

Zambia is untamed Africa at its best and is a prized safari destination for those who wish to experience the true romance and adventure of the bush. From the thundering sprays of Victoria Falls to close encounters on the Lower Zambezi valley; from remote Kafue to the splendour and untamed grandeur of the Luangwa valleys, this is a magnificent destination for intrepid safari enthusiasts.

Zambia's national parks are without doubt some of Southern Africa's finest - even the names of the parks and reserves are evocative: Lochinvar, Bangwelu, Kasanka and Luangwa. The routes between some of them are undeniably some of the most enjoyable driving to be found south of Tanzania and the variety and quantity of game and birds here is amazing. Zambia still has a very "untouched" feel about it and it is a real privilege to be able to explore areas that have been off limits for a while.

KAFUE NATIONAL PARK

This huge park lies in central-western Zambia. To put its size in perspective, it is the third largest park in Africa and covers an area equivalent to Wales in the UK and twice that of Yellowstone National Park in USA. It spills into three of Zambia's provinces and is not that far from Lusaka and the well-populated Copperbelt, yet it remains relatively undiscovered.

The Kafue River and its numerous tributaries supply water to a diversity of habitats, with extensive riparian woodlands opening out at intervals to wide grassy areas known as dambos, where antelopes are attracted by the good grazing. Termite mounds, phoenix palms and fig trees punctuate these plains. The landscape is generally flat, or at most gently undulating.

A dominant feature in the north of the park is the Busanga Plains - a vast floodplain fed by the Lufupa River system. These seasonal floodplains have been known to dry out to the extent that hippos become trapped in shallow muddy pools. Normally though, the overflowing river results in well watered grasslands that attract masses of game.

In the south of the park are dense double canopy forests, tall mopane woodland and Kalahari sandveld with the wide Ninzhila Plains dotted by baobabs trees and white-sapped Euphorbias. At the southern end of the Kafue flats, the Kafue River is dammed for hydroelectricity and forms a massive lake on the park's eastern border, which is used for boat cruises and provides excellent game and bird watching.

ANIMALS AND BIRDS

Kafue's ecological diversity has resulted in an impressive array of wildlife and wide range of species. Game viewing in the south is more difficult than the north due to thick woodlands; so much of the accommodation is situated in the north near the Busanga floodplains, where excellent animal sightings are guaranteed. Kafue is one of the best parks in Africa to see an incredible variety of antelopes including; roan, sable, hartebeest, eland, wildebeest, impala (in the south), puku (in the north), oribi, sitatunga, duiker and waterbuck plus red lechwe in their thousands. There are plenty of predators with cheetah, leopard, wild dog, hyena and lion, who will chase lechwe right into the water. There are also a host of smaller carnivores including the side-

striped jackal, civet, genet and various mongooses. Bush pigs and warthogs abound and there are masses of elephants, hippos and crocodiles too. In fact the only animal missing is the giraffe!

The birding is exceptional, especially on the rivers and the dambos, with over 400 species, notably goliath herons, fish eagles, wattled crane, purple crested lourie and Pel's fishing owl.

Fishing is excellent and most lodges have tackle and rods to catch bream, barbel and fresh water pike. There is a fishing competition every September on Lake Itzhi Tezhi.

SEASONS

Zambia has three main seasons:

Very Hot Rainy Season: December to April is hot, humid and rainy with an abundance of insects. Many lodges close from November to April, as roads become impassable. Expect midday temperatures of 82°F (28°C)

Cool Dry Winter: May to September is cool and dry with pleasant term temperature around 75°F (24°C). Night temperatures go down to 46°F (8°C)

Hot Dry Season: October and November becomes hotter reaching approximately 95°F (35°C), but lacks humidity.

The best time to visit is during the dry months from June to November.

KAFUE SPECIALITIES

- Antelopes galore
- 400 species of birds
- Remote African bush
- Hippos and crocs
- Walking safaris

FACTS

A fly-in safari is a good option for Kafue but it is accessible by road so long as you avoid the rainy season

This is a malarial area

LOCHINVAR NATIONAL PARK

Once it was bequeathed to the nation in 1904, land belonging to an old colonial farmhouse under a preservation order, returned to its wild state. Lochinvar's huge swath of unique wetland and beautiful floodplain savannah was subsequently deemed to be important enough to be granted World Heritage Status.

