

Victoria Falls

When an awestruck David Livingstone first saw Victoria Falls in 1855 during his four-year journey from the upper Zambezi to the mouth of the river, he wrote in his journal, 'On sights as beautiful as this, angels in their flight must have gazed.' He named the falls after the queen of England, but they were (and still are) known as Mosi-oa-Tunya (The Smoke that Thunders) in the Kololo language.

It's easy to loft lengthy adjectives at Victoria Falls (indeed, it's aptly described as one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World), though perhaps the stats are more telling. Victoria Falls is 1.7km wide and 108m high and has an annual average flow of one million litres per *second*. During the rainy season (March to May), the flow can be ten times higher, while in the dry season (September to December), the volume of water can be as low as 4% of the peak flow.

In other words, climate plays a crucial factor in shaping your experience at Victoria Falls, though any time of year is a fine time to visit. During the rainy season, the spray from the falls can be seen (and felt) from kilometres away. Although you *will* get wet (don't worry, local entrepreneurs will be happy to rent you raincoats), the sight of Victoria Falls at full volume is simply awe-inspiring. During the dry season, the grandeur of the falls is somewhat checked, though the lack of spray makes it's easier to appreciate the size and scope of the falls. And of course, you'll probably walk away a lot drier. However, for whitewater rafting it is the most dangerous time as many more rocks are exposed – thus, this is the time that adrenaline junkies choose to visit.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Gaze in amazement at **Victoria Falls** from the **Zambian** (p625) or **Zimbabwean** (p630) side (or preferably both)
- Visit the falls during the full moon and see the enigmatic **lunar rainbow** (p626)
- Brush up on your history of the area at the **Livingstone Museum** (p622)
- Enjoy a spot of high tea at the **Terrace** (p629) at the elegant Victoria Falls Hotel
- Get your **adrenaline kicks** (opposite) with bungee jumping, microlighting, white-water rafting, jet-boating or canoeing



ACTIVITIES

Adrenaline junkies of the world unite – if you've got the cash, they've got the fix. All activities listed in this section can be booked and started from either Livingstone or Victoria Falls for about the same cost, though be sure to confirm any extra government charges and taxes. Note rates given in this section are approximate.

Abseiling

Spend the day scrambling up rocks, rapelling down cliffs and swinging across canyons in the scenic Batoka Gorge. Half-/full-day excursions cost US\$80/100.

Bungee Jumping

Tackling the third-highest jump in the world (111m) costs a mere US\$90 (US\$130 for tandem).

Canoeing & Kayaking

Although most travellers are set on rafting the Zambezi River, there are plenty of thrills to be had by canoe or kayak; half-/full-day trips along the Zambezi cost from US\$60/75; overnight jaunts cost about US\$150, and three-night trips start at US\$300.

Elephant-Back Safaris

Live out your wildest African dreams on an elephant-back safari through the bush. A half-day excursion costs US\$120 plus US\$10 in park fees.

Fishing

Care to tackle the mighty tiger fish of the Zambezi? A half-day trip including tackle, rods, lures and bait is just US\$90.

Fixed-Wing Flights

Whether you cruise over the falls in a modern Cessna or a vintage Tiger Moth, you'll never forget the views of the spray from above. Flights range from US\$60 to US\$160 depending on the type of craft and the route.

Helicopters

The aptly named 'Flight of the Angels' is a 15-minute joy ride (US\$90) over the falls or 30 minutes (US\$180) across the falls and Zambezi National Park.

Hiking

Hike with guides around the Zambezi National Park (Zimbabwe) or Mosi-oa-Tunya

National Park (Zambia) in search of the rare Taita Falcon. Day hikes cost US\$50, while overnight camping is an additional US\$10.

Horse Riding

Spot herds of game while horse riding alongside the Zambezi. Two-/three-hour rides cost about US\$45/60, while half-/full-day rides (US\$85/160) can also be arranged.

Interactive Drumming

Spend your evening by a campfire under the Southern African sky drumming alongside locals and travellers alike. A one-hour session followed by a traditional meal costs US\$25.

Jet Boats

Why avoid whirlpools in a raft when you can drive straight into them in a jet boat? This hair-raising trip costs US\$90, and is combined with a cable-car ride down into the Batoka Gorge.

Lion Walk

This is an amazing opportunity to walk alongside lion cubs that are between the ages of six weeks and one year. A half-day excursion to the Zambezi Nature Sanctuary (p628) in Zimbabwe costs US\$100 (excluding visa fees).

Microlights & Ultralights

These motorised hang-gliders offer the best views from the air, and the pilot will take pictures for you with a camera fixed to the wing. Microlight/ultralight flights cost about US\$85/104 (15 minutes) over the falls and about US\$160/185 (30 minutes) over the falls and Zambezi National Park.

Quadbiking

Appreciate the beauty and grandeur of Mother Nature by burning litres upon litres of her precious natural resources – a one-hour spin costs US\$60.

Rafting

High-water runs through rapids 11 to 18 (or 23), which are relatively mundane and can be done between 1 July and 15 August, though in high rainfall years they may begin as early as mid-May. Wilder low-water runs operate from roughly 15 August to late December, taking in the winding 22km from rapids 4 to 18 (or 23) if you put in on the Zimbabwean side, and from Rapids 1 to 18 (or 23) if you put in on the Zambian side. Half-/full-day trips cost

about US\$110/125, and overnight trips about US\$165. Longer jaunts can also be arranged.

