

BEST OF ZAMBIA & MALAWI

Zambia and Malawi have some magnificent wild places, encapsulating unforgettable African landscapes. In this varied and special countryside is an astonishing variety and density of wildlife that will captivate and mesmerise you. You're practically guaranteed to see plenty of hoofed, tusked, winged and other creatures, not to mention the fabled big cats and great herd animals. And if this all seems a bit exhausting, then lazing around Malawi's twinkling lake, finding your own patch of paradise off the beaten track, or indulging in a luxury safari are other ways to experience one of Africa's finest corners.





1

Wildlife

The beauty of the wildlife is not just the Big Five (lion, leopard, buffalo, rhino and elephant). You may be entertained by the clownish antics of the dwarf mongoose, captivated by the speed and grace of a cheetah, in awe at the beauty of a sable antelope, outraged at the cheek of a curious baboon or startled at the rippling power of a hippo.



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1 Elephants

As in many parts of Southern Africa, elephant numbers are on the rise and you've an excellent chance of spotting these magnificent creatures in both countries.

2 Lions

Zambia is fertile ground for spotting lions, especially in Kafue (p174) and South Luangwa National Parks (p119), and there are opportunities to track lions in the wild with expert guides.

3 Leopards

Kafue National Park (p174) in Zambia is surely one of the best places on the continent to see a leopard – notoriously shy creatures and unique amongst the big cats for pulling their kill up trees.

4 Hippos

Zambian and Malawian river systems are full of grunting hippos who haul themselves onto grassy banks around sunset to spend the night foraging for food, sometimes miles inland.



5 Antelopes

The graceful antelopes of the region are a real highlight for visitors with puku, bushbuck, waterbuck and impala commonly seen on open grasslands and many other, rarer species deep inside the parks.

6 Birds

Both Malawi and Zambia are studded with a wonderful array of feathered creatures. Rainbow-flecked kingfishers, rollers and bee-eaters are commonly seen, as are African fish eagles.



Wild Places

Densely wooded national parks, which include some of the best on the continent, combined with natural features such as thundering waterfalls, mighty mountains and vast plateaux provide simply breathtaking landscape. Watching wildlife in these habitats is a powerful and heady experience.





1 Victoria Falls

One of the most awesome natural spectacles on the planet, just viewing the thundering waters close up provides an adrenaline rush; if that's not enough there's always rafting or a microflight (p149).

2 South Luangwa National Park

Zambia's best national park (p119), this unforgettable wilderness with its majestic landscapes and variety and density of wildlife is regarded as one of the finest in Africa.

3 Lower Zambezi National Park

Independent travel here (p142) is a logistical challenge but the rewards are immense. A canoe trip along the pristine waters of the Zambezi River is an adventure you'll long remember (p143).

4 Kafue National Park

This vast park (p174) (about the size of Belgium) has a thousand different landscapes and is classic African safari territory. Leopards – famously elusive – are regularly spotted here on night drives (p175).

5 Liwonde National Park

The Shire River dominates this beautiful park (p263) where crocs, hippos and elephants are commonly seen but birds are the real highlight: more than 400 of Malawi's 650 species have been spotted here.



6 Mt Mulanje

This huge hulk of twisted granite towers over 3000m, making it the highest point in the region (p281). With its beautiful scenery and easy access, the 'Island in the Sky' is very popular with hikers.

7 Nyika National Park

Explore this wilderness in northern Malawi (p224) by foot, mountain bike, on horseback or vehicle and you'll find gently sloping hills, broad valleys, and grasslands interspersed with pockets of thick pine trees and crystal clear streams.

Chilling Out

Zambia and Malawi are made for sitting back and soaking up the wildlife and the wild places. You can chill out in style on safari, otherwise make the most arduous thing you do putting your feet up and relaxing beside breathtaking views and enormous, shimmering lakes.





1 Nkhata Bay

Chill out in a reed hut on the beach at one of Malawi's favourite relaxation outposts (p232), where lazing on the sand and taking a dip in the sparkling waters are mandatory.

2 Cape Maclear

A long piece of golden beach with islands bobbing offshore in the glassy-blue waters of the bay, this is a place where plans are forgotten as visitors are lulled into life on the lake (p253).

3 Walking Safari

Although your first walking safari can be challenging you'll soon be lulled into the rhythm of the African bush and its wild inhabitants.

4 Lake Kariba

This gigantic artificial lake (p136) deserves a few low-key days on sunset cruises, walking the dam wall and watching the storms roll in over the jagged peaks of Zimbabwe across the waters.

5 Likoma Island

A jewel in the middle of Lake Malawi (p237), with sublime crescent bays, views over to Mozambique and a pace of life even slower than the mainland.