This park of exceptional beauty is situated on the Kafue River floodplain, easily accessible midway between Livingstone and Lusaka. It extends from the Kafue River

in the north, to low wooded hills in the south and includes the Chunga Lagoon whose levels fluctuate according to river flow. Within the park are two National Monument sites: Sebanzi Hill iron-age village site which has dramatic views over the surrounding flats and thick bushland, and the sulphurous Gwisho Hot Springs whose saline deposits attract animals who delight in licking the salt. Lochinvar is a tranquil hideaway far from the main safari circuits, offering peace and beauty together with ever-changing waterscapes. Local villagers are also part of the eco system and support themselves by fishing from mokoro dug-out canoes.

ANIMALS AND BIRDS

The glinting waterways attract an incredible number of birds and masses of antelopes on the Kafue floodplains, including about 2,000 blue wildebeest and the last stronghold of approximately 30,000 graceful, aquatic Kafue lechwe. Big game is restricted to hippo and buffalo and predators include leopard and spotted hyena. With over 400 species of birds there are always plenty to see.

SEASONS

Zambia has three main seasons:

Hot Rainy Season: December to March is hot, humid and rainy with an abundance of insects. Lodges often close from December to March, as roads become impassable. Expect midday temperatures of at least 82°F (28°C)

Cool Dry Winter: May to September is cool and dry with pleasant mid-term temperatures around 75°F (24°C). Night temperatures go down to 46°F (8°C). Warm clothing is advisable for winter evenings.

Hot Dry Season: October and November becomes hotter reaching approximately 95°F (35°C).

The best time to visit Lochinvar is during the dry months from June to November.

LOCHINVAR SPECIALITIES

- Mokoro (dug-out canoe) excursions
- Guided walks
- Sitatunga rare aquatic antelope
- Sport fishing
- Night drives
- Cultural visits to nearby fishing villages
- Hot springs
- Iron-age archaeological sites
- Exquisite 'Out of Africa' lodges
- Outstanding birding opportunities

FACTS

This is a malarial area

The park is 428 square kilometres.

LOWER ZAMBEZI NATIONAL PARK

The Lower Zambezi National Park lies in the scenic river valley between rolling hills of a hazy escarpment and the mighty Zambezi River. On this remote section, the river has calmed down after its hectic journey over the Victoria Falls and through the Kariba Dam, and now flows calmly but insistently towards Mozambique and the sea. The river acts as the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe and on the south bank opposite the Lower Zambezi National Park, is Zimbabwe's equally wild Mana Pools National Park.

The park has three main habitats: the riverbanks overhung with a thick fringe of foliage and large mahogany acacia and 'upside down' baobab trees; inland floodplains lined with mopane forest and interspersed with winterthorn trees and reed islands harbouring a myriad of wildlife; escarpment hills covered in broadleaf woodland.

The park covers a wide area but the escarpment acts as a kind of barrier keeping most animals in the bottom of the valley. This park is so beautiful that it is hard to know which to admire more, the scenery or the animals.

The Zambians who live along the Zambezi are very poor, yet their smiles are broad. They manage to eek out a meagre subsistence living on the banks of the river from catching fish and irrigating a few crops.

ANIMALS AND BIRDS

Wildlife seems less bothered by people when they are at water level and there are some spectacular opportunities in this park, to get close to animals from a canoe or boat. The tranquil river and floodplain scene is punctured by a huge variety of wildlife with antelopes and buffalo wandering in and out of the picture and herds of elephants up to 100 strong.

Baboons and vervet monkeys thrive here with their main enemy being the leopard. Lions prefer zebra or buffalo. Territorial hippos and huge crocodiles inhabit the river in abundance. Bird watchers will be thrilled at the colourful array of birds including kingfishers, lovebirds, parrots and hornbills, and also upon hearing the distinctive 'cry of Africa' from majestic fish eagles.

Fishing is very popular in the Zambezi and the 'striped river dog' or tiger fish, attracts anglers from all over the world. They can be caught on fly, spinner or bait.

SEASONS

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The best time to visit Lochinvar is during the dry months from June to November.

LOWER ZAMBEZI SPECIALITIES

- Close encounters with big animals from a canoe or boat
- Bush walks and animal tracking
- Wading waterbuck and buffalo
- Beautiful scenery
- Tiger fishing
- Night game drives
- Elephants swimming
- Superb safari lodges located along the river

FACTS

Day and night game drives are an option
This is a malarial area

SOUTH LUANGWA NATIONAL PARK

The huge South Luangwa National Park is so wild and remote and full of animals that it would be hard to exceed the safari experience found here. It is one of Africa's most unspoiled places with enormous spaces, a wide diversity of habitats, and a high game density and rarity of wildlife rarely seen in other game reserves. The survival of the valley depends on the winding Luangwa River, crowded with hippos, crocodiles and wading waterfowl, and its numerous tributaries that course through the park.

