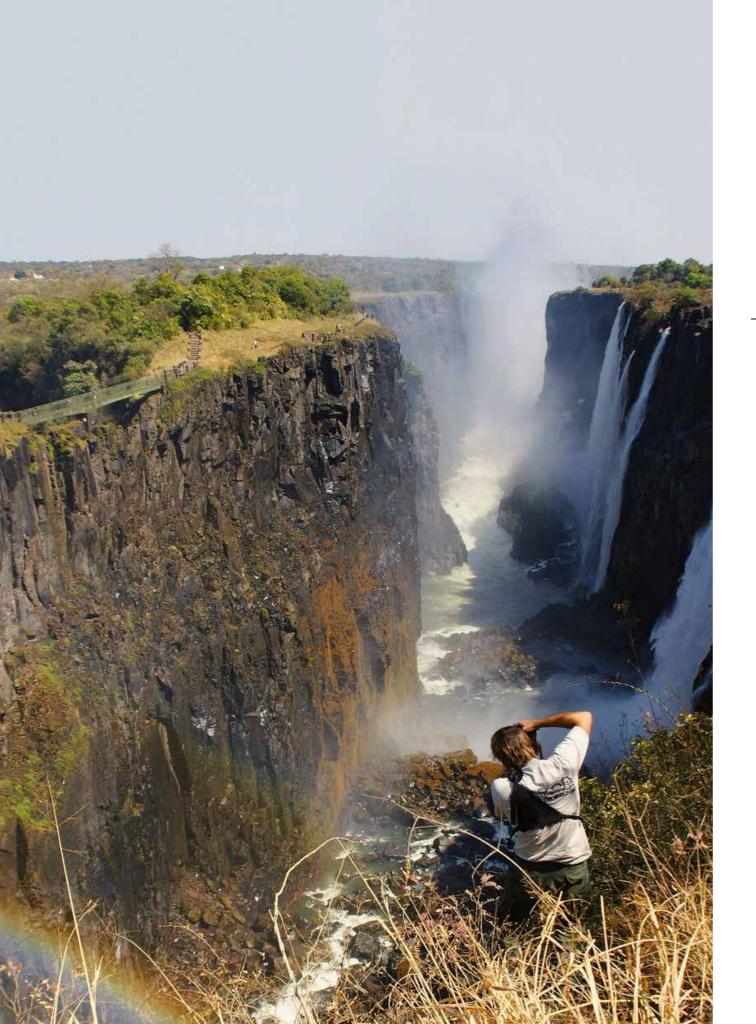


Victoria Falls is a picture sque town set on the banks of the Zambezi River overlooking its namesake, the world's largest waterfall. The Falls belong to both Zambia and Zimbabwe, as the Zambezi marks their national boundary, but Victoria Falls Town is on the Zimbabwean side (Livingstone is on the Zambian side). Visitors have travelled here to see the Falls since 1905 and they're a spectacular sight: the Zambezi thunders over a basalt ledge 1708 metres (5 604 feet) wide and 108m (354ft) high. The local name Mosi-oa-Tunya (meaning 'the smoke that thunders') is perfectly apt as the roar of falling water can be heard 40 kilometres (25 miles) away while a 400m (1 312ft) column of mist floats above the drop. Water levels peak in April at about 500 million litres (over 13 million gallons), and drop to their lowest in October after the dry season. A visit to Victoria Falls is an easy add-on to a South Africa or Botswana safari and, since there is so much to do and see here, we recommend you spend at least three days having fun in Africa's adventure capital.

Go2Africa has been bringing travellers on safari since 1998. Our success is built on a simple promise: we'll show you Africa, better than anyone else. We've explored every destination we sell and because we are 100% independent, we only recommend tried-and-tested hotels, lodges and activities. Our consultants are Africa Safari Experts - a title they earn through extensive travel, training and examinations. We publish travel reviews, blogs and a range of free guides (like this one) to inspire and inform our community of travellers.