River-Boarding

What about lying on a boogie board and careering down the rapids? 'Waterfall surfing', as it's sometimes called, costs from US\$135/150 for a half/full day. The best time of year for river-boarding is February to June.

River Cruises

It's easy enough to spot wildlife from a boat, though some passengers seem more interested in the free drinks. River cruises along the Zambezi range from civilised jaunts on the *African Queen* to full on, all-you-can-drink booze cruises. Prices range from US\$30 to US\$60.

Wildlife Drives

A guided safari in Mosi-oa-Tunya Game Park will maximise your chances of a face-to-face encounter with one of the few remaining white rhinos in Zambia. Wildlife drives cost around US\$45.

TRAVEL & ADVENTURE COMPANIES

If you're looking for independent advice, visit the **Backpackers Bazaar** (Map p627; ☎ 013-45828; bazaar@mweb.co.zw; off Parkway; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat & Sun) in the town of Victoria Falls. This well-established agency can book activities and accommodation on both sides of the falls, and its knowledgeable staff can help you make sense of everything. A new rival to Backpackers Bazaar is **Travel Junction** (Map p627; ☎ 013-41480; junction@mweb.co.zw; Trading Post Shopping Centre, Livingstone Way), which is also located in the town of Victoria Falls, and provides similar services.

ZIM OR ZAM?

From the Zimbabwean side, you're further from the falls, though the overall views are better. From the Zambian side, you can almost stand on top of the falls, though your perspective is narrowed. Admission is cheaper on the Zambian side, but the Zimbabwean side is less tourist-oriented and much quieter.

The town of Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe was built for tourists, so it's easily walkable and located right next to the entrance to the falls. These days, however, the town can feel abandoned as most travellers are avoiding Zimbabwe outright. The town is perfectly safe, though, and local business owners rely on tourism for their livelihoods.

Livingstone, in Zambia, is an attractive town with a relaxed ambience and a proud, historic air. Since the town of Victoria Falls was the main tourist centre for so many years, Livingstone feels more authentic, perhaps because locals earn their livelihood through means other than tourism. Livingstone is bustling with travellers all year, though the town is fairly spread out, and located 11km from the falls.

Below is a list of well-established and reputable tour operators. Keep in mind, however, that this list is by no means comprehensive, and that the industry is changing rapidly, particularly on the Zimbabwean side of the falls.

Note the majority of companies do not have offices, and instead work in conjunction with tour operators, booking agencies, hotels and hostels.

Companies in Livingstone

The area code for the following is ☎ 03.

Abseil Zambia (☎ 321188; www.thezambeziswing.com) Operates the gorge swing across Batoka Gorge.

African Extreme (☎ 324423) Operates the bungee jump over the Victoria Falls Bridge.

Batoka Sky (☎ 323672; www.batokasky.com) Specialises in flights over the falls.

Bwaato Adventures (☎ 324227; bwaato@zamnet.zm) Runs wildlife drives and walks.

Bundu Adventures (☎ 324407; www.bundu-adventures.com) Offers riverboarding and rafting.

Jet Extreme (☎ 321375; www.jetextreme.com) Does jet-boating in the Batoka Gorge.

Makora Quest (☎ 324574; quest@zamnet.zm) Organises tranquil canoeing trips in Klepper canoes.

Raft Extreme (☎ 323929; www.raftextreme.com) Also offers riverboarding and rafting.

Safari Par Excellence (☎ 326629; www.safpar.com) Offers a variety of activities, though they're well regarded for their rafting trips.

Taonga Safaris (☎ 324081) Runs booze and sunset cruises.

Touch Adventure (☎ 321111; www.touchadventure.com) Another whitewater rafting operator.

Wild Side Tours & Safaris (☎ 323726; www.wildside-safaris.com) Runs cruises and wildlife drives.

Zambezi Elephant Trails (☎ 321629; www.zambezi-safari.com) Specialises in elephant-back safaris.

Companies in Victoria Falls

The area code for the following is ☎ 013.

Adrift (Kandahar Safaris) (☎ 43589; www.adrift.co.uk) Organises riverboarding and rafting.

Bad Dog Rafting (☎ 41082; baddog@telcovic.co.zw) Another whitewater rafting operator.

Kalambeza Safaris (☎ 45938; kalambez@mweb.co.zw) Specialises in river cruises and canoeing expeditions.

Safari Par Excellence (☎ 44424; www.safpar.com) Offers a variety of activities, though they're well regarded for their rafting trips.

Shearwater Adventures (☎ 45806; www.shearwater-adventures.com) One of the most established whitewater rafting companies in the area.

Southern Cross Aviation (☎ 44018; sca@zol.co.zw) Arranges scenic flights over the falls.

Untamed Africa (☎ 42158; www.untamed-africa.com) Runs a variety of excursions from wildlife drives and walks to river rafting.

Zambezi Horse Trails (☎ 42054; www.horsesafari.co.zw) Takes riders on horseback safaris through nearby wildlife parks.

ZAMBIA

While Zimbabwe struggles to maintain its crumbling infrastructure, Zambia has reason to celebrate. The country remains stable, each of the 73 tribes are co-existing peacefully and the currency (the kwacha) is strengthening. Of course, Zambians are renowned for their friendly and laid-back demeanour, so even if things were collapsing around them, you'd probably still be greeted with a smile.