Guided walking safaris were initiated in the Luangwa Valley and continue to be the most popular way to explore this park. There is nothing quite like getting the earth under your feet and meeting Africa's animals on their own ground! There are a number of famous name specialised guides (such as...Robin Pope and....- I don't know if you want to mention names here and if so which ones?) who have perfected the art of walking safaris and who combine earthy bushwhacking in big game country with comfortable tented camp accommodation. Some camps are so mobile that they

are dismantled and reassembled in another spot, before you have reached the end of your walk. Whatever the luxury, you cannot keep Africa at bay and you will encounter everything both big & small, including bugs and biting insects. This is a place for the real adventurer, but it is often said that a safari in South Luangwa is, "the best Africa has to offer."

ANIMALS AND BIRDS

There is such an abundance of animals in this park that it could be called crowded! Antelopes, wildebeest and zebra congregate along the river and on the open savannah grasslands in the north, where most safari camps are located. The muddy Luangwa is home to hundreds of crocs and often over 100 hippos in a single pool. The Nile Crocodile is the world's largest reptile - maxing at around 15ft (metres) long and 100 years old.

Night drives are renowned for sightings of leopard and lion on the hunt. Baboons and vervet monkeys seem to be everywhere and even rarely seen animals like the honey badger and civet are likely to be seen. Large hunting packs of African wild dog - who require a large traversing area - travel easily through this park and are a special sight due to their endangered status. Thornicroft's giraffe are indigenous to the park, and are one of 8 different races of giraffe in Africa. They have darker muzzles and are slightly smaller than their cousins. Even the zebras are a sub-species of the common plains (or Burchell's) zebra, and lack the muddy-brown shadow stripe of its neighbours.

With over 400 species of birds recorded here you could easily see over 100 different species in a three day visit. Some particularly beautiful ones are; carmine bee-eaters, kingfishers, lilac-breasted rollers, bateleur eagles, saddle-billed storks, crowned cranes and fish eagles.

SEASONS

Rainy Season: The rainy season starts in December and ends in about April. During this time, conditions can deteriorate and it may be difficult to access some areas of the park.

Dry Season: May to August are the colder winter months with warm days and cold nights. After that it gets hotter and dryer and by September and October it is very hot. By this time the bushes have wilted and the earth is bone dry, so animals assemble along the river and at remaining waterholes. These hot dry months are the best for game viewing.

SOUTH LUANGWA SPECIALITIES

- Walking safaris with expert guides
- Night drives with good sightings of leopard
- Truly wild and remote setting
- An abundance of animals
- Encountering a lion or herd of elephants on a walk
- Huge pods of hippos
- Exciting bird watching

- Mobile camps with all the luxuries
- Unusual animal sightings including wild dog, honey badger, civet

FACTS

Off-road and night drives are permitted

This is a malarial area

The park covers an area of 3,494 ²miles (9,050 ²km)

NORTH LUANGWA NATIONAL PARK

The Luangwa Valley covers almost the entire eastern region of Zambia and contains some sensational national parks. North Luangwa National Park is one of the most spectacular surviving wilderness areas in Africa and has been called "one of the greatest wildlife sanctuaries in the world today." It is so remote that self-drive safaris are not allowed and you may only enter if accompanied by a licensed guide. There is really only one main road leading there, but fly-in safaris make it accessible.

The main difference between the North and South Luangwa parks lies in their history. For years the north was the poor relation to the South Luangwa National Park which was Zambia's premier park with good funding.

In 1986, this all changed when renowned researchers and authors Mark and Delia Owens (who wrote *Eye of the Elephant & Cry of the Kalahari*), based themselves here to carry out more research. Their presence had a profound impact and their conservation efforts resulted in a great reduction in poachers. North Luangwa National Park now has some of the most zealous game rangers in the country. If you are the kind of traveller who likes adventure, then this park will supply you with Africa at its absolute wildest.

The diversity of habitats in North Luangwa leaves you feeling bewildered. There are areas of pure mopane woodlands and lush riverine forests of red mahogany, ivory palms and sausage trees laden with long dangling fruit.