EVERYTHING YOU **NEED TO KNOW**

- **Why go:** Africa's adventure capital
- **Where to stay:** Comfortable to lavish hotels
- **What to see & do:** Top tours & activities
- **Rest & relax:** Poolside to spa treats
- **Eat:** Our Top 3 restaurants
- More: Quick links to travel advice



WHY GO Dr David Lingstone keeps watch over the Fa

When David Livingstone 'discovered' Victoria Falls in 1855, he famously wrote, 'Scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight'. Over 160 years later, travellers from around the world can appreciate this spectacular viewpoint from the air, and all along the ground too.

Victoria Falls is one of Southern Africa's most iconic destinations and a visit to observe this tremendous waterfall — which straddles the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia - has long been on many a traveller's bucket list. Views from the Zimbabwean side include those of the Main Falls, the Devil's Cataract and Livingstone Island, while the Zambian side takes you to the Knife-Edge Bridge for a close encounter with the spray, and a steep footpath leads down to the Boiling Pot — a furious whirlpool at the base of the Falls.

Now a World Heritage Site, Victoria Falls is also considered 'Africa's Adventure Capital'; its heart-pumping pursuits include bungee jumping, micro lighting, high-wire activities and white-water rafting. For those who prefer a slower pace, soft adventures like scenic cruises on the Zambezi River complete with snorting hippos and gin and tonics, high tea at the stately Victoria Falls Hotel, shopping at the local Zimbabwean market stalls and wonderful animal interactions at nearby lodges are sure to tick all your boxes.

Victoria Falls is best combined with a safari, either in Zimbabwe's national parks like Hwange or Mana Pools; with Botswana's top game reserves like Chobe and Moremi; or South Africa's Kruger National Park. One of Go2Africa's most popular itineraries includes a few days in Cape Town, a luxury Big 5 safari in a private Kruger reserve and adventure at the Falls.

The best time to view Victoria Falls in all its splendour is between February and May, when the summer rains have arrived at the gorge in thundering style. Spray shoots high into the air and can be seen for miles. However, if you are considering combining a visit to the Falls with a safari, we recommend the drier winter period between June and August when game viewing is excellent and the water levels are still high.

No matter when you visit, Mosi-oa-Tunya is sure to leave as deep an impression on you as it did on Livingstone all those years ago.











As African Safari Experts, we've tried and tested a variety of accommodation in and around Victoria Falls, making sure each lodge fits our exacting standards and that families, adventurers and honeymooners find their ideal place to stay.

There are a few larger family-friendly lodges and hotels fairly close the Falls, down-to-earth safari-style tented camps in the surrounding Zambezi National Park and intimate honeymoon retreats situated on the banks of the scenic Zambezi River.

For a shorter stay, we recommend a few nights close to the entrance of the Falls so you'll be able to enjoy all the activities on offer, as well as explore a little further. If you have a longer time in mind, our suggestion is to combine two or three different hotels and lodges to ensure you have a well-rounded experience at this World Heritage Site.

Prefer historic accommodation and love the grand era of traditional safaris? Then the Victoria Falls Hotel is ideal. Enjoy high tea on the terrace while marvelling at the spectacular views of Batoka Gorge. For plush and sophisticated accommodation, the Royal Livingstone – on the Zambian side – offers refined hospitality, complete with cognacs on the patio and zebra on the lawn.

Romantics will love the secluded Elephant Camp, known for its luxurious accommodation, elephant-back safaris and habituated orphaned cheetah, Sylvester. The camp evokes a true sense of adventure in a bush setting, and is just a few minutes from Victoria Falls itself.

A little further down the river are a number of secluded camps and lodges that are perfect for honeymooners and nature lovers. Away from the hubbub surrounding the Falls, these quiet spots offer boating safaris and river cruises. Listen to the sound of birdsong in the morning, enjoy a leisurely canoe trip after breakfast, and then arrive at the Falls for an adventure in the afternoon.

For a classic Victoria Falls experience, look no further than the Victoria Falls Safari Lodge. Situated just minutes from the town and the entrance to the Falls, the lodge has a spectacular sunset view over a well-frequented waterhole. The entire lodge complex is also home to the more exclusive Safari Club as well as The Boma – Place of Eating. Families will enjoy the green lawns, swimming pool and bar area as well as the lunchtime 'vulture restaurant'.