On the contrary, however, the recent tourist swing to the Zambian side of the falls has initiated a construction boom. Local business owners are riding the tourism wave straight to the bank, and the Zambezi waterfront is rapidly being developed as one of the most exclusive destinations in Southern Africa. But it's still fairly easy to experience the 'real Africa' in Zambia, and chances are you'll be greeted by a few smiling locals along the way.

LIVINGSTONE

☎ 03

The historic town of Livingstone, named after the first European to set eyes on the falls, sprung to life following the construction of the Victoria Falls Bridge in 1904. During the

remainder of the 20th century, Livingstone existed as a quiet provincial capital. However, following the recent political collapse of neighbouring Zimbabwe, Livingstone quickly emerged as the tourist capital of the Victoria Falls area. Historic buildings in the town centre are receiving a much-needed facelift, new construction projects are popping up on the town's outskirts and rumours abound of increased transportation links.

Today, Livingstone is the preferred base of most travellers visiting Victoria Falls. The town abounds with hotels, restaurants and bars catering to shoestringers and well-to-do travellers alike, and there are enough adrenaline activities on offer to make you think twice about leaving town after *only* seeing the falls.

Orientation

Livingstone is a modern, bustling African town that is redefining itself as a tourist hub. The town centre is 11km from the entrance to the falls, though it is not safe to walk this route.

Information

EMERGENCY

Police (☎ 320116; Maramba Rd)

Livingstone General Hospital (☎ 321475; Akapelwa St)

INTERNET ACCESS

Cyber Post (216 Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; per hr US\$4) Also offers international phone calls and faxes.

MONEY

Barclays Bank (cnr Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd & Akapelwa St) and **Standard Chartered Bank** (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd) accept major brands of travellers cheques, offer cash advances on Visa and MasterCard and changes money.

POST

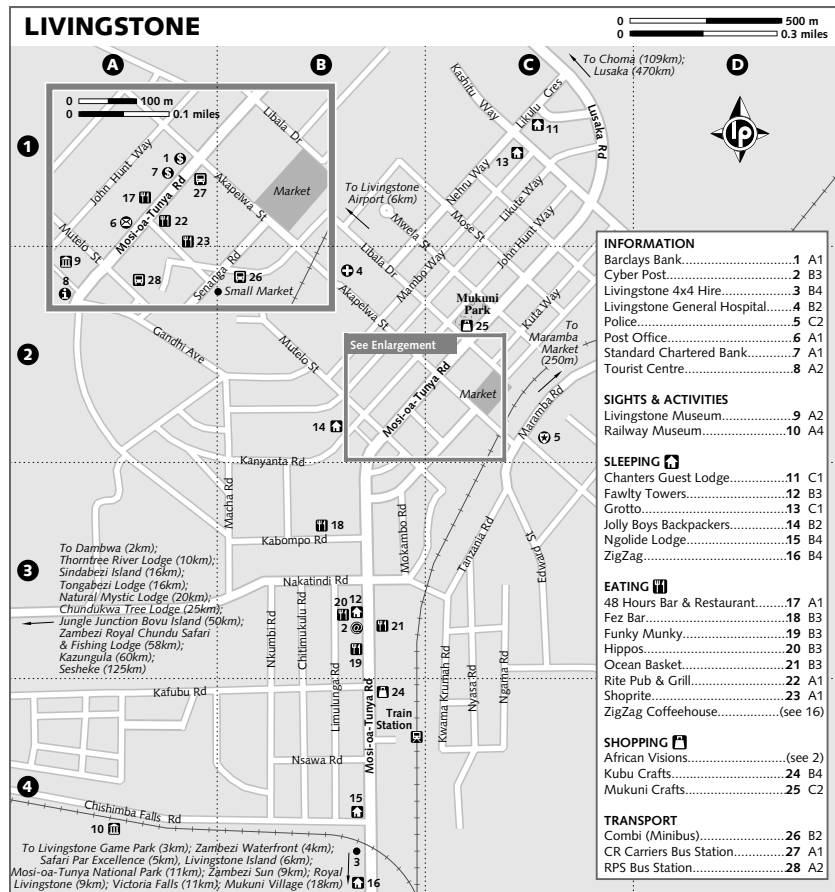
Post office (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd) Has a poste restante and fax service.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Centre (☎ 321404; Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12pm Sat) This is mildly useful, but has few brochures and maps.

Dangers & Annoyances

Don't walk from town to the falls as there have been a number of muggings along this stretch of road – even tourists on bicycles have been attacked.



Sights

One of the most popular attractions in the area is **Livingstone Island** (Map pp624–5), which is where the famous explorer caught his first glimpse of the falls. The island is located in the middle of the Zambezi River at the top of the falls, so you can literally hang your feet off the edge. Tours to the falls (from US\$45) can be arranged at your hotel or hostel.

The stately **Livingstone Museum** (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; adult US\$2; ☞ 9am–4.30pm) is divided into five sections covering archaeology, history, ethnography, natural history and art.

The **Railway Museum** (Chishimba Falls Rd; admission US\$5; ☞ 8.30am–4.30pm) features a charming but motley collection of locomotives, rolling stock and rail-related antiques.

