



Operation Wallacea 2026, South Africa

Terrestrial & Marine - Research Assistant Kit List

INTRODUCTION

This document is a guide to the expedition kit you will need for your expedition based on what you will be doing in South Africa and the experience of previous expeditions.

When packing you need to be thinking of the minimum amount you can take whilst remaining comfortable and safe. Check your airlines baggage and hand luggage allowance and ensure to weigh your bag before you go. You want to be aiming for light, compact, durable, quick-drying and versatile equipment. The list below is essential kit – unless stated as optional. If you have any questions about the information below please do not hesitate to contact your nearest Opwall office or email southafrica@opwall.com.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST

Summary Checklist	Tick off once you have gone through each section of your kit list.	Tick Box
Kit list video	Ensure you watch the kit list video that accompanies this pack	
Documentation	What documentation you are required to bring on site.	
Hand luggage	What to include in your hand luggage.	
Core Kit	What core kit to bring for your expedition.	
Clothing essentials	Clothing that you will require on site.	
Terrestrial Kit	What specific kit you will need for the terrestrial part of your expedition.	
Marine Kit	What specific kit you will need for the marine part of your expedition.	
Organising, packing & added extras	Top tips for packing and organising all your expedition gear and some added optional extras for you.	
Toiletries	Guide to the toiletries you will require.	
Medical Kit	Essential medical kit for the expedition.	
Helpful Resources	Suggested resources to learn more about the region before your expedition, or to help you with your expedition prep	
Money	What money you need and the easiest way to bring it to site.	
Food	What food to expect on site.	
Washing facilities	What are the washing facilities like on-site.	

DOCUMENTATION

Documentation	We would recommend bringing a physical paper copy of the following documentation.	Tick Box
Insurance documents	Bring a copy of your personal insurance documentation.	
Photocopy of passport	This is in case your passport gets lost so keep it in a separate location to your passport itself.	
ID Guides	Bring a copy of your ID guides included in this pack.	
Internal Travel Documentation	Bring a print out of your travel documents, along with any information for required VISAs.	

HAND LUGGAGE

Hand luggage	Unfortunately, working in such remote locations often involving numerous flights and forms of transport, luggage can be delayed. It is best to be prepared just in case, so here is what we recommend you pack in your hand luggage.	Tick Box
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Valuables	Think passport, money, camera, phone etc. If completing your dissertation you will most likely wish to bring your laptop and this should be taken in your hand luggage.	
Personal medicine	Extremely important to bring your personal medicine with your hand luggage!	
Change of clothes	Including spare underwear.	
Head torch	Essential for your expedition, so this is not something you want to lose. Small headlamp models can be ineffective at spotting wildlife such as herpetofauna so keep that in mind when browsing for one. Don't forget spare batteries!	
Toiletries	Tooth brush and wet wipes.	
Sleeping bag/liner	If you have to borrow a sleeping bag its nice to have your own liner to use.	
Walking boots	Wear these on the plane, reduces space and makes sure you don't lose them.	
Travel adapter & power bank	Pack these so you can keep your devices charged and usable during transit and unexpected delays. South African Type M adapter (3 round prongs), this isn't usually found on a universal adapter. Electricity is available at both camps, but travel adapters aren't provided.	

CORE KIT

Core kit	These are things you will need no matter which expedition site you are going to.	Tick Box
Rucksack	You will need a rucksack or holdall, 50 litre minimum capacity. You don't need to carry your bag too far on the project, so a rucksack is not essential although is recommended.	
Day bag/Small rucksack	Needed for field work for carrying water, paper, pens, binoculars, cameras etc. . A 10 to 30litre backpack is usually sufficient and it's easiest to use this bag as your hand luggage	
Sleeping Bag	A three-season sleeping bag is recommended as it can get down to around 0-5 degrees at night time. If you have a 2 season sleeping bag you could consider buying a fleeced liner to add instead of a new sleeping bag.	
Water bottle/platypus	A combination of leak-proof plastic bottles (minimum 2 litres) is imperative. The 'hydration systems' on the market (Platypus, camelback, Ortleb) have the advantage of packing flat when not in use but are not a requirement if you already have a bottle.	
Travel towel/Sarong	Travel towels are perfect as they're lightweight and quick drying. Alternatively a small/thin towel, or sarong. Don't bring a standard towel as they're bulky, heavy and take a long time to dry. We recommend a second thin towel or sarong for use on the beach at the marine site, if you have space.	
Watch with alarm	It doesn't have to be anything technical. A travel alarm clock will also do.	
Notebook and pencil	Essential for all projects!	