VICTORIA FALLS HOTEL

You might have to share the immaculate lawns of the Victoria Falls Hotel with acrobatic vervet monkeys, trotting warthogs and adorable banded mongooses, but that's a small price to pay for having arguably the best views in town. Built in 1904 and still steeped in a bygone era of gracious service, silver cloches and decadent cream teas, this grand old dame boasts vistas of the Falls' spray and the brightly lit railway bridge.

Packed with colonial memorabilia and antiques, the Victoria Falls prides itself on providing a glimpse into the past; Queen Elizabeth II has twice been a guest. Full English breakfasts can be taken in the Jungle Junction, lazy afternoon tea on the Stanley Terrace and – if you feel like spoiling yourself – make reservations for an excellent 7-course degustation dinner in the stately Livingstone Room.

In addition to the characterful rooms and large pool, the hotel is a short walk from the Falls themselves and a guide can accompany you. In fact, it has one of the best-possible locations and, with a pair of binoculars, it's possible to watch the daredevils bungee jump off Victoria Falls Bridge, with a classic iced drink in hand.

The Victoria Falls Hotel is exactly the sort of pampering spot you want to check into after a long walking or mobile safari, where you can sink into a clawfoot tub while the staff see to everything. Popular with honeymooners, mature couples and travellers who return year after year, it's probably the only hotel in Africa where you can cross the road to the railway station to board a luxurious Rovos Rail trip. All aboard!









THE ELEPHANT CAMP

We believe The Elephant Camp is Victoria Falls's most luxurious safari lodge. A mere 10-minute drive from the centre of town, it lies in the Wild Horizons Elephant Sanctuary, which is a private concession in Victoria Falls National Park. It's hard to believe that the bustling town centre is so nearby: once you're ensconced in your private plunge pool on your expansive verandah, it's easy to feel like you're in the middle of the bush. Each of the 12 individual suites has views over the national park so be on the lookout for small game and birds, especially raptors. Because the lodge is fenced, however, you needn't be concerned about encountering large animals.

Honeymooners and couples will enjoy the secluded outdoor showers, deep bathtubs, à la carte dinners and the air-conditioned bar area. Families and large groups can be perfectly accommodated at Elephant Camp West, a 4-suite 'mini lodge' where children can run free under the watchful eye of on-tap supervisors.

A highlight for anyone staying at The Elephant Camp is meeting Sylvester the cheetah and the herd of rescued elephants. Sylvester's story is a sad one but he has a found a haven with his minders here. The elephants may have been orphaned or injured but, through loving care and gentle training, have been habituated to humans. Dawn and dusk elephant-back safaris are possible under strict conditions: the elephants must be healthy, the weather cool and the ride a maximum of an hour long to ensure the encounter is an ethical one. Even if you don't clamber onto one of the backs of these gentle giants, do wander down to feed them but be warned: the adorable and energetic warthogs may steal the show – and the food!