6 Livingstonia

Stroll around the old stone buildings, which provide a snapshot of Malawi's colonial past (p221), and especially the influence of the missionaries, while drinking in the views across to Lake Malawi.

7 Shiwa Ng'andu

Staying at this peaceful yet incongruous country manor (p106) is all about four-poster beds, roaring log fires, poking around dusty family heirlooms and sipping gin on manicured lawns.



Three men in a boat, in the late afternoon sun, Lake Malawi

Destination Zambia & Malawi

ZAMBIA FAST FACTS

Area: 752,614 sq km

Capital: Lusaka

Country code: ☎ 260

Famous for: National parks with the Big Five, and Victoria Falls

Languages: English, Bemba, Lozi, Nyanja and Tonga

Money: Zambian kwacha

Population: 12 million

Did you know: Even when the Zambezi River is low, a million litres of water per second plunge over the edge of Victoria Falls, and when the river is high it's 10 times this

MALAWI FAST FACTS

Area: 118,484 sq km

Capital: Lilongwe

Country code: ☎ 265

Famous for: The lake, laid-back beach resorts and friendly locals

Languages: English, Chichewa

Money: Malawian kwacha

Population: 13 million

Did you know: An early Lonely Planet book called *Africa on the Cheap* was critical of the Hastings Banda regime in the Malawi chapter. It was promptly banned in Malawi and copies confiscated at the border

Zambia and Malawi perfectly complement each other as travel destinations, for both first-time visitors to the continent and experienced travellers. Zambia, known as the 'real Africa', holds myriad opportunities for exploring true African wilderness. Peeling away its layers reveals a throbbing heart of natural wonders that are a real adventure to discover under your own steam – getting off the beaten track here means leaving Lusaka. Intrepid travellers will discover an astonishing diversity and density of wildlife, from the fleet-footed grazers to the rippling power of the stalking hunters. And there are plenty of waterfalls, including one of the planet's great natural wonders...no-one should miss the thundering torrent that is Victoria Falls.

Malawi is much easier to navigate earning it the slogan, 'Africa for Beginners'. Its attractions are pretty well organised and bundled into compact, neat packages. The country relies on the crystal-clear waters of its pristine lake, full of rainbow-coloured fish, to draw visitors for serious chilling, or any number of water-based activities including canoeing and diving. It also offers national parks like Nyika, actually more reminiscent of the Scottish highlands, genuine wilderness areas teeming with birdlife, mountainous retreats such as Mulanje, and the historic outpost of Livingstonia.

One thing for which both countries are renowned is the warmth of their people and their friendliness towards visitors. In more remote areas they may be astonished to see you – but don't mistake staring for antagonism; most people would move heaven and earth to ensure a visitor to their country is comfortable, safe and happy.

Zambia's people are known for being docile – probably because of the country's relatively peaceful political scene in a region historically surrounded by civil war and unrest. However, corruption they don't like and there is concern that the country is sliding back into bad habits under its new president, who is proving to be unpopular.

In Malawi the president is riding on a wave of popularity. However, because his party won more than a two-thirds majority in recent parliamentary elections, some people are worried that this may hand the government too much power. The Madonna adoption row has also been a hot conversation topic – many locals feel that Malawi's orphans should be helped in their own community and that the negative international press coverage is damaging.

There's a certain joy about travel in these countries. Whether it comes from the people, the wild landscapes or the astounding animal population it is difficult to tell, but this indefinable quality will probably hit you when you first set foot here. Now is the time to go as both countries gear themselves up for the influx of visitors the 2010 World Cup in South Africa is expected to bring – an influx who will get the chance to live out their dreams of Africa if they set even a toenail inside Zambia and Malawi.

Getting Started

Together, Zambia and Malawi present far-reaching opportunities for all types of trip, regardless of budget, experience or interest, although individually the two countries are very different. Malawi is easy to get around via public transport or driving your own car because distances are short, roads are in good condition and there is accommodation aimed at all budgets – especially backpackers. Malawi is also a good place for first-time visitors in Africa, and for solo travellers, as it provides a gentle introduction to travel in the region, without many of the more challenging aspects that may be encountered in some other countries.

Zambia, on the other hand, can present more logistical problems and the sheer size of the country and the time it takes to get anywhere can be daunting. Zambia is less developed (the roads, even major highways, are often in a shocking condition), is expensive to travel around and has far fewer options for budget travellers – but its wealth of wildlife and landscapes make it worth spending that bit extra. It has some of the finest national parks and wildlife-viewing opportunities in Africa, and a genuine chance to cut away from the popular tourist trail. Zambia is one of the best destinations in Africa, both for midrange visitors and the highly exclusive top end of the market. Camps and lodges in national parks are highly regarded by safari cognoscenti, and in Zambia you can enjoy fine food and wine, skilful guides, good-quality vehicles and privately chartered planes.