Mukuni Village (admission US\$3; ☞ dawn–dusk) is a 'traditional' Leva village that welcomes tourists on guided tours. Although the village can be inundated with tourists at times, the admission fee does fund community projects.

Festivals

The annual three-day **Livingstone Festival** take place in late August, and features concerts, traditional dancing and special exhibitions.

Sleeping

Accommodation on the Zambian side of the falls is located in Livingstone and along the Zambezi riverfront. The advantage of staying in town is that you'll be within walking distance of all the bars and restaurants. The

advantage of staying along the riverfront is that you'll be able to relax in seclusion along some gorgeous stretches of the Zambezi.

Reservations are recommended during the busy summer months. Contact accommodation in advance to arrange for a visa-waiver in exchange for a pre-booking.

TOWN CENTRE

Budget

Grotto (☞ 323929; grotto@zamnet.zm; 2 Mambo Way; camping per person US\$3; ☞ ☞ ☞) This shady camp site, next to a lovely colonial home and a manicured garden, caters mostly for overland trucks.

Jolly Boys Backpackers (☞ 324229; www.backpackzambia.com; 34 Kanyanta Rd; camping per person US\$4, dm from US\$6, d from US\$25; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) The entire property, from the sunken pillow lounge to the lofty observation tower, was painstakingly designed by the fun-loving owners.

Fawly Towers (☞ 323432; www.adventure-africa.com; 216 Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; camping per person US\$5, dm from US\$8, d from US\$20; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) This lush oasis next to the Livingstone Adventure Centre has a large enclosed garden with a shady lawn and a sprawling pool as well as a relaxed, congenial backpacker vibe.

Midrange

Zambezi Waterfront (☞ 330696; www.safpar.net; camping per person US\$7, s/d pre-set tents US\$36/48, s/d with breakfast from US\$80/120, f US\$170; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) Accommodation is varied, and includes luxury tents, standard and riverside chalets as well as posh executive rooms and family suites.

ZigZag (☞ 322814; www.zigzagzambia.com; Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; s/d US\$35/60, f US\$70; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) Cutesy rooms are well decorated with African paraphernalia, while the grounds feature the quaint ZigZag Coffee House (p624), a lovely swimming pool and a small craft shop.

Chanters Guest Lodge (☞ 323412; www.chanters-livingstone.com; Likulu Cres; s/d with breakfast US\$50/65; ☞) This simple, family-run guest lodge is a comfortable option if you're looking for personalised service and quiet surroundings.

Ngolide Lodge (☞ 321113; www.ngolide.com; 110 Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; s/d/ste US\$66/87.50/104; ☞ ☞) This thatched lodge features natural stone-walled rooms with modern amenities including air-con, satellite TV and en suite.

Top End

Zambezi Sun (☞ 321122; www.sunint.co.za; s/d from US\$275/300; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) This huge complex, which

features restaurants, bars and a casino, is Moroccan-inspired, and designed to simulate a north African casbah.

Royal Livingstone (☞ 321122; www.sunint.co.za; s/d from US\$415/450; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) Although the building itself is only a few years old, grassy courtyards, vaulted ceilings and an atmosphere of indulgent excess give the Royal Livingstone an air of yesteryear.

ZAMBEZI RIVERFRONT

Pre-booking for hotels along the riverfront is mandatory.

Budget

Jungle Junction Bovu Island (☞ 323708; www.junglejunction.info; camping per person US\$8–15, huts per person incl all meals US\$40–50; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) Located on a lush island in the middle of the Zambezi, the Jungle Junction attracts travellers who want to do nothing more than lounge beneath the palm trees.

Midrange & Top End

All prices include meals and transfers from Livingstone.

Chundukwa Tree Lodge (☞ 324452; www.maplanga.co.za/lodge1.html; camping per person US\$10; huts per person US\$125; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) This simple but rustic lodge consists of thatched huts perched directly on the water.

Natural Mystic Lodge (☞ 324436; www.naturalmysticlodge.com; s/d from US\$85/125; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) The atmosphere at Natural Mystic is significantly less lavish than at some of the more upmarket lodges, though it makes for a peaceful retreat.

Zambezi Royal Chundu Safari & Fishing Lodge (☞ 097-653719; www.royalchundu.com; chalets per person US\$200; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) Accommodation is one of six dark wooden chalets on stilts that jut out over the water. Because of its remote location, the owners emphasise a number of activities including mokoro (dug-out canoe) trips, fishing excursions and riverboat safaris.

Thorntree River Lodge (☞ 324480; www.safpar.com/thorntree.htm; chalets per person US\$250; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) The Thorntree River Lodge is located within the borders of Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, and features rustic chalets with panoramic views of elephants frolicking along the Zambezi.

Tongabezi Lodge (☞ 323235; www.tongabezi.com; cottages/open-faced houses per person US\$430/530; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) The Tongabezi comprises several

spacious cottages and open-faced 'houses', which incorporate living trees as part of their structures. Guests are also invited to spend an evening on nearby Sindabezi Island (US\$350/person/night).

Eating & Drinking

Although there's no shortage of local haunts in Livingstone, the town is home to a number of high-quality tourist-oriented restaurants.

48 Hours Bar & Restaurant (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; snacks & mains US\$2-3) This unassuming spot serves up cheap eats and takeaway including burgers, meats and local dishes.

