

Zambia

Zambia, with its dreamy African landscapes and astonishing density of wildlife, fits perfectly into a trip around the wider region. Its unique appeal is its rough edge: Zambia is not set up for independent tourism and travel here is challenging – crumbling infrastructure, little signage and long distances between major towns make it one big adventure.

What makes it worthwhile is the stunning landscapes and the concentration and variety of wildlife. A fact you'll become acutely aware of when you watch a grunting hippo haul itself onto a grassy bank under a blood-red sunset, or admire a fish eagle as it swoops across glassy waters while you canoe the Zambezi River. South Luangwa, one of the best national parks on the continent, and monstrous Kafue National Park, classic African safari territory, epitomise the country's riches. And then there's Victoria Falls, the dazzling waterfall that is truly one of the greatest spectacles in Africa.

So if you like your travel easy and your wilderness neatly bundled into a homogenised and Westernised version of Africa, then much of Zambia may not appeal. But if you enjoy a raw edge and few tourists, then you're in the right country.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 752,614 sq km
- **ATMs** Only in main cities
- **Borders** Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe
- **Budget** US\$30 to US\$40 per day
- **Capital** Lusaka
- **Languages** English, Bemba, Lozi, Nyanja and Tonga
- **Money** Zambian kwacha; US\$1 = ZK4410, €1 = ZK6221
- **Population** 12 million
- **Seasons** Cool and dry (mid-April to August), hot and dry (September to mid-November), hot and wet (mid-November to mid-April)
- **Telephone** Country code ☎ 260; international access code ☎ 00
- **Time** GMT/UTC +2
- **Visa** US\$50 for 30 days; issued at point of entry



HOW MUCH?

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

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L petrol/diesel** US\$1.30/1
- **1L bottled water** US\$3
- **Bottle of Mosi lager** US\$1.50
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$15
- **Sausage, nshima & veg street snack** US\$2

HIGHLIGHTS

- **South Luangwa National Park** (p1091) Identify the incredible diversity of winged, hooved and furred creatures along the majestic landscapes of Zambia's premier park.
- **Lower Zambezi National Park** (p1095) Gaze in awe at elephants strolling along the bank, teeming hippos in the river, and fish eagles soaring overhead, all while canoeing or fishing on the river.
- **Lake Kariba** (p1095) Boat or fish, or just sunbathe at a resort along one of the world's largest artificial lakes.
- **Victoria Falls** (p1098) Gaze at the magnificent, thundering waters, then get your adrenaline fix with a daredevil activity in the gorge below.
- **Northern Zambia** (p1093) Get lost in Zambia's land of adventure, the immense untamed north, with rarely another tourist in sight.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

There are three seasons: the dry season (mid-April to August), when temperatures drop at night, but the landscape is green and lush; the hot season (September to mid-November), the best time to see wildlife as flora is sparse; and the wet season (mid-November to mid-April), ideal for birdwatching.

ITINERARIES

- **One week** With only one week, hit one of the major attractions of southern Africa:

Victoria Falls (p1098) or South Luangwa National Park (p1091).

- **Two weeks** You will have time for the great Victoria Falls (p1098), as well as one or two of the national parks – probably South Luangwa (p1091) or Lower Zambezi (p1095).
- **Three weeks** With extra time and money, go to Victoria Falls (p1098), South Luangwa National Park (p1091), a lodge on the Lower Zambezi (p1095) and the Copperbelt province (p1094). If you are travelling to/from Tanzania or Malawi, or have even more time up your sleeve, you can explore northern Zambia (p1093), including the Kalambo Falls (p1093) and Shiwa Ng'andu (p1094).

HISTORY

Zambia was originally inhabited by hunter-gatherer Khoisan people. About 2000 years ago Bantu people migrated from the Congo basin and gradually displaced them. From the 14th century more immigrants came from the Congo and, by the 16th century, various dispersed groups consolidated into powerful tribes and nations, with specific territories and dynastic rulers.

The first Europeans to arrive were Portuguese explorers, following routes established many centuries earlier by Swahili-Arab slave traders. The celebrated British explorer David Livingstone travelled up the Zambezi in the early 1850s in search of a route to the interior of Africa. In 1855 he reached the awesome waterfall that he promptly named Victoria Falls.

Livingstone's work and writings inspired missionaries to come to the area north of the Zambezi; close on their heels came explorers, hunters and prospectors searching for whatever riches the country had to offer. In 1890 the area became known as Northern Rhodesia and was administered by the British South Africa Company, owned by empire-builder Cecil John Rhodes.

At around the same time, vast deposits of copper were discovered in the area now called the Copperbelt. Although the indigenous people had mined there for centuries, large European-style opencast pits were now being dug. The main sources of labour were the Africans who had to earn money to pay the new 'hut tax'; in any case, most were driven from their land by the European settlers. In 1924 the colony was brought under direct British control.