Anyone with limited time will want to plan their trip carefully, while those with more time may prefer to just follow their whims and take life at a leisurely pace, stopping whenever something takes their fancy. (Although in Zambia in particular you'll benefit from a bit of forward planning.) Don't run around trying to fit too much into your time – Zambia and Malawi need to be approached with a sense of fun and laid-back nonchalance: before long you'll find yourself in tune to the rhythm of their friendly people, wild landscapes and majestic wildlife.

WHEN TO GO

The best time to go to Zambia and Malawi can largely be determined by the weather. If you're driving, it's worth noting that in the rainy season, or just afterwards, access roads in the parks (and other minor roads

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- A sense of fun and a relaxed attitude about African travel
- Binoculars for wildlife-watching and a decent camera for taking great wildlife shots
- Reading the Malaria section of the Health chapter (pp309–10) in this book
- A basic medical kit that includes a preparation to relieve itchy bites and stings; and anything to repel pesky tsetse flies
- Warm, waterproof clothing, a hat and warm socks for cold highland areas in Malawi and for national parks such as Kafue in Zambia
- Reading a few of the books listed on p20, or bringing one with you for long bus rides
- A tent, sleeping bag, sheet liner (which may also come in handy at budget hotels) and other equipment for camping

around the country) are often impassable unless you've got a rugged 4WD vehicle; this is especially the case in Zambia.

Also weather patterns all over Southern Africa have become less predictable in the last decade or so with the onset of climate change. Some years the rainy seasons have arrived later and some years they have finished earlier.

Zambia

Zambia has three main seasons: May to August is dry and warm; August to October is dry and hot; November to April is the rainy season. The climate is a major consideration because it affects wildlife watching (called 'game viewing' in Zambia). The rains end around May, when conditions become dry and the landscape is beautifully lush but animals are relatively hard to see. Through June and July temperatures are cool and the bush starts to thin out. By August the weather is warmer again and the bush has died back to allow very good wildlife viewing. Rising temperatures through September and October (the 'suicide month') result in very dry and dusty conditions, but with excellent wildlife viewing as the animals cluster around precious water holes. The rains break in November, and the new grass starts to grow. Plentiful food and water allows most animals to produce their young; true wildlife aficionados enjoy this period, but in the rains many dirt roads become impassable and some national park lodges close (although those that stay open give good discounts).

If you're heading for Victoria Falls, or looking for white-water rafting and other activities, the water level of the Zambezi River will be a factor to consider: in 2009 the Zambezi was at its highest level in about 60 years and the Falls were at their thundering best.

Malawi

Malawi's wet season runs from October/November to late April, and its dry season is from April/May to October/November. Climatic conditions are similar to those in Zambia.

When you go to Malawi will also be determined by your reason for coming. Late in the dry season is the best time for wildlife viewing as the vegetation is not so dense and animals converge at reliable watering holes, but the heat can be unpleasant – especially in the lowland areas. May to July is not so good for seeing wildlife but the landscape itself is much more attractive and conditions less oppressive. August is a busy period, mainly because the weather is good but also because it is school holiday time in both Malawi and South Africa, from where many visitors come.

If you come only to take landscape photographs, the later months of the dry season may not be the best time as the views, especially from the highland areas (such as Livingstonia and the Nyika Plateau) can sometimes be obscured by haze and smoke from burning grass on the lower plains. Views are at their sharpest during the wet season (when it isn't actually raining) or in the first few months of the dry season.

Although the views might be good, it's best not to consider hiking or trekking in the highlands during the wet season. Showers, which may be short on the lowlands, can last for longer on the higher ground, and stream crossings (particularly on Mt Mulanje) can be treacherous. Another factor to consider if you intend to travel in southern Malawi, especially if you plan to visit Mt Mulanje, is a heavy mist called a chiperone (chip-er-own-ee), which occurs during the early months of the dry season, sometimes lasting up to five days at a time.

See Climate Charts
(p184) for more
information.

COSTS & MONEY

Generally speaking, prices in Zambia and Malawi are around 50% to 75% of what they are in Europe, Australasia or North America. In general, locally produced items (such as food and beer) will be good value wherever you go, while imported goods may be twice what they cost in the West (thanks to import duties).

Serious backpackers may get by on an average of US\$15-20 per day, including accommodation, food and transport. For a bit more comfort, US\$30 to US\$40 per day is a reasonable budget for day-to-day living expenses. To stay in midrange hotels, eat well and travel in comfort when possible, you're looking at around US\$75 per day or more. Top end travellers should expect to pay at least US\$100 per day, but upward of this is more realistic, while those on safari in top end lodges and camps in the national parks should be looking at about US\$300 to a whopping US\$900 a day.