The Luangwa River acts as the eastern border to the park, while the western boundary is marked by the impressive Muchinga escarpment rising to 3,575 feet (1,100metres) above sea level. The Mwaleshi River originates high in the hills of this escarpment and cascades down in a series of rapids and waterfalls before reaching the valley floor by means of the beautiful Chomba Waterfall. This river in the heart of North Luangwa Park recedes in the dry season leaving many pools, which attract large herds of antelope.

ANIMALS AND BIRDS

This is primarily a woodland park noted for huge herds of buffalo - sometimes more than a thousand head. Other common mammals include lion, leopard and hyena, elephant and numerous antelopes including, bushbuck, puku, kudu, impala and some not found in the south such as oribi, hartebeest, reedbuck and the largest of all antelopes, eland. The park also contains zebra, wildebeest warthog, baboon and vervet monkeys.

There is an awesome variety of birds with half-collared kingfishers, long-tailed wagtails, babbling starlings, Pel's fishing owl and purple crested turaco, to name just a few of the special ones.

SEASONS

Rainy Season: November to March is the wet season with most rain falling during December to February and humidity reaching a peak in January, February and March. The park is inaccessible during heavy rains.

Dry Season: It barely rains from April to October and the coolest months are May, June and July. As the months progress it gets hotter and peaks in October at around 86°F (30°C).

Best time to visit North Luangwa is July to October

NORTH LAUNGWA SPECIALITIES

- Close encounters with big animals from a canoe or boat
- Adventure in one of the wildest places on earth
- Buffalo herds 2,000 strong
- Walking amongst game
- Incredible diversity of habitats
- Animals unused to humans
- Few other visitors

FACTS

Avoid the rainy season
This is a malarial area

LIUWA PLAIN NATIONAL PARK

Liuwa Plain National Park is situated in Barotseland on the Upper Zambezi Flood Plains, Western Province, Zambia. The Park covers an area of 3660 sq km's of vast grasslands and wooded islands. It is regarded as unique, because it harbours both human and animal populations, which have been sharing the same natural resources for many years.

It has one of the oldest wildlife protection histories in Africa, as it was declared a "game reserve" in the 19th century, by the then king of Barotseland, King Lubosi Lewanika. It was officially administered by the Litunga (the Paramount Chief of the Lozi people) until 1972 when management was taken over by central government.

Liuwa Plain National Park is endowed with rich wildlife, birdlife and plant life, all set within a fascinating landscape. One area of note is the Plain from which the National Park takes its name. It is completely treeless and stretches 70km's in length and 30kms in width. There are two main phenomena that Liuwa Plain experiences; the first being the vast population of wildebeest during their annual migration from

Angola, and the second being the flooding of the Park during the rainy season, which occurs from December to May. During this time people and their livestock move into more wooded uplands and accessibility by vehicle into the Park is hindered. However by June the floods subside and accessibility returns.

ANIMALS AND BIRDS

Although less known than the Wildebeest migration of the Serengeti, the Wildebeest migration of Liuwa Plain National Park is by no means less spectacular. Little research has been carried out into their exact movements but the herds are thought to move north-west into Angola in June, concentrating in the southern region of Liuwa by November. African Parks together with Peace Parks Foundation is currently running a pilot study satellite tracking four Wildebeest to find out more about this phenomenon.

In addition to the Blue Wildebeest, Liuwa Plain National Park has a diversity of animal species including: Tsessebe, Zebra, Red Lechwe, Oribi, Reedbuck, Lion, Spotted Hyena, Wild Dog, Leopard and Cheetah.

The Park boasts an abundance of bird species, particularly in the flooding season, including the Crowned and Wattled Crane, Marabou Stork, Pelican, and Brown parrot as well as migratory birds such as the Horus Swift. The presence of endangered species, such as the Wattled Crane and vulnerable species like the Ground Hornbill and Martial Eagle makes this an important conservation area for birds.

SEASONS

The Park is accessible by vehicle from June to December. For the adventurous it is possible to access the Park by canoe and foot from February to May. People wishing to do this should contact the Park beforehand to arrange boats and local guides.

LIUWA PARK SPECIALITIES

- The Wildebeest migration
- Adventure in one of the wildest places on earth
- Animals unused to humans
- Few other visitors

FACTS

This is a malarial area

Entry prices into the park are higher than most other national parks due to the involvement of the international organisation, African Parks, as they try to protect and restore the biodiversity of this area.