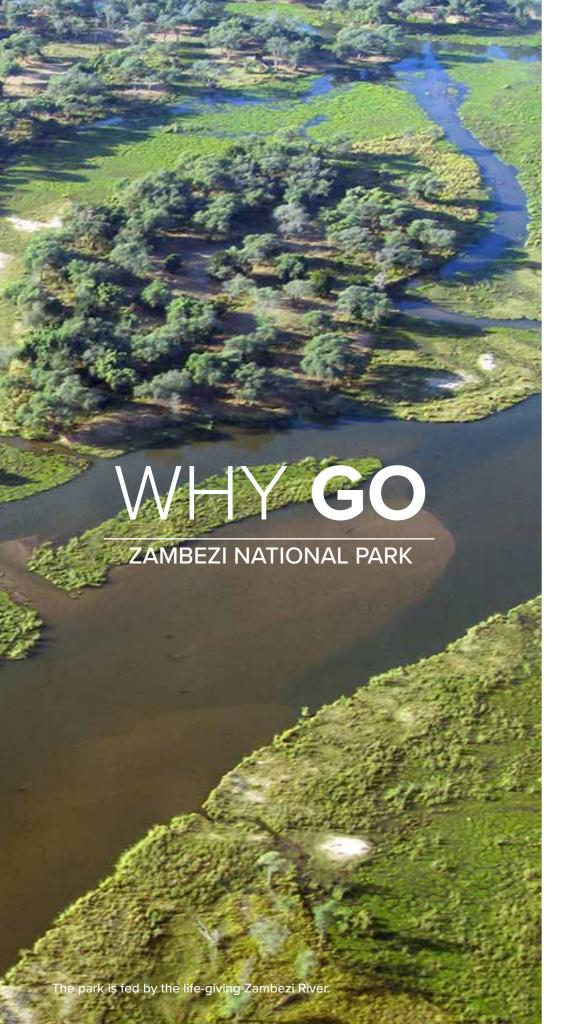
VICTORIA FALLS SAFARI LODGE

Built on a sprawling property a short drive from the centre of Victoria Falls Town, Victoria Falls Safari Lodge consists of several different 'mini hotels', each suited to a different type of traveller. The main and largest of these is Safari Lodge itself; known locally as 'Saf Lodge', it is an ideal budget-friendly option for families or younger travellers.

Groups or families who want more privacy can check into the Safari Suites, which are 2- and 3-bedroom units with small kitchenettes and spacious living areas. The premium accommodation is at the Safari Club, which has butler service and sophisticated, African-inspired décor. The Lodge, Suites and Club all have some views over Zambezi National Park, which unfurls into the distance.

In addition to providing rooms for every traveller type, Victoria Falls Safari Lodge also lays on a couple of complimentary extras, like a very convenient free shuttle every 15 minutes to the centre of town and daily raptor feeding. 'Vulture Culture' is a great way to see dozens of birds of prey catch the thermals above the lodge before descending to share the spoils among themselves. You can also book a guided nature walk (billed to your account) to the hide next to the popular waterhole to watch elephants and other game coming down to drink.

Saf Lodge is universally known in Victoria Falls for having one of the liveliest restaurants in town: The Boma is large buffet-style eatery where you can sample African favourites like mopane worms, local beer, spit-roasted venison and sadza (traditional polenta). Décor is 'township chic' and the staff will keep you entertained with energetic drumming and singing – feel free to jump up and join in!



Of the three national parks around the Falls – Mosi-oa-Tunya, Victoria Falls and Zambezi – Zambezi National Park is the biggest. Stretching for a sizable 56 000 hectares (138 000 acres) from Kazangula on the border with Botswana, it is classic Big 5 country best explored on game drives in search of leopard, white rhino, buffalo, elephant and lion.

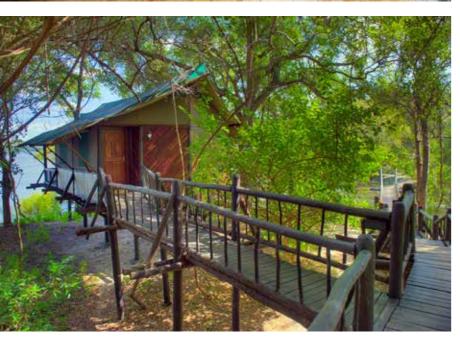
The park is split into two main areas: a riverine expanse along the meandering Zambezi that is known for birding (Zimbabwe has 684 listed species) and the Chamabondo vlei, where herds are slowly making a comeback. Most of Zambezi National Park consists of mopane woodland, which thins out during the dry winter (from May to August) and makes the animals easier to see, before returning to lush greenness once the rains fall around September.

In addition to classic early morning and late afternoon game drives and birding, Zambezi National Park is a great place for canoe safaris – there is nothing like seeing a large elephant bull gently pulling out soft vegetation and washing it carefully of grit from the safety of your kayak. Guided canoeing allows you to float along the river, which has at least 75 different species of fish, and watch the animals as they come down to drink. Your guide will steer you clear of hippos and its much cooler to be out on the water on a hot summer's day.

This is an ideal spot if you want proximity to the excitement of the Falls but still want to maintain that unique 'on safari' feeling and atmosphere.







Staying in Victoria Falls Town is ideal if you want to be close to non-stop action, shopping and dining out. But there are plenty of beautiful lodges and amazing private safari holiday homes on the banks of the greater Zambezi River that offer peace, quiet, serenity and are still within a convenient driving distance to the Falls. Many lodges have a shuttle service and Go2Africa will arrange all your transfers before you even leave home, making for a carefree, stress-free vacation with no hidden costs.