If you're travelling in both countries you'll find Zambia more expensive overall than Malawi, especially for accommodation. Malawi offers a wide range of options, from dirt cheap to exceptionally expensive, while Zambia caters much more for the midrange and top end market, with a very under-developed market in budget tourism.

Getting around Zambia by public transport seems expensive compared to Malawi, but that's mainly because the distances are so long. Car rental starts at about US\$45 per day for city driving, plus costs such as kilometre charge and insurance – see p198. For travel around the country 4WDs are at least US\$120 per day (older second-hand Landrovers), but usually closer to US\$200. Internal flights are also expensive, eg Lusaka to Mfuwe (South Luangwa National Park) is US\$500 return.

In Malawi car rental for city driving also starts at around US\$45, while 4WD hire is about US\$150.

See the Transport sections of individual country chapters, and the Money sections in country-specific directories, for more information on costs.

TRAVELLING RESPONSIBLY

Travelling responsibly in Zambia and Malawi means taking a keen interest in the country you're visiting and actively thinking about the consequences of your visit. In both countries tourists pay to visit national parks and other popular tourist areas (such as Victoria Falls), and this provides employment for the people and income for the country. Some schemes distribute money earned from tourism to local communities located around national parks; this is particularly the case around South Luangwa National Park in Zambia. This in turn provides an incentive to conserve the wilderness areas and the animals they contain.

However, tourism can also have a negative effect. In those very national parks and wilderness areas that attract large numbers of tourists, the building of new camps and lodges (and the number of guests they contain) is restricted, but sometimes not as tightly as it could be because the government body issuing the licenses wants more revenue or the tour companies want more visitors to improve the bottom line on their balance sheet. The end result is too many tourists in too small an area, which puts a strain on the local environment and also dilutes the 'wilderness' experience that tourists have paid to enjoy. This scenario has already occurred in several national parks in other African countries, but so far Zambia and Malawi have pretty much avoided it, mostly because tourist numbers are relatively small and because in Zambia, in particular, the safari industry is fairly exclusive.

HOW MUCH?

4WD car hire US\$120-200

Bunch of bananas or mangoes at roadside US\$1

Walking safari US\$45

Hourly internet access US\$2-3

Traditional dance performance US\$10-20

'take a moment to consider where the money goes'

You can make a difference by deciding where to spend your money. Try to make sure that as much money as possible stays inside the country, and near to the bottom of the economic ladder. Travellers with cars and on public transport have many opportunities to buy local goods and services, from soft drinks and market produce to souvenirs and nights in locally run hotels. If you take a tour or safari, or even have your whole holiday organised by an agent, take a moment to consider where the money goes. If you want to support tour companies with a good environmental record, you have to look beyond vague 'ecofriendly' claims and ask what they are really doing to protect or support the environment and its local inhabitants (and remember that includes local people just as much as wild animals).

Here are some suggestions to get you thinking:

- Consider staying in community-run guesthouses (such as Tikondane, p117) or in local villages (such as Kawaza Village, p125 or Njobvu Cultural Village, p264) where possible.
- If you're travelling around independently be upfront about asking your accommodation about their 'green' credentials.
- Many lodges and camps in national parks claim to be helping local communities – ask how they are achieving this.
- Stick to marked trails and tracks in national parks and other protected areas, whether walking or driving.
- Consider very seriously a donation to a reputable development organisation or charity as part of your trip (see p59).
- Many businesses are run by Europeans and South Africans: take note of how they treat their local staff, and channel your money accordingly.
- Be prepared to bargain, sure, especially when shopping for carvings and other souvenirs, no-one likes to get ripped off. But remember that a US dollar or two means a lot more to them than it does to you.
- Don't give money or sweets as gifts for children. If you want to help them, find the village school and donate some pens or schoolbooks, or seek out the clinic and donate unwanted first aid items. Don't allow schoolkids to guide you during school hours as this encourages them to play truant.

Organisations with information on responsible travel and sustainable environmental practices include: **Tourism Concern** (☎ 020-7133 3800; www.tourismconcern.org.uk; Stapleton House, 277-281 Holloway Rd, London N7 8HN); and **Action for Southern Africa** (☎ 020-3263 2001; www.actsa.org; 231 Vauxhall Bridge Rd, London SW1V 1EH), which campaigns for (among other things) sustainable tourism throughout the region.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

In *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier*, Alexandra Fuller journeys with a companion through Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, revealing a legacy of conflict and its effects on themselves and the region's indigenous peoples.