CLOTHING

Clothing	For working in the field at your terrestrial site it is vital you wear neutral or dull-coloured clothing (khaki, beige etc). There are safety reasons for this—we will not let anyone out into the field with brightly coloured clothes on. Black and white should be avoided wherever possible, although a small amount of black is acceptable. You can also buy an Opwall t-shirt from https://sh.opwall.com/ .	Tick Box
Hiking boots	Should be comfortable, with firm ankle support and good grip as the terrain can uneven. Make sure they're well-worn in and wearing them on the plane reduces space in your luggage.	
Coat or Jacket	The chance of rain is slim, but a lightweight waterproof or poncho is necessary, just in case. It's cold at night—regularly dropping below 5 degrees centigrade—so you need something to wrap up warm in. Ideally, your coat will also have a hood to provide protection from dust and windchill whilst in the field.	
Long trousers (1-2)	Make sure they are loose and comfortable. You will need long trousers instead of shorts for wearing in the field as you'll be operating in the bush where there could potentially be ticks.	
Warm trousers (1)	Good for early mornings and evenings when it gets cold.	
Shorts (3-4)	For wearing around camp in the midday warmth and for down-time at the marine site.	
T-shirts (7-8)	Avoid bright colours for anything you'd like to wear on the terrestrial site, but any colours /styles are fine for downtime at the beach at the marine site.	
Long sleeved shirts (3-4)	Ticks are quite prevalent so you'll need to cover up on survey, and also protect yourself from any rough vegetation. Light layers are ideal to prepare for the changing temperatures. Shirts are also great to throw on after a dive.	

Hoodie/Jumper/Fleeces (2-3)	Non-bulky if possible, but you will need at least some that will keep you warm in the cold conditions on the back of the vehicle and in camp in the evenings, flights and the air conditioned coaches.	
Nightwear/Pyjamas	You will be in shared accommodation. We recommend something warm as the temperatures do drop at night time.	
Underwear and socks	Bring enough to last the two weeks, including thermal underwear if you get cold at night and hiking socks if you prefer.	
Balaclava/Buff/Bandana	For protection from windchill during early morning surveys.	
Hat with brim	Useful to protect you from the sun.	
Woollen Hat/Beanie & Gloves	A warm hat and gloves will make you more comfortable in the colder mornings and evenings	
Sunglasses	A good pair are useful to protect your eyes from the sun and glare reflected from water in the marine site.	
Comfortable shoes/flip flops/sandals	Anything that is comfortable to wear around camp. Sandals will allow your feet to air and are best for the marine site, but we do ask participants to wear closed toe shoe in the evenings and at night in the terrestrial site so you may also want a pair of closed toe comfortable shoes.	
Swimwear	For your time at the marine site.	
Additional clothes	One set of 'regular' style clothes for when you are at any hotels during your transfers or for travelling back at the end of the expedition.	