Funky Munky (216 Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; snacks & mains US\$2-4) This laid-back bistro is a popular backpackers' hang out and prepares baguettes, salads and pizzas in a comfortable setting.

ZigZag Coffee House (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; US\$3-5) This alluring hang out offers an eclectic range of dishes, from tacos to tandoori, and is ideal for a coffee or milk shake.

Fez Bar (Kabompo Rd; US\$3-6) This Moroccan-inspired bar and lounge serves tasty and eclectic meals throughout the day, though things really get kicking here once the sun goes down.

Hippos (Limulunga Rd; mains US\$3-6) This raucous bar-cum-restaurant at the back of Fawltly Towers is housed underneath a soaring two-storey thatched roof.

Rite Pub & Grill (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; mains US\$4-7) This centrally located pub draws in a good mix of travellers and locals, and serves tasty pub grub amid a kitschy Wild West setting.

Ocean Basket (82 Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd; US\$4-8) Sure, you're dining on seafood in a land-locked country, but the quality and selection here is surprisingly good.

Shopping

African Visions (216 Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd) Near the Livingstone Adventure Centre, this is a charming place selling quality fabrics and crafts from all over Africa.

Kubu Crafts (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd) Offers a vast selection of classy souvenirs. You can admire your purchases while sipping a tea or coffee in the shady tea garden.

Mukuni Crafts (Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd) The craft stalls in the southern corner of this park are a pleasant, and relatively hassle-free place to browse for souvenirs.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Nationwide Airlines (☎ 323360; www.flynationwide.co.za; Zambezi Sun hotel) and **Zambian Airways** (☎ 322967; www.zambianairways.co.zm; Livingstone Airport) connect Livingstone to destinations throughout Zambia and South Africa. **South African Airways** (www.flysaa.com) and **British Airways** (www.britishairways.com) fly every day to Johannesburg for around US\$110 return.

BICYCLE

Bikes can be ridden to/from Zimbabwe; however, bear in mind that cyclists have been mugged while riding to/from the Zambian border and the falls.

BUS & COMBI (MINIBUS)

Domestic

RPS (Mutelo St) has two bus services a day to Lusaka (US\$8, seven hours). **CR Carriers** (cnr Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd & Akapelwa St) runs four services a day to Lusaka (US\$9, seven hours). Buses to Shesheke (US\$7, five hours) leave at around 10am from Mingongo bus station next to the Catholic church at Dambwa village, 3km west of the town centre. Direct buses to Mongu (US\$11, nine hours) leave at midnight from Maramba market, though you might feel more comfortable on a morning bus to Shesheke, and then transfer to a Mongu bus (US\$5, four hours).

Combis to the Botswana border at Kazungula (US\$2.50, one hour) depart from Dambwa, 3km west of the town centre, on Nakatindi Rd.

International

For information about international buses, see p759.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If you're driving a rented car or motorcycle, be advised that the vast majority of companies do not ensure their vehicles in Zambia (surprisingly, most companies allow their vehicles to enter Zimbabwe).

HITCHING

With patience, it's fairly easy to hitch from Kazungula, Botswana, and Katima Mulilo, Namibia, to Livingstone. The best place in all three towns to arrange a lift is at any petrol

station. See warnings about hitching in each country's Directory.

TRAIN

The *Zambezi Express* leaves Livingstone for Lusaka (US\$4/5/7/8 economy/standard/1st class/sleeper, 15 hours), via Choma, on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday at 7pm. Reservations are available at the **train station** (☎ 320001), which is signed off the Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The Livingstone Airport is located 6km north-west of town, and is easily accessible by taxi (US\$5 each way).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If you're planning on renting a car in Zambia, consider using **Livingstone 4X4 Hire** (☎ 320888; www.4x4hireafrica.com; Industrial Rd). This is the only operator in town that rents 4WD vehicles.

COMBIS & TAXIS

Combis run regularly along Mosi-oa-Tunya Rd to Victoria Falls and the Zambian border, and cost (US\$0.50, 15 minutes). Taxis, which can be easily identified by their sky-blue colour, cost about US\$4 and are a good option if you can split the fare with others.

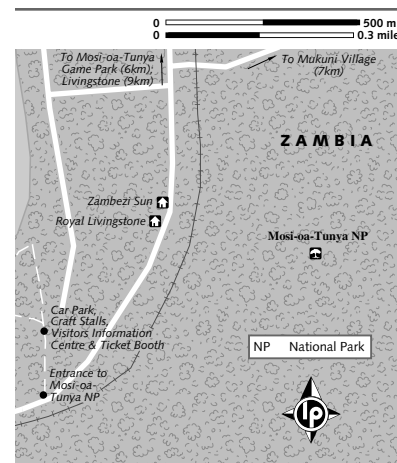
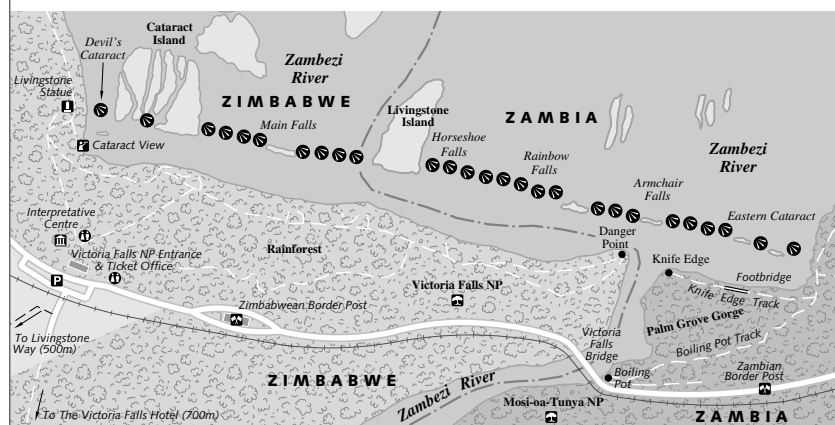
MOSI-OA-TUNYA NATIONAL PARK

Zambia's smallest national park is located 11km from Livingstone, and is divided into two sections – the Victoria Falls World Heritage National Monument Site and Mosi-oa-Tunya Game Park.