Zambia: Safari in Style by David Rogers is an indispensable guide for those considering an upmarket safari in Zambia. It reveals in detail 25 of the country's top wildlife lodges, peeling apart their unique ambience.

In *The Ukimwi Road*, Dervla Murphy, the famously eccentric Irish grandmother, recounts her adventures as she cycles through Africa (including Malawi and Zambia), downing beers and observing life – most notably the harrowing effects of AIDS.

TOP PICKS



FESTIVALS

The numerous tribes and ethnic groups of Zambia and Malawi enjoy a diverse and fascinating collection of traditional festivals. These folk know how to party. Most festivals include drumming and other music, and many feature dancing. The most popular dance form in Zambia is called *makishi*; it originated in western Zambia, but is now popular among tribes all over the country. *Makishi* is performed by troupes of energetic dancers wearing brightly coloured skirts and leg tassels, with equally colourful face masks surrounded by a mane of feathers. Most festivals also involve a lot of drinking; the aim of any festival is to give everyone a good time!

- N'cwala (Zambia), near Chipata, February (p185)
- Kusefya Pangwena (Zambia), near Kasama, August (p185)
- Kuomboka (Zambia), near Mongu, March/April (p172)
- Lake of Stars (Malawi), Senga Bay, October (p251)
- Kungoni Festival (Malawi), Mua, August (p252)

ADRENALINE SPORTS

The range of energetic, adventurous and downright scary activities in Zambia and Malawi is growing, and the choice is bound to be even bigger by the time you arrive. This is the place to blow those hard-earned dollars on a few hours, or even a few seconds, of total excitement.

- Abseiling (Zambia), Batoka Gorge (p150), near Victoria Falls, year round; (Malawi), Livingstonia (p222), year round
- Kayaking safari (Zambia), Lake Kariba (p139), year round
- Bungee jumping (Zambia), Victoria Falls (p150), year round
- Microlight flight (Zambia), Victoria Falls (p151), year round
- Gorge swing (Zambia), Batoka Gorge (p150), near Victoria Falls, year round; (Malawi), Livingstonia (p227), year round
- Rock climbing (Malawi), Mulanje and Viphya Plateau (p281), year round
- White-water rafting (Zambia), Batoka Gorge (p151), near Victoria Falls, mid-June to October

A fun and fascinating collection of stories from Africa about cars, bars, rebellions and other diverse subjects, *Mr Bigstuff and the Goddess of Charm* by Fiona Sax Ledger includes some insightful conversations with Zambian politicians.

In Quest of Livingstone by Colum Wilson and Aisling Irwin is the story of two British travellers who followed the explorer's footsteps through Tanzania and Zambia, combining contemporary observations with flashbacks to Livingstone's own journals.

Laurens van der Post's poetic descriptions of his 'exploration' of Malawi's Mt Mulanje and Nyika Plateau in *Venture to the Interior* are augmented by his report of the quaint workings of the British colonial administration.

Zambezi – Journey of a River by Michael Main is a slightly rambling but immensely fascinating study of Zambia's mighty river; a combination of history, geography, geology, anthropology, careful observation, humour, rumour and myth.

BEST BOOKS

Here's a selection of some of our favourite books about Zambia and Malawi.

The Africa House, by Christina Lamb, relates the story of Stewart Gore-Brown and his grand plans for a utopian fiefdom in a remote part of Zambia during the 1920s. His country mansion at Shiwa Ng'andu still stands (see p106).

Challenging the effectiveness of aid in Africa, Zambian-born Dambisa Moyo explodes the myths in *Dead Aid*, arguing that aid is actually a major cause of poverty.

The Jive Talker: Or, How to Get a British Passport: by Samson Kambalu is a memoir about growing up in '70s and '80s Malawi.

Although a personalised selection of observations on wildlife and humans, *Kakuli* by Norman Carr also raises deeper issues and suggests some practical solutions to current conservation problems. The author spent a lifetime working with animals and people in the South Luangwa National Park (see p119).

My Malawi Journal by Bea Buckley is a travelogue telling the story of a Peace Corps volunteer in a rural village in Malawi.

On the Wild Side, by Outi Maattanen-Bourke, is a pictorial detailing the history of Liwonde National Park and conservation issues facing it.

Mark and Delia Owens (authors of the famous *Cry of the Kalahari*) based *Survivor's Song* in the North Luangwa National Park. They launch themselves single-mindedly into the hard fight against elephant poachers, putting their lives and relationship seriously on the line.

In *Wisdom of the Yawo People*, Ian Dicks has collected traditional proverbs and stories from Malawi's Yawo people. Simple and humourous they often have a poignant meaning, such as 'Under the Elephant's Belly, You Can't Pass Twice'.

