wonderful and informative experience! A dream of a lifetime comes true. To walk, talk, and ride on an Elephant is a moving experience and something I will hold in my heart forever. Thank you to our lovely guide.**

**04/04/08 Julie Horn South Africa**

**This experience helps all of us understand the need of conservation and management of animals in the wild for the future health of all. This is good work!**

**We will be back!**

**11/08/2008 Carol Wilsher South Africa**

**On behalf of the group of King David Grade 9's who visited your sanctuary on 2nd September I would like to thank you and your guides for the tour. Your guides once again were outstanding and we learnt so much about the elephants.**