TERRESTRIAL ONLY

Terrestrial only	Below you will find equipment specific to the terrestrial portion of your expedition.	Tick Box
Head torch	Essential for the expedition as previously mentioned.	
Binoculars	These are essential to see much of the wildlife in the bush. 8 X 40 are the best to bring. If you're based in the UK, under 21 or represent a school or university group, you can apply to receive donated binoculars through the BTO - https://www.bto.org/our-work/youth/equipment-donation-scheme	

MARINE ONLY

Marine only	Below you will find equipment specific to the marine portion of your expedition.	Tick Box
Dive Training Materials	If you're learning to SCUBA dive on expedition, you will need dive training materials. These are now entirely online so to make things easier for you we've arranged them on your behalf. You'll receive an email from us in the run up to the expedition with login details and information on how to access them. We highly recommend bringing a smartphone or tablet with you so you can then access them on expedition. If you have independently bought dive training materials please let us know as soon as possible by emailing diving@opwall.com .	
Marine medical forms	You must complete these online via the Opwall portal at least 3 months prior to travel. It's recommended that you bring out a printed copy of the completed form with you on expedition, particularly if you've had it signed by a doctor or dive medic.	
Proof of dive qualification	If you are already a qualified diver, we will require proof of your dive qualifications on site. We do accept non-PADI qualifications, as long as it is equivalent to or more advanced than PADI Open Water.	
Wetsuit	We strongly recommend purchasing a minimum 5mm full-length wetsuit; this is essential as the waters are cold. If you opt to purchase a thinner 3mm wetsuit you will want to purchase a rash vest or extra layers to compensate such as a hood.	
Dive watch or computer	This is a requirement under PADI regulations for qualified divers. However, PADI allows Open Water divers to go off diving in buddy pairs on their own without a Dive Master whereas Opwall regulations require that all divers are accompanied by a Dive Master who times their dives. Under these circumstances we don't consider it necessary but if you have a waterproof watch or dive computer please take it.	
Mask, snorkel and fins	The hire costs of these items is already included in your package price to Opwall so these items will be provided for you to use onsite. You may however wish to bring your own mask & snorkel if you already have one.	

ORGANISING, PACKING & ADDED EXTRAS

Organising, packing & added extras	Top tips for packing and organising all your expedition gear and some added optional extras for you. Label your baggage, clothes and kit; there are many volunteers, and some may have the same or similar items to you.	Tick Box
Waterproof plastic/zip lock bags/dry bag/bin liners	These are very useful to keep the water out of your kit and clothes. You can line your rucksack with a bin/garbage bag and have smaller bags for clothes and items like your camera.	
Camera	If you have one bring it—you will come back with some amazing pictures. You will have lots of opportunities to take pictures but be aware the animals will often be at a distance so a camera with a decent zoom is recommended.	
Spare Batteries	Good idea to bring spares for any electrical equipment such as your head torch.	
Earphones/cards/book	Transfers can be long and there will be some down time during the expedition so bring something to keep yourself entertained.	
Handheld mirror	There isn't access to many mirrors in the terrestrial site so it may be useful to bring one.	
Earplugs/eye mask	If you are someone that generally struggles to sleep, you may find that the lively sounds of the jungle or people walking by with their torches on keeps you awake. Also useful for a long plane and coach journey!	
Nail clippers/tweezers	If you are staying in camp for a long amount of time these will be very useful.	
Snacks & condiments	Cereal bars, protein bars or things to spice up your meals!	

TOILETRIES

Toiletries	Good tip to travelling light is to get into small groups to combine things like toiletries to split the load of shampoo and sun block for example so you don't bring a bottle each.	Tick Box
Toiletries bag	How are you storing these, you may prefer to just have a couple of ziplock bags to save space but keep things separate.	
Toothbrush & Toothpaste	Avoid bringing an electric toothbrush as you may struggle to charge it. We would recommend bringing a case to keep it clean.	
Hair and Body Wash	Biodegradable if possible, small travel sizes or bars rather than liquids to save space (make sure you have a tin if you have bars). Sanex 0%, Lush, The Body Shop, Ecover and many health stores offer 'green' detergents. Due to the dry conditions and wind on the back of the vehicles, we also recommend bringing a good quality, natural lip balm.	
Insect repellent	The mosquito count is generally fairly low during the expeditions as it is winter in South Africa. However, it is still recommended that you bring a natural insect repellent to use in the evenings. Many of our staff use Mosi-guard, which can be bought from Amazon or Avon skin so soft.	
Sun cream	Factor 30, minimum, is recommended. Please ensure it is a coral friendly sun-block if you intend to use it in the water.	
Sanitary towels/tampons	Please bring a supply even if you do not expect to use them as travel can disrupt your cycle.	