The compelling *Zambian Myths and Legends of the Wild* by Kenneth Kangende is a detailed examination of good and bad omens and explains how manifestations of evil are often the strange or unexplained amongst a superstitious people.

The well-written and entertaining *The Scramble for Africa: White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912*, by Thomas Pakenham, is the standard work that details both sides of the colonial story.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Everything travel related you need to kick off a trip.

Malawi Tourism (www.malawitourism.com) The official site for Malawian tourism promotion.

Malawi Tourism Association (www.malawi-tourism-association.org.mw) Lots of practical info, car hire, places to stay, buses, safari operators etc.

Zambia Online (www.zambia.co.zm) This lively site has webzines, news summaries and links to many other sites.

Zambia Tourism (www.zambiatourism.com) Detailed and comprehensive site by the Zambia National Tourist Board.

Zamnet (www.zamnet.zm) Zambia's main service provider has good news and business information, with links to useful sites.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

NATURAL DELIGHTS & MAN-MADE WONDER

One Week /
Lusaka to Livingstone

Start your trip in **Lusaka** (p65), the gateway to Zambia, and then zip straight down to **Siavonga** (p138) on sparkling **Lake Kariba** (p136), one of the largest artificial lakes in Africa, and relax on a boat cruise. Retrace your steps and head for **Monze** (p132), staying at one of the most beautifully landscaped **campsites** (p132) in the country; consider a side trip to entrancing **Lochinvar National Park** (p133), part of a huge World Heritage Wetland Site called the Kafue Flats and a haven for many species of antelope and bird. Then head further south and drop into the **Choma Museum** (p135) with its interesting exhibits on the local Tonga people and a great crafts shop. Now it's time to see one of the greatest natural sights on the planet – the last leg of your trip takes you into **Livingstone** (p153), the gateway to the **Victoria Falls** (p149), whose mighty spray can be seen from 50km away. There's a plethora of activities including serene canoe trips on top of the falls or rafting down the churning Zambezi.



This 1000km trip serves up a delightful variety of watery treats, and if you're not in a hurry you could slow the pace down and include some time wildlife-watching in the Game Management Area (GMA) around the Lower Zambezi on your way to Lake Kariba.

MAGNIFICENT WILDLIFE & MIGHTY LAKE MALAWI

One Month /
Lower Zambezi to Livingstonia

The **Lower Zambezi National Park** (p142) is spectacular, and an excellent place to see elephants and other wildlife. Tear yourself away from here and mosey down the Great East Road to Zambia's premier park, **South Luangwa National Park** (p119), with its incredible density of game. After getting that photo of a stalking leopard, head for the Malawi border, overnighing at **Tikondane Community Centre** (p117) in the Katete district, perhaps seeing the legendary **Ghost Dance** (p117) in a local village. The next day make a beeline for **Chipata** (p118), cross the border and then it's only a couple of hours to sleepy **Lilongwe** (p203). Head north for the lake, passing through historic **Nkhotakota** (p245), and if you've wildlife withdrawal symptoms, duck into **Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve** (p247). And now for the lake: **Nkhata Bay** (p232) with its Caribbean vibe and clutch of water-based activities is a stone's throw north and the perfect place to laze by the shimmering waters of Lake Malawi. From here grab the ferry to beautiful **Likoma** (p237) and **Chizumulu** (p239) islands for a chance to explore the lake's crystal waters and admire the panorama of Mozambique's wild coast, a few kilometres away. Trek north, passing through **Mzuzu** (p228), a useful service town, and on to **Rumphi** (p223). Make a side trip to one of Malawi's best-kept secrets, **Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve** (p228) with its hippo-heavy river. Then end your trip with a vertical drive or walk up to **Livingstonia** (p221) – with its grand architecture, intriguing museum and sweeping lake views, it provides a captivating glimpse into the man himself and Malawi's colonial past.

This mammoth trek takes you through breathtaking landscapes; some of the best Zambia and Malawi have to offer. You could zip through the 2500km in three weeks, but we recommend taking at least a month to enjoy the incredible wildlife and Africa's third-largest lake.



MALAWI SNAPSHOT Three to Four Weeks / Blantyre to Livingstonia

Whether you start north or south, this is the ultimate journey, taking in beaches, safari parks and mountains.

Fly into **Blantyre** (p270) and after a day's acclimatisation head down to **Mulanje** (p280) for a three-day hike across the country's highest peak. Recover by spending a day or two in an old planter's house on one of Mulanje's many **tea estates** (p286). Then on to colonial gem, **Zomba** (p266), and a day or two of gentle walking on the misty **Zomba Plateau** (p267), perhaps finding time for a riding lesson as well. Now it's wildlife time! Make your way to nearby **Liwonde National Park** (p263), basing yourself at the excellent **Mvuu Camp** (p265), for a few days of hippo and elephant spotting by car, boat and on foot. Now head for the lake and the small resort village of **Cape Maclear** (p253). You'll need a good three or four days here to recover – spend them lolling on the sand and swimming with the brilliantly coloured fish.

