

# Zambia

Zambia, with its dreamy landscapes and astonishing density of wildlife, fits perfectly into a trip to Southern Africa. Its unique appeal is its rough edge: known as the 'real Africa', Zambia is not set up for independent tourism and travel here is challenging – a crumbling infrastructure, little signage and long distances between major towns make it one big adventure. You don't have to get far out of the cosmopolitan capital, Lusaka, to get off the beaten track.

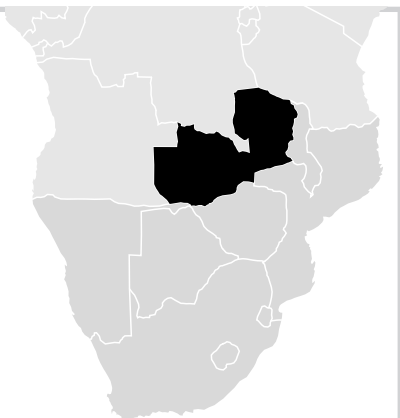
What makes it all worthwhile is the stunning landscapes, made up of unspoiled miombo woodland, floodplains, snaking rivers, countless waterfalls and vast wilderness areas, and the concentration and variety of wildlife. A fact you'll become acutely aware of when you spot your first leopard skulking around its kill, or watch a grunting hippo haul itself onto a grassy bank under a blood red sunset, or admire the fish eagle as it swoops across glassy waters while you canoe the Zambezi River. In fact the endless sound of thousands of lechwe (antelope) hooves clattering and splashing through the marshes of a wetland could well sear itself in your mind.

South Luangwa, one of the best national parks on the continent, and monstrous Kafue National Park, classic African safari territory with an area larger than Switzerland, epitomise the country's riches. And then there's Victoria Falls (see the Victoria Falls chapter), the dazzling waterfall that is truly one of the greatest spectacles on the planet.

There's also the cultural side of Zambia, and witnessing the Kuomboka ceremony, one of Southern Africa's last great festivals, could be the highlight of your trip here. Also, try to get out to a local village – you'll understand why Zambians are so highly regarded for their welcoming hospitality and their irrepressible warmth.

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 752,614 sq km
- **Capital** Lusaka
- **Country code** ☎ 260
- **Famous for** National parks with the Big Five, fishing for tigerfish along the Lower Zambezi and Victoria Falls
- **Languages** English, Bemba, Lozi, Nyanja and Tonga
- **Money** Zambian kwacha
- **Phrases** *Muli shani* (hello; Bemba), *muli bwanji* (hello; Nyanja), *natotela* (thanks; Bemba), *zikomo* (thanks; Nyanja)
- **Population** 12 million



## HIGHLIGHTS

- **South Luangwa National Park** (p652) Identify the incredible diversity of winged, hooved and furred creatures along the stunning landscapes of Zambia's premier park.
- **Lower Zambezi National Park** (p663) Canoe along a stunning wilderness landscape, watching in awe as elephants stroll along the bank and birds of prey soar overhead.
- **Kafue National Park** (p670) Explore vast, classic wildlife country – one of the best places to spot leopards in Africa.
- **Northern Zambia** (p644) Get lost in Zambia's land of adventure, the immense untamed north, with rarely another tourist in sight.
- **Lake Kariba** (p660) Motor out to remote islands on one of Africa's largest artificial lakes.

## ITINERARIES

One consideration is your method of travel; travellers without their own transport cannot reach the remote places that are easily accessible by private vehicle or organised tour. Also, the bizarre shape of Zambia can frustrate your travel plans.

- **One Week** With only one week, hit one of *the* attractions of Southern Africa: Victoria Falls (p604) or South Luangwa National Park (p652).
- **Two Weeks** With two weeks, you'll have time for the great Victoria Falls as well as one or two of the national parks – maybe South Luangwa, Lower Zambezi (p663) or Kafue (p670).
- **Three Weeks** With extra time and money, go to Victoria Falls, South Luangwa National Park, a lodge on the Lower Zambezi, the Copperbelt Province (p642) to see wild chimps, and Kasanka National Park (p645). If you are travelling to or from Tanzania or Malawi, or are able to set aside even more time, explore the Northern Province, including the Bangweulu Wetlands (p646) and the dramatic southern tip of Lake Tanganyika.

## CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Zambia's altitude creates a temperate climate. There are three distinct seasons: the dry season (mid-April to August), when temperatures drop at night and the landscape is

### HOW MUCH?

- **Small woodcarving** US\$12
- **Bunch of bananas at roadside** US\$1
- **Traditional dance** US\$10–20
- **Walking safari** US\$45
- **Batik** US\$13

### LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of petrol/diesel** US\$1.30/1
- **1L of bottled water** US\$3
- **Bottle of Mosi lager** US\$1.50
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$15
- **Street snack** US\$2

green and lush; the hot season (September to mid-November), which is the best time to see wildlife, as flora is sparse; and the wet season (mid-November to mid-April), which is ideal for birdwatching, though some camps and lodges in the national parks close due to flooded roads. Rainfall is higher in the north of the country.

Refer to the Victoria Falls chapter (p604) for details about the best time to visit there, and see p745 for climate charts.

## HISTORY

The precolonial history of the area that became Zambia, along with the rest of Southern Africa, is covered on p32.

### The Slave Trade & Early Europeans

The first Europeans to enter what is now Zambia were Portuguese explorers. In the 1790s, several of them travelled from Angola as far as the headwaters of the Zambezi River. Around the same time, another group of Portuguese pushed inland from Mozambique to Lakes Mweru and Bangweulu.

The Portuguese generally followed routes established many centuries earlier by Swahili-Arab slave-traders, who had penetrated the region from their city-states on the east coast of Africa. Often in collaboration with the chiefs of powerful tribes, the slave-traders captured many people from Zambia and took them across Lake Malawi and through Mozambique or Tanzania to be sold in the slave markets of Zanzibar.