Among our favourite riverside accommodation is **Victoria Falls River Lodge**, the first private lodge to be built in Zambezi National Park. Here you have the best of both worlds: the Falls are close enough that you can see its spray and you can undertake game drives, night drives and bird-watching excursions into the park. Spacious suites have completely private outdoor showers – perfect for watching the antics of hippos in the river down below.

Another hit with honeymooners is **Islands of Siankaba**, which is located on two private islands between the Falls and Chobe National Park. Although further out than River Lodge, it accommodates only a handful of guests who get a thrill mastering walking over the suspension bridge that links the islands. Make the most of the river here with sunset cruises and mokoro rides (a traditional canoe).

Families, especially those with young children, will enjoy checking into a private safari villa where a team of friendly staff (such as a chef, childminder, butler and driver) will smooth all the logistics and take over the 'heavy lifting' of a family vacation. Among the best are **Tangala House** and **Chuma House**: think swimming pools, sun-splashed decks, your own schedule and absolute privacy.





Whether you're an adventure enthusiast or simply prefer a relaxed river cruise, there is something for everyone at Victoria Falls. Long considered Africa's 'Adventure Capital', the Falls offer plenty of action to the many adrenalin-seekers arriving pre- or post-safari. These days, it also offers a generous mix of rest and relaxation.

There are plenty of active adventures or what is termed 'soft adrenalin' activities. These include a guided tour of the Falls (a highlight is the full moon tour to see the lunar rainbow), tiger fishing on the Zambezi River, an historical bridge tour and game drives into nearby Zambezi National Park or across the Botswana border into Chobe.

Prefer something more heart-racing? Settle down at the Lookout Café and watch others jump, zip and slide along the many high-wire activities before taking the plunge yourself. Choose from the 'flying fox' (a cable slide), zip line, gorge swing or canopy tour, or head across to Zambia for the ultimate blood-pumping activity: bungee jumping off the bridge! There's also low- and high-season white-water rafting on the churning Zambezi River but be aware that a reasonable level of fitness is required.

Want to see the Falls from another angle? Take to the skies for a helicopter flip or try a tandem microlight flight. Another highlight is a day-trip to Livingstone Island, which can include a swim in the Devil's Pool. This lip-edge view is not for the faint-hearted!

Victoria Falls is also known for its animal encounters. Go2Africa supports ethical animal interactions only, where the animals are not stressed nor coerced, and are allowed to roam freely for a sizable part of the day. Elephant-back safaris and interactions are conducted at the Wild Horizons Wildlife Sanctuary, while a meeting with Sylvester the orphan cheetah at The Elephant Camp is a must-do. A more conventional animal encounter is a horse-back safari through Zambezi National Park.

Another popular activity is shopping for mementos at the many traditional markets, mostly in and around Victoria Falls Town on the Zimbabwean side. Wooden, metal and stone artefacts are all hand-crafted by the local traders, the sale of which forms their only source of income. If you'd prefer to be out of the sun with your feet up, then head off for a relaxed Zambezi River cruise, high tea at the Victoria Falls Hotel or relax around the swimming pool at your lodge.











Although Victoria Falls has a well-earned reputation of being the Adventure Capital of Africa, there are plenty of outdoor activities where you can stretch your legs and perhaps work up a gentle sweat without your pulse trebling in less than a minute...

History buffs and lovers of trivia will enjoy walking under – yes, under – the Victoria Falls Bridge, which was opened in 1905 and links Zambia with Zimbabwe. Connected via a secure harness-and-carabiner system, you walk 128m / 420ft above the Second Gorge, the waters swirling beneath you. Your guide entertains you with all sorts of factoids and anecdotes, and you'll be amazed how troops of baboons casually swing and jump from beam to beam, the little ones holding confidently onto their athletic moms.

Of course, the biggest and most popular activity is a walking tour of the Falls themselves. Although it isn't strictly necessary to have a guide as the paved route is well-marked with plenty of viewing points, a guide will impart nuggets of information and be on hand to answer all your questions. Depending on the time of year, you may need a waterproof poncho or umbrella as the spray and mist fill Batoka Gorge completely (be sure to keep your camera dry or invest in an underwater one or a waterproof housing).