Next, it's time to board the Ilala Ferry for a classic Lake Malawi experience. Sleep out on a mattress underneath the stars and disembark at **Nkhata Bay** (p232), Malawi's other famous lakeshore resort, where you can snorkel, kayak or even take a PADI course at local dive school **Aqua Africa** (p232). When you've had enough of the water, move on to **Nyika National Park** (p224), the country's largest, where you can explore wild grasslands, strangely reminiscent of the Yorkshire Moors, on foot or on horseback. Finally, it's time for a history lesson at nearby **Livingstonia** (p221), an isolated colonial hilltop town.



Mountains, wilderness, the lake, historical riches – tracking across the length of this marvellous country you'll see the very best of Malawi. We'd recommend taking a month, as side trips could always be on the cards, but you could squeeze it into three weeks at a canter.

ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

MALAWI'S SOUTHERN WILDERNESS

Two Weeks /
Blantyre to Elephant Marsh

Head south from the commercial hub of **Blantyre** (p270) and the road plunges down the Thyolo Escarpment into the heat of the Lower Shire, a region little visited by travellers. It may be Malawi's most densely populated area but you'll also find empty national reserves and wild marshland. On the journey, take in the magnificent views across the Shire River floodplains; perhaps stop at the **Fisherman's Rest nature reserve** (p279) for a coffee with a view. Make your way west to **Majete Wildlife Reserve** (p287) and check into **Thawale Camp** (p287), from where you can watch elephants, buffalos and waterbuck around the floodlit waterhole. Also, make sure to go on an exciting **elephant tracking trip** (p287) as well as the traditional safaris drives. There's no big game at the next stop, **Lengwe National Park** (p288), but it's famous for its nyalas – you won't find them any further north in Africa. This is a good place for walking safaris and there are several tree hides with views of the watering holes. Further south, on Malawi's southernmost tip is **Mwabvi Wildlife Reserve** (p289), the smallest, least visited and least accessible reserve in the country – don't even think about visiting without a 4WD. There may be no big game at present but hikers can see antelopes and buffaloes, and there's a dreamy campsite.

Elephant Marsh (p288) is your final destination. Forming the eastern floodplain of the Shire River, its lush swamps are studded with flowers and rich in birdlife. A boat trip amongst the crocodiles, hippos and, of course, elephants, can be arranged through the local villages.

The distances may be short, but put aside time to go off the beaten track into the untamed wilderness of this forgotten corner of Malawi. Although not known for its big game, the area has majestic landscapes and plenty of antelopes, elephants, birds and hippos.



THE UNTAMED NORTH

Two Weeks / Lusaka to Kalambo Falls

Zambia's vast north is a landscape of sweeping hills, untamed parks and secret waterfalls as yet undiscovered by most visitors, so you're likely to have it all to yourself.

Leaving **Lusaka** (p65) head north on the Great North Road. It's a long journey, so you may have to stop off at **Serenje** (p99) for the night. The next day head for **Kasanka National Park** (p100) to see sitatunga antelopes, rich bird life, and in season, millions of fruit bats. An arduous drive away are the **Bangweulu Wetlands** (p103), huge, wild swamps and grasslands where you'll find the endemic black lechwe, the rare shoebill and a rustic island camp.

Make your way back to the Great North Road now – it will take a day or so. Then head further north to **Mutinondo Wilderness** (p104). You could easily spend a week here, exploring the bush, plains and whaleback hills, horse riding, swimming and canoeing in croc-free rivers, and sleeping in semi-open chalets with astounding views. Next, and further on up the Great North Road is **Shiwa Ng'andu** (p106), a magnificent manor house built by **Sir Stewart Gore-Browne** (p107). You can tour the house and estate, or get out your binoculars and go birdwatching. Nearby, on the same estate, is **Kapishya Hot Springs** (p107) where you can take a dip in a steaming, palm-fringed lagoon. Back to the road and you can make **Kasama** (p108) your next stop – an excellent jumping-off point for exploring the nearby waterfalls and ancient rock paintings. Push further north still to the border with Tanzania and you'll come to the spectacular **Kalambo Falls** (p111) – the second-highest single-drop waterfall in Africa.



If you want to visit some of Zambia's best untrodden wilderness, with rarely another tourist in sight, then this northern route is for you. Go now, before the government opens the area to mainstream tourism, but take your time (the dilapidated roads will help you).