Victoria Falls World Heritage National Monument Site

The entrance to the **park** (admission US\$10, ☎ 6am-6pm) is located just before the Zambian border post. For close-up views of the **Eastern Cataract**, nothing beats the hair-raising (and hair-wetting) walk across the **footbridge**, through swirling clouds of mist, to a sheer buttress called the **Knife Edge**. If the water is low, or the wind is favourable, you'll be treated to a magnificent view of the falls as well as the yawning abyss below. Otherwise, your vision (and your clothes) will be drenched by spray. Then you can walk down a steep track to the banks of the great Zambezi to see the huge whirlpool called the **Boiling Pot**.

VICTORIA FALLS & MOSI-OA-TUNYA NATIONAL PARKS



Like its counterpart on the Zimbabwean side, the park is open again in the evenings during (and just before and after) a full moon in order to see the amazing **lunar rainbow**. The tickets cost an extra US\$10 – hours of operation vary, though you can inquire through your accommodation.

Mosi-oo-Tunya Game Park

Upriver from the falls, and only 3km southwest of Livingstone, is this tiny **wildlife sanctuary** (admission per person US\$10; ☎ 6am-6pm), which has a surprising range of animals including rhinos, zebras, giraffes, buffaloes, elephants and antelopes.

Getting There & Away

The Zambian side of the falls is 11km south of Livingstone and along the main road to the border with Zimbabwe. Plenty of minibuses and shared taxis ply the route from the minibus terminal along Senanga Rd in Livingstone. Don't walk (and think twice about cycling) – muggings are frequent along this route.

ZIMBABWE

Although Zimbabwe was the preferred base for visiting Victoria Falls as recently as 2002, these days travellers are reluctant to cross the border. In all fairness, there's reason enough to be alarmed, especially as the media continues to relate stories of petrol rationing, hyperinflation, rampant land reform, food shortages and most recently a lack of Coca-Cola. In fact, a 2006 survey by the US-based *Foreign Policy* magazine ranked Zimbabwe number five in their top 10 list of failed states.

The reality on the ground is far from encouraging, though tourists do continue to remain safely on the sidelines of Zimbabwe's internal conflict. And, of course, Zimbabweans continue to remain hopeful that things will get better, particularly because it's difficult to imagine things getting worse.

VICTORIA FALLS

☎ 013

Unlike Livingstone, the town of Victoria Falls (or simply 'Vic Falls') was built with the needs of the tourist in mind. Walkable streets were lined with hotels, bars and restaurants while locals plied their curios in public parks and squares. These days, however, Vic Falls feels

like a ghost town, perhaps because residents fled to the bush following the government-sponsored Operation Murambatsvina (Drive out the Trash), which left thousands of ordinary people homeless.

Although walking through the streets of Vic Falls is at times an exercise in empathy, understand that locals eke out a meagre living by tending to the few remaining tourists. With that said, allay your fears, stock up on US dollars and cross into Zim – we promise that you'll be warmly welcomed.

Orientation

Vic Falls was designed to be walkable – it's just over a kilometre from the town centre to the entrance to Victoria Falls National Park (p630). Although it's perfectly safe to walk to and from the falls, it's advisable to stick to the more touristed areas and avoid walking around at night.

Information

EMERGENCY

Medical Air Rescue Service (MARS; ☎ 44764)

Police (☎ 44206; Livingstone Way)

Victoria Falls Surgery (☎ 43356; West Dr)

INTERNET ACCESS

Telco (☎ 43441; Phumula Centre; per hr US\$1; ☎ 8am-6pm) Surprisingly reliable internet access.

MONEY

Barclays Bank (off Livingstone Way) Offers cash advances with Visa and MasterCard and have ATMs, though you will be forced to pay the official exchange rate.

Standard Chartered Bank (off Livingstone Way) Offers the same services as Barclays.

