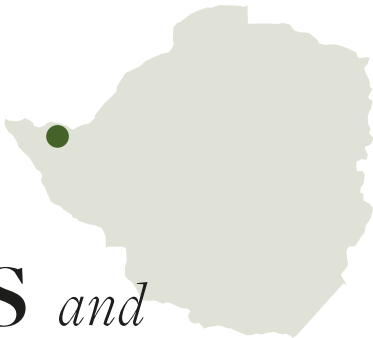


ZIMBABWE

See Victoria Falls *and* Wondrous Wildlife



Opposite: elephants and baboons cross the savanna; This page: wildlife-spotting by canoe in Zimbabwe's Mana Pools National Park

ZIMBABWE IS ONE OF Africa's most underrated wildlife destinations. Come here and you can see thousands of elephants and voracious predators aplenty, including lions, cheetahs and wild dogs. Add to the mix the world's largest curtain of falling water, Victoria Falls, inspiring community conservation projects, excellent camps and lodges and some of the best guides on the continent, and it has all the ingredients for a dream safari. Yet few travellers visit Zimbabwe compared to Tanzania or South Africa – so bring a smile and an open mind and enjoy a magical trip without the crowds.

Hwange is the country's largest national park, spanning 5863 sq miles (14,650 sq km) of wilderness with teak woodlands, mopane forests and palm-dotted plains home to the prestigious Big Five: lions, buffalo, leopards, elephants and rhinos. On game drives and walking safaris, you'll spot some of the 100 mammal species roaming the park, from myriad antelopes to wildebeest and zebras. Or wait silently by one of Hwange's many waterholes for thirsty animals to come for a drink, including mesmerising herds of elephants slurping the water and rumbling contentedly. Away from the parks, browse

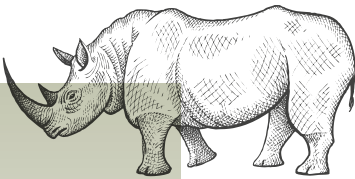
community craft markets and visit inspiring schools and women's projects that local lodges support.

Mana Pools National Park has a unique beauty, with atmospheric albedo woodlands fringing the Zambezi River in the shadow of a purple-hued escarpment. Here you can kayak on the river, keeping a watchful eye out for hippos and crocs, or explore by vehicle or on foot, perhaps seeing the wild dogs that starred in David Attenborough's BBC series, *Dynasties*. Look out for Boswell and Fred Astaire as well, two bull elephants who unusually stand on their hind legs to reach for pods high up in the trees.

A Traveller's Tale

In 2022, I joined conservationists translocating two white rhinos – Thuza and Kusasa – on an exhausting 17-hour journey across Zimbabwe to Hwange's new Imvelo Ngamo Wildlife Sanctuary. Rhinos were extinct here and everyone was fizzing with excitement and pride: the community had given up land for their rare residents and protect them 24/7. Seeing their joy as they silently watched the rhinos emerging to explore their new home brought tears to my tired eyes.

SUE WATT



AT A GLANCE

EAT
Treat yourself to delicious high tea at the Victoria Falls Hotel, the *grande dame* of Zimbabwe.

DRINK
Enjoy a sundowner G&T or Zambezi beer by a waterhole as elephants come to drink.

STAY
In Hwange, wake up to rhinos at Camelthorn Lodge in the heart of the wildlife sanctuary.

EXPERIENCE
Be captivated by the dance, puppetry and music of *Simunye* in Victoria Falls' outdoor theatre.



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This page: Victoria Falls on the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia

The showstopping Victoria Falls are best seen by helicopter on the ‘Flight of Angels’ whirring above this natural Wonder of the World. The mile-wide (1.6km) cascades and the mighty Zambezi have plenty to offer adrenaline junkies, including bungee-jumping, zip lining, gorge-swinging and micro-lighting. For a calmer experience, walk the trail along the viewpoints, getting soaked and spying rainbows in the spray amid the roar of the raging water.

PRACTICALITIES

GETTING THERE AND AROUND
Victoria Falls International Airport is the best port of entry. Companies such as Safari Logistics, Wilderness and Mack Air offer reliable light aircraft flights around Zimbabwe’s national parks.

WHEN TO GO
The dry season from July to October is best for wildlife sightings. The rains from November to April make roads challenging and many lodges close. Views of Victoria Falls are at their best from June to September before the flow starts to diminish.

THINGS TO NOTE
Although safaris in Zimbabwe can be arranged independently, it’s far easier (and not necessarily more expensive) to book everything through a specialist tour operator. Bring anti-malarials, binoculars, cool clothes and warm layers.

At Victoria Falls, protect your phones and cameras from the pervasive spray.
For further information visit zimbabwetourism.net

12 Day Itinerary

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From Victoria Falls International Airport, head to Hwange either by road (four hours) or by a one-hour bush flight to the airstrip. Spend three to four days here on game drives and walking safaris, visiting the rhino sanctuary and local villages, and sipping sundowners in the bush, all offered by your lodge.

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It’s a two- to three-hour light aircraft flight to Mana Pools for your next four days. Mana is ideal for walking safaris, when your senses become truly attuned to the sights and sounds of the bush. Many lodges also offer kayaking, birding and boat trips as well as game drives.



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Your two-hour flight to Victoria Falls follows the Zambezi River and vast Lake Kariba. You’ll easily fill a few days visiting the Falls, enjoying activities or taking things easy exploring the thriving eponymous town with its shops, curio markets and restaurants.

MORE TIME?
After Mana Pools, spend a couple of nights on a houseboat on Lake Kariba, where exquisite sunrises and sunsets enhance the lake’s haunting beauty.