VICTORIA FALLS

Mosi-ao-Tunya National Park is divided into two sections; a game park along the riverbank and the staggering Victoria Falls, each with separate entrances.

The immense and awe-inspiring Victoria Falls are known to the local people as 'Mosi-oa-Tunya' - Smoke Which Thunders', and is the greatest known curtain of falling water. However you describe them, the falls are a breathtaking spectacle which, "roar as if possessed", and spew vast clouds of mist from a dark and seething cauldron." They are one of the greatest natural wonders in the world.

David Livingstone 'discovered' the falls in 1885 and named them after his Queen. The scene he encountered was a mile-wide (1.6km) sheer basalt fault line over which the mighty Zambezi tumbled to a depth of 300 feet (100metres), creating a cloud of spray which can be seen up to 20 miles away.

The Victoria Falls Bridge was commissioned by Cecil John Rhodes in 1900, and was completed by 1905, although Rhodes never lived to see it. It spans the impressive gorge and forms a sort of no-mans land between the border posts of Zambia and Zimbabwe, and provides easy access between the two countries. The famous adrenaline pumping Victoria Falls bungee jump is done from this bridge, with a terrifying drop of 360ft (111m). The bridge has an amazing view of the Falls and the lush green mist-soaked rain forest that exists on its edge; although nothing can beat a 'flight of angels', to fully appreciate the size and grandeur of the falls. There are many vantage points on numerous paths, each giving a different view and some giving a good dousing from the spray. The Knife Edge Bridge is particularly staggering as you stare into the eastern cataract and the main falls towards the 'Boiling Pot'. A resident troop of very cheeky baboons often clamber around on this bridge and patrol it like a toll gate.

As the Zambezi enters the steep sided Batoka Gorge, numerous frothing rapids churn into a frenzy. It is on these rapids that people unleash themselves in rubber rafts or even on boogie boards, for a white-water thrill of a lifetime. Just about any adrenaline sport can be attempted around here, either on the Zimbabwean or Zambian side. Many people say they prefer the Zambian side of the Victoria Falls, as it is less commercial than the Zimbabwe tourist hub.

WILDLIFE RESERVE

This is a small wildlife sanctuary (only 25.5 square miles (66 square kilometres) running along the north bank of the Zambezi, encompassed in Mosi-ao-Tunya National Park. It is worth a short visit not only for the sight of what are probably Zambia's only remaining rhino, but also for some common species.

Within this park is the Old Drift cemetery where the first European settlers were buried. They made camp by the river, but kept succumbing to a strange and fatal illness. They blamed the yellow/green-barked 'Fever Trees' for this incurable malady, while all the time it was the malarial mosquito causing their demise. Before long the community moved to higher ground and the town of Livingstone emerged.

Livingstone's main street is dotted with classic colonial buildings, and while some are decaying, many others have been restored. Victorian tin roofed houses with wooden verandas are a typical example of the English settler architecture and there is also a distinct art-deco influence. Livingstone is a quiet lazy little town with much charm and a feeling of optimism in the air.

ANIMALS AND BIRDS

Baboons are frequently seen on the paths leading to the falls and small antelopes and warthogs inhabit the rainforests that hug the edge of the falls. In the wildlife reserve, the pastures and tall riverine forests contain plenty of birds and a scattering of animals including some white rhino, elephants, giraffe, zebra, sable, eland, buffalo and impala.

SEASONS

Rain Season: Peak flood season is in March and April and the falls are at full power. This also means that the full width of the gorge is hard to see and photography is difficult due to immense amounts of spray. The aerial view at this time is spectacular.

Dry Season: The falls are at their lowest around November and December. This season's gift is the opportunity to appreciate a clear view of the sheer cliffs and the abyss into which the water falls.

LIVINGSTONE - VIC FALLS SPECIALITIES

- Flight of angels over Victoria Falls
- Full moon lunar rainbow
- Baboons and warthogs in the Victoria Falls rainforest
- Sundowner drinks on a boat on the Zambezi
- Attractive birdlife
- High adrenaline sports like white water rafting and bungee jumping
- White rhino in the wildlife reserve
- Superbly positioned riverside lodges

FACTS

This is a malarial area

It is possible to go from Zambia into Zimbabwe and vice versa quite easily without additional visa fees as long as you are listed as a guest on a hotel manifest

There is a charge to enter either section of Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park