TAILORED TRIPS

MAJESTIC WILDLIFE & AFRICAN LANDSCAPES

In Zambia the inspirational landscapes of **South Luangwa National Park** (p119) contain an astonishing abundance and variety of wildlife. But if size matters, the gigantic **Kafue National Park** (p174) is one of the best places in Africa to see leopards. The **Lower Zambezi National Park** (p142) in the south has elephants in profusion, browsing on the lovely acacia trees and in the thick miombo woodland. To get really wild, head for **North Luangwa National Park** (p129) where walking safaris are the only way to explore this pristine wilderness. And in the rarely visited Copperbelt you'll find the world's largest chimpanzee sanctuary, **Chimfunshi Wildlife Orphanage** (p95). In Malawi hippos, elephants and colourful kingfishers dominate the lush surrounds and tranquil Shire River at **Liwonde National Park** (p263), while the **Nyika National Park** (p224) has antelopes, endless views and clean, crisp air. **Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve** (p228) with its open swamps and dense woodlands has plenty of waterbuck, eland, zebras and elephants. Further south the cool slopes of **Mt Mulanje** (p281) are excellent for hiking. A series of remote wilderness areas in the south include **Elephant Marsh** (p288), where spectacular birdwatching (not elephants) is the draw, and the beautiful wilderness of **Majete Wildlife Reserve** (p287). And, of course, you can't forget Lake Malawi ...



CULTURE & CRAFTS

Zambia and Malawi present some excellent opportunities to scratch the cultural surface of their varied ethnic groups, as well as benefit from wonderful arts and craftwork. In Zambia **Kawaza Village** (p125) and **Tikondane Community Centre** (p117) both provide accommodation and cultural experiences including watching traditional dancing. **Malambo Womens Centre** (p133) offers the opportunity to purchase knitted and sewn arts from a textile collective run by AIDS widows. Rummage through the largest collection of woodcarvings, textiles and other artisanal goods in the country at the **Sunday market at Arcades** (p81) in Lusaka; there are some fine pieces of work for sale. The **Mumwa Craft Association** (p171), a network of local craft producers in far-flung Mongu, has some of the best basket-weaving in Africa and it's very cheap. In Malawi at **Njobvu Cultural Village** (p264) you stay in traditional huts, participate in everyday village life and are offered the chance to watch dancing and drumming. **Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art** (p252) offers traditional dance displays, a museum describing the Yao, Ngoni and Chewa cultures, and a carving workshop, where you can see artisans at work and purchase their products. You'll find excellent examples of woodcarvings, jewellery and woven baskets at small **craft markets** (p214) in Lilongwe (Kamuzu Procession Rd) and Blantyre (Chilembwe Rd).



The Authors



ALAN MURPHY

Coordinating Author

Alan remembers falling under Southern Africa's ambient spell after bouncing around in the rear of a bakkie on the way from Johannesburg airport in 1999. Since then he's been back four times working for Lonely Planet, including this trip to Zambia. Whether watching elephants crossing a river, tracking lions in the bush, glimpsing elusive wild dogs or chuckling at the clownish behaviour of curious baboons, he finds wildlife watching exhilarating. Perhaps the logistical difficulties of getting around Zambia hit home though when he got told: 'go down the track and then take a right at the turn-off where the sign has fallen down'. This trip was one big adventure, made even more enjoyable by a 4WD named Bessie and a travelling companion named Smitzzy. Alan wrote the Zambia & Malawi Highlights, Colour Itineraries, Destination Zambia & Malawi, Getting Started, Itineraries, History and Grassroots Development chapters, plus the Zambian chapters (except for Northern Zambia).



NANA LUCKHAM

Born in Tanzania to a Ghanaian mother and an English father, Nana started life criss-crossing Africa by plane and bumping along the roughest of roads. She first made it to Southern Africa in 1994 when she spent six months living in Zimbabwe. After several years as an editor and a United Nations press officer, she got into travel writing full time and has hauled her backpack all over Africa researching guidebooks to destinations such as Algeria, Kenya, South Africa and Benin. She was thrilled to return to Malawi (the scene of her very first Lonely Planet assignment) for this book. Nana wrote the Culture, Environment, Northern Zambia and Malawi chapters and contributed to the Highlights and Itineraries chapters.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHOR

Nicola Simmonds has worked in and backpacked around Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Europe, Japan, Central and South America. Having then lived in Angola and Zimbabwe for seven years (with her husband and, eventually, three kids), mastering water shortages, African bureaucracy and out-of-control economies, covering Zimbabwe post 'dollarisation' was nothing but joy. She has just spent a year in Sri Lanka and is currently figuring out where to go next. Nicola wrote the Victoria Falls chapter.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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