PERSONAL MEDICAL KIT

Personal Medical Kit	Staff will be carrying medical kits and the medical provision on site is excellent. However, there are some items listed below you should carry yourself (as appropriate). If you are travelling as a group or with friends, one full kit can be shared amongst a few students to spread out the cost.	Tick Box
Antihistamine tablets	For insect bites. It's useful if you can bring both drowsy and non drowsy	
Antihistamine cream	Bite/sting cream. Can be very beneficial for reducing itching and swelling of insect bites.	
Paracetamol/aspirin	For headaches etc.	
Ibuprofen	For headaches or inflammation.	
Rehydration salts (14 days worth)	Essential! We recommend you take a dosage of rehydration salts every day especially at the marine site. Don't forget to read the correct dosage to ensure you are absorbing the salts correctly	
Antiseptic wipes	Cleaning cuts or grazes	
Plasters (assorted sizes)	May also be worth adding a couple of blister plasters as well as normal ones.	
Personal Medication	It is vital that you bring any prescribed medications.	

Vitamins	If you normally take these.	
Sea/travel sickness tablets	The sea conditions can be rough at Sodwana bay, so even if you don't normally get seasick we highly recommend bringing tablets just in case!	

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Helpful Resources	Below you will find a selection of helpful resources for your expedition	Tick Box
A Guide to Buying Dive Equipment	https://www.opwall.com/article/all-the-gear-but-no-ideayet/	
Top Eco-Friendly Kit Ideas	https://www.opwall.com/article/top-eco-friendly-kit-ideas/	
Beginner Fieldwork Equipment	https://www.opwall.com/article/beginner-fieldwork-equipment/	
What Equipment to Borrow or Buy	https://www.opwall.com/article/the-festive-guide-to-gearing-up-for-your-expedition/	
Top 10 Must Have Items!	https://www.opwall.com/article/lets-find-out-what-you-couldnt-live-without/	
Hair & Skin Care at a Marine Site	https://www.opwall.com/article/hair-and-skin-care-at-a-marine-site/	
Ecological Apps to Download	https://www.opwall.com/article/ecological-apps-so-you-can-identify-appsolutely-everything/	
BBC Documentaries	BBC Seven Worlds, One Planet, Episode 7: Africa BBC Earth, An Adventure Through Africa	

MONEY

Spending money is an optional extra to cover personal on-site expenditure. Somkhanda Game reserve doesn't have any facilities to purchase snacks or souvenirs, so we recommend you purchase snacks at the airport or prior to travel. Sodwana Bay has more options to purchase snacks and souvenirs, so we recommend bringing some cash for the local market at least. The snack kiosk at the beach does take card. The local South African currency is Rand, and it's a good idea to have it in small denominations if possible. We'd recommend getting the money out before you get into South Africa, although you can get cash at the airport or service stations during transfers. You will not be able to get cash out on site. We'd recommend budgeting between £20 and £50 per week, depending on how much you like snacks or souvenirs!

FOOD

When on expedition 3 meals a day are provided, but please be aware that due to the remote location of the sites that food can be basic. Special dietary requirements are catered for as much as possible, but we would also suggest that if you are a vegetarian or particular about certain foods that you bring cereal bars/snacks/vitamins out to site. If there is anyone with food allergies you must let us know in advance, so we can make the necessary preparations.

Lunch on the transfers between the airport and the research sites are not included, so you will need to budget for these meals with your spending money.

WASHING FACILITIES

We ask participants to reduce the need to wash clothes on site as we aim to conserve water at all times. Therefore, please ensure you have enough clothes to last you the full expedition. There are facilities to pay to get your washing done at the marine site if needed.