POST

Post office (off Livingstone Way)

TELEPHONE

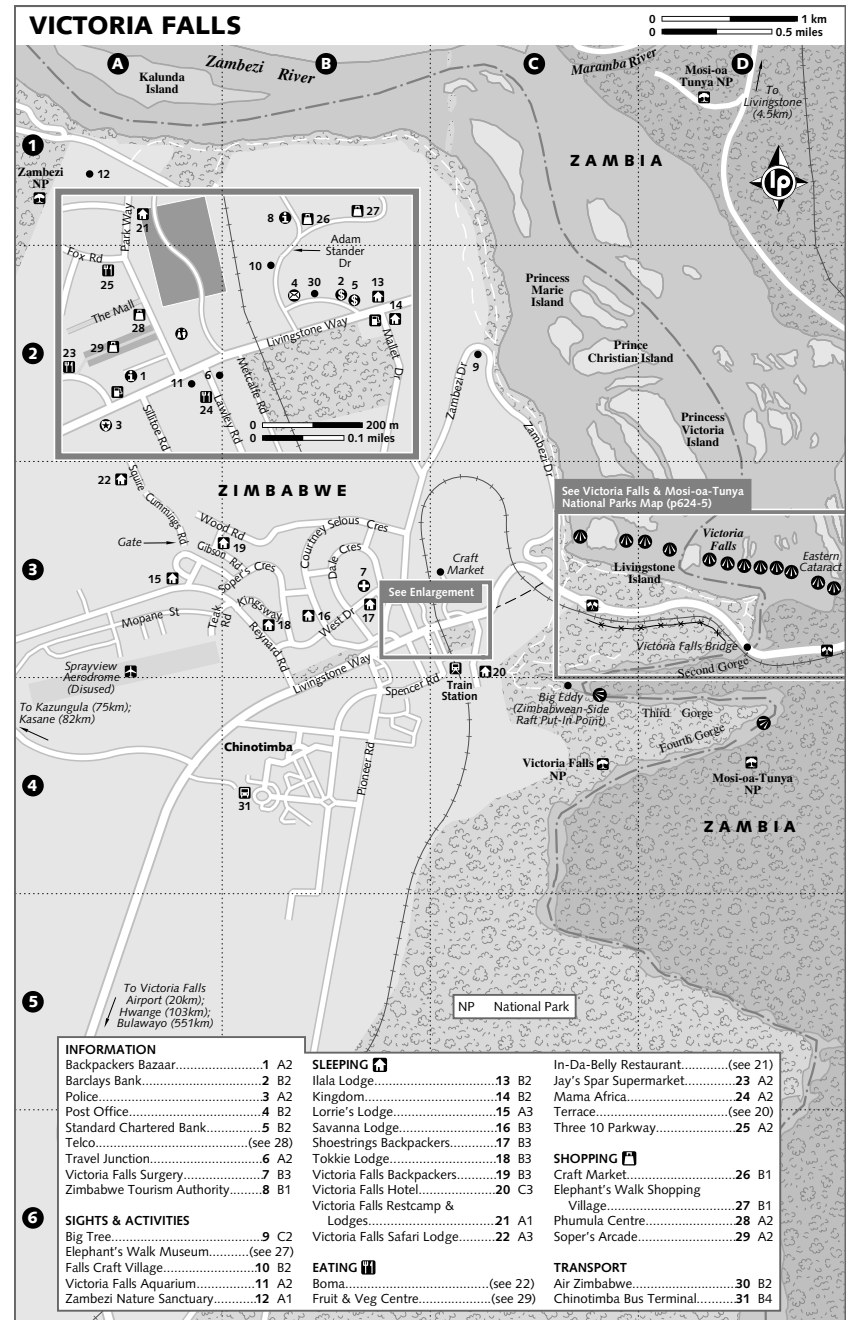
Telephone calls can be made at telephone offices and travel agencies upstairs in Soper's Arcade.

To dial Livingstone you don't need the country or city code – simply dial ☎ 8, then the local number.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (☎ 44376;

zta@vicfalls.tzazim.co.zw; 258 Adam Stander Dr; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Gives away a few brochures and can book accommodation throughout the country.



Dangers & Annoyances

Don't walk or even cycle along Zambezi Dr to the Big Tree, because of the danger of being mugged. And of course, do not change money on the streets as you are liable to get caught.

Sights

Zambezi Dr heads north from near the entrance to the falls to the **Big Tree**, which is, well, a big tree. In fact, it's a baobab with a 20m circumference.

The impressive new **Victoria Falls Aquarium** (Livingstone Way; admission US\$5; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm) is apparently the largest freshwater aquarium in Africa.

The new **Elephant's Walk Museum** (Elephant's Walk Shopping Village, off Adam Stander Dr; admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm) houses a small but worthwhile private collection detailing the cultural heritage of local ethnic groups.

The **Falls Craft Village** (☎ 44309; Adam Stander Dr; admission US\$8; ☎ 8am-5pm) is a touristy mock-up of a traditional Zimbabwean village.

The **Zambezi Nature Sanctuary** (☎ 44604; Parkway; admission with guided tour US\$5; ☎ 8am-5pm) offers lots of crocs, as well as lions and leopards.

Sleeping

Unlike in the rest of Zimbabwe, accommodation options quote – and usually require payment – in US dollars.

BUDGET & MIDRANGE

Shoestrings Backpackers (☎ 40167; 12 West Dr; camping per person US\$3, dm US\$5, d US\$20; ☎) Shoestrings is a popular stop for the overland truck crowd, though the laid-back ambience also draws in a good number of independent travellers.

Victoria Falls Backpackers (☎ 42209; www.victoriafallsbackpackers.com; 357 Gibson Rd; camping per person US\$4, dm US\$8, s/d with shared bathroom \$10/20; ☎) Although it's a bit further out than other places, Victoria Falls Backpackers is superbly set up for independent and budget travellers.

Tokkie Lodge (☎ 43306; www.safarisouth.co.zw; 224 Reynard Rd; camping per person US\$5, dm US\$10, s/d with shared bathroom US\$15/30; ☎) Although the basic rooms and camp sites at Tokkie are primarily reserved for overland trucks, independent travellers are welcome.

