

## **Why does conservation volunteering cost money and why does TEV promote this?**

At TEV we generally source projects that do not charge a fee. If there is a fee we are sceptical (is the project set up primarily to attract volunteers and to make money??) and, by and large, we steer clear of projects with fees.

However, it seems that a lot of the great conservation projects we come across tend to charge a fee and while our first instinct was to decline to promote these projects, more and more we are ending up being convinced of their worth (but not without visiting them, learning about their work and where this money goes). Seeing the work of these projects first hand has forced us to question our own model and by eventually including some of them in our community we have had to concede that, sometimes, it ok to charge.

Why? Well, in the words of Chris Badger (co-owner Mvuu lodge, Malawi), **“If it pays, it stays”**

In short, with so many problems in the developing world, the rights of animals and the environment tends to take a back seat. What’s more, for many, animals and the environment are a means to an end – the survival of an indigenous antelope means little to a subsistence hunter that needs to feed his family, the preservation of a local shrub land means little to a woman who needs fuel to cook. And that’s only those that are trying to live their lives day to day. What about the well resourced and armed poaching teams from South Africa and Mozambique that are systematically wiping out the remaining Rhino populations? How does a small local organisation go up against a trained and well armed force?

Without funds, conservation organisations cannot even enter the fight against poachers and general local apathy towards wildlife conservation. It costs money to run protection, rehabilitation and advocacy programs and, rather than compete for limited resources in the charity world, many conservation organisations are *turning towards tourism for their major source of revenue*. The conservation projects that we list charge a fee and that fee is used directly to fund the work being carried out by the organisation and by the volunteer, eg Act to Protect, IAPF, LLC are all social enterprises, using the income they generate from volunteers to further their goals, whether they be directly fighting poaching, educating the local youth as to the importance of wildlife in their region or creating employment to remove the need to subsistence poach.

So, yes, you are being charged to volunteer and in some cases, these funds are more valuable than the time you commit. As a volunteer you get to learn about this work and contribute financially and/or otherwise to the work. We include these projects as we believe, while it is voluntourism, it is being done well and in the best interests of the environment. It is up to you to choose whether you wish to pay these fees or to opt for a non fee charging placement.