When the water levels are low (at the end of winter, in about October) you may be able to see people swimming in the Devil's Pool, a natural hollow at the edge of the Falls. Fairly easily reached by walking from the Zambian side, alert guides will help you get jaw-dropping photos that appear to show you balancing on the lip of the giant waterfall, when in reality you are perfectly safe and sound!













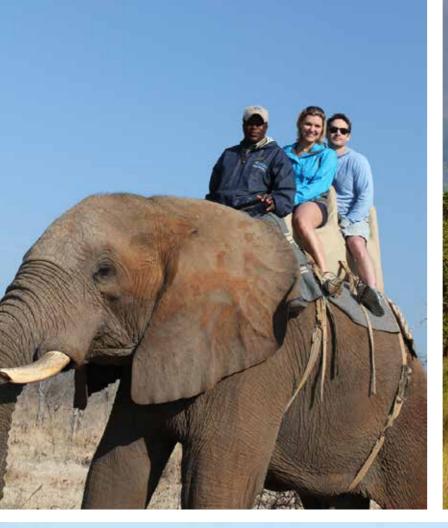


Jump! Swing! Slide! Paddle! After a week on a game-drive vehicle or long hours on a plane, Victoria Falls is the place in Africa to get your blood pumping and your heart racing. There are reputable companies with excellent safety standards and friendly staff, and your Safari Expert will make all the arrangements before you leave home – including transport to and from your hotel or lodge – so that you're all set to have fun from the moment you arrive.

The Zambezi River and Batoka Gorge are naturally the focus of many adrenalin activities. From the bridge that connects Zimbabwe and Zambia, you can go bungee jumping, bridge swinging, cable sliding or zip lining. No experience is necessary but nerves of steel are a definite plus.

If heights aren't your thing, then consider taking to the rushing waters of the Zambezi on a guided rafting journey down Batoka Gorge, which ranks as arguably the most exciting 1-day run in the world. The gorge becomes deeper the further you venture down it, the spray keeping the foliage on its sides lush and green.

Although bridge activities take place year-round, white-water rafting falls into 'low water' and 'high water' trips that are obviously dependent on the volume of water rushing over the Falls. Low-water trips are longer, cover more rapids and are more or less a full-day activity so bear this in mind before booking other excursions. It helps to be as fit as possible but don't worry about falling out of the raft – that's all part of the fun and your guides will be there to 'rescue' you in an instant.















We only recommend activities that we have tried ourselves because first-hand experience is at the heart of the advice we give you. This is extremely important when it comes to animal encounters – a tour activity where you get to interact with a wild animal.

We recommend the Wild Horizons Elephant Sanctuary, which rescues orphans from unavoidable culls in Zimbabwe's national reserves. Elephants can live a remarkable 70 years and these orphans can never return to the wilderness, so Wild Horizons funds their long-term care through elephant-back safaris. The close bonds between the elephants and their caregivers are plainly evident – no surprise since the sanctuary's handlers are graduates of one of the world's premier elephant training schools, Riddles in Little Rock Arkansas, USA. We believe that Wild Horizons provides a safe and humane elephant interaction.

We do not recommend any encounter that allows tourists to touch baby predators, like lions. These cubs are habituated to humans and can never be rehabilitated back into the wild. Worst of all, the cubs soon become too big to be safely petted by tourists, and are sold off to unregulated buyers. The cub you pose with for a photo today ends up a young lion sold to a circus, a private collector or, worst of all, to the canned lion hunting industry. We believe lion encounters are unethical and cruel because operators breed cubs solely for the purpose of very profitable human interactions, they separate tiny cubs from their mothers and force them to endure hours of stressful interaction with human beings. When the natural predatory instincts of these cubs kick in, they are sold or used to breed more cubs.









Victoria Falls Town is a great place to pick up a few mementos of your trip. There are a number of formal shops that sell traditional Shona stone sculptures, wooden or wire decorative and functional items, and colourful cloth wraps. They will usually accept credit cards (although not all take Diners Club or American Express) and some may ship larger items home to you.

If you want a more 'authentic' African experience, then venture out to the vendors at the entrance to the Falls or to the Open Market. Zimbabweans do a strong line in sales patter and will try their luck to sell you their wares. Although they may be persistent, they are harmless and will move on if you repeatedly and politely decline to buy.