Victoria Falls Restcamp & Lodges (☎ 40509; www.vicfallsrestcamp.co.zw; Park Way & West Dr intersection; camping per person US\$5, dm US\$5, s/d chalets with shared bathroom US\$15/20, s/d cottages with bathroom US\$20/30; ☎) This former government-run camp-

ing ground was recently renovated by the new management.

Savanna Lodge (☎ 42115; savanna@telcovic.co.zw; 68 Courtney Selous Cres; dm US\$13, d with shared bathroom & breakfast US\$26; ☎) This family-run budget lodge has basic rooms and dormitories that surround a tranquil garden and swimming pool.

Lorrie's Lodge (☎ 011-406584; lorrie@mweb.co.zw; 397 Reynard Rd; r per person without bathroom with breakfast US\$15, r with breakfast US\$25; ☎) This quaint pension is a great option if you're looking for personalised attention and an intimate atmosphere.

TOP END

Ilala Lodge (☎ 44737; www.ilalalodge.com; 411 Livingstone Way; s/d with breakfast from US\$195/270; ☎) This colonial relic is adorned with mounted rifles, hunting trophies and faded oil paintings; classically decorated rooms face out towards the manicured lawns and elaborate gardens.

Kingdom (☎ 44275; www.zimsun.co.zw; Livingstone Way; s/d with breakfast from US\$205/228; ☎) Although it claims to be a humble recreation of the ruins at Great Zimbabwe, the Kingdom looks more like a Las Vegas hotel, right down to the casino, food court and palm-fringed pool complex.

Victoria Falls Hotel (☎ 44751; www.lhw.com; Mallet Dr; s/d with breakfast from US\$295/328; ☎) This historic hotel (the oldest in Zimbabwe) oozes elegance and sophistication, and occupies an impossibly scenic location across from the gorge and bridge.

Victoria Falls Safari Lodge (☎ 43201; www.vfsl.com; Squire Cummings Rd; s/d from US\$315/395 with breakfast; ☎) Everything from the rambling gardens and spray views to the dramatic thatched lobby and meticulously appointed rooms is a class act.

Eating

Restaurants in Vic Falls have taken a hit following the reduction in Zimbabwean tourism, but there are still a few memorable spots in town.

If you're self-catering, you can try **Jay's Spar Supermarket** (Courtney Selous Cres) or the **Fruit & Veg Centre** (Soper's Arcade), but don't be surprised if stocks are somewhat lacking.

Three 10 Parkway (☎ 43468; 310 Parkway; meals US\$2-4) This relaxed café serves up enticing dishes amid a tranquil garden setting.

In-Da-Belly Restaurant (☎ 332077; Victoria Falls Restcamp & Lodges; meals US\$4-8) In-Da-Belly (a play on Ndebele, one of the two major population

groups in Zimbabwe) serves an impressive array of gourmet bistro-style cuisine.

Mama Africa (☎ 091-380430; meals US\$5-8) This perennial tourist haunt behind the Landela Centre exudes a hip and trendy atmosphere, and specialises in local dishes, steaks and game meats.

Terrace (Victoria Falls Hotel, Mallet Dr; meals US\$5-12) The Terrace at the stately Victoria Falls Hotel overlooks the hotel gardens and the Victoria Falls Bridge, and brims with English colonial ambience.

Boma (☎ 43201; Victoria Falls Safari Lodge, Squire Cummings Rd; meals US\$5-15) The Boma is consistently recommended by readers, and is highlighted by its incredible views of a nearby water hole in Zambezi National Park.

Drinking & Entertainment

There's unfortunately not much life left in Vic Falls after sunset, though the bars at Shoestrings Backpackers and Mama Africa are usually bustling.

Shopping

The **craft market** (Adam Stander Dr) has an impressive selection of curios, while the nearby Elephant's Walk Shopping Village complex stocks mainly upmarket crafts.

Getting There & Away

AIR
Air Zimbabwe (☎ 44316; www.airzimbabwe.com) connects Victoria Falls to destinations through-

out Zambia and South Africa. **South African Airways** (☎ 011-808678; www.flysaa.com) and **British Airways** (www.britishairways.com) fly every day to Johannesburg for around US\$150 return. **Air Namibia** (www.airnamibia.com) flies to Windhoek for around US\$300 return.

BUS & MINIBUS

Combis depart irregularly from **Chinotimba Bus Terminal** (Pioneer Rd, Chinotimba) for Bulawayo (US\$5, five hours) and Harare (US\$11, 11 hours).

For information about international buses, see p759.

BICYCLE

Bikes can be ridden to/from Zambia; however, bear in mind that cyclists have been mugged while riding to/from the Zambian border and the falls.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If you're driving a rented car or motorcycle, you'll need a letter from your rental company stating that you are permitted to enter Zimbabwe.

HITCHING

It's fairly easy to hitch between Victoria Falls and Kazungula, Botswana. If you head to the petrol station in both towns you'll have the best chance of a lift; see also p131.

Hitching in the rest of Zimbabwe is not recommended; see p731.

VISITING ZAM FROM ZIM (OR VICE VERSA)

From Vic Falls, you can walk or take a taxi to the Zimbabwean immigration post, and then