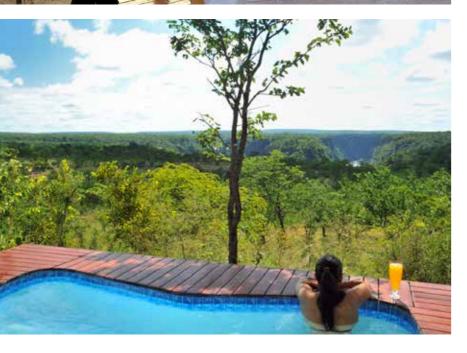
Our Top Shopping Tips

- Don't buy Zimbabwean dollars as no-one will accept them. Almost all cash transactions are
 in US dollars although vendors will occasionally accept pounds sterling, euros or South African
 rands.
- Be friendly, firm and fair: vendors are trying to earn a living and a little generosity on your part will go a long way. An extra \$10 will make the world of difference to a trader's takings.
- At the Open Market, visit the traders at the back first as they get the least traffic and make the fewest sales. They will appreciate your interest.
- An 'umbrella price' is the cost of buying several items at once from the same vendor: the more you buy, the lower the cost per item.
- Some traders are happy to swap anything of value like razor blades, clean clothes, shoes, stationery or toiletries for their goods.









If you're visiting Victoria Falls after an action-packed Big 5 safari, you may be more interested in relaxing along the banks of the river than getting your blood pumping with white-water rafting. There are plenty of opportunities to relax but still take in the beauty of the area. A scenic sunset cruise on the Zambezi River is an absolute highlight. You'll be treated to drinks and snacks on board your luxury cruiser as the sun sets slowly over the water, the air punctuated by bird song and the snorts of half-submerged hippos. For something extra-special, consider an evening dinner cruise: a 3-course dining experience that takes in both the sunset and the moon rising over the river.

If a spa massage or package sounds like your ultimate relaxation, then enjoy an indulgent treatment at your lodge or hotel (if your accommodation doesn't offer this service, then decamp to the Victoria Falls Hotel, Elephant Camp or Victoria Falls Safari Lodge for a few hours). If you're staying at The Royal Livingstone, the exceptional Royal Spa – which has gorgeous river views - is a slice of paradise.

Most lodges and hotels have their own swimming pools and private decks, so once you've returned from an elephant-back safari or bridge tour, spend some time catching rays and enjoying poolside cocktails.

TOP 3 RESTAURANTS AT VICTORIA FALLS

THE BOMA

AT VICTORIA FALLS SAFARI LODGE

The Boma – Place of Eating is an iconic dining experience at Victoria Falls and is situated within Victoria Falls Safari Lodge. Serving traditional Zimbabwean dishes, such as its renowned warthog fillet, the restaurant offers a 4-course meal including a barbeque buffet that has a number of international dishes and adventurous options: Mopane worms, anyone? You'll be treated to traditional singing and dancing, and you can participate in African drumming; a true entertainment highlight.





THE LOOKOUT CAFÉ AT WILD HORIZONS

Once a simple structure catering to adrenalin-seekers, The Lookout Café is now a fully functional day-time restaurant and bar. With an enviable position overlooking Batoka Gorge with the Victoria Falls Bridge in the distance, the restaurant is also the check-in point for adventure activities like the bridge swing, 'flying fox' (a cable slide) and zip line. For something extra special, book the full moon dinner where the spray from the Falls is illuminated by the light of the moon.





MAKUWA-KUWA AT VICTORIA FALLS SAFARI LODGE

Overlooking a well-frequented waterhole in Zambezi National Park, Makuwa-Kuwa is an award-winning à la carte restaurant at Victoria Falls Safari Lodge. Expect top-notch service, a menu with good variety and spectacular views. We suggest arriving a little early for sundowners from the adjacent Buffalo Bar and watching the sun sink beneath the horizon. Recommended local dishes include Zambezi bream, impala loin and crocodile kebabs.







YOUR **VICTORIA FALLS**ADVENTURE

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Best Time to Visit Victoria Falls



Victoria Falls Activities -Fly With Angels, Swim with The Devil



Zimbabwe or Zambia? Choosing Sides at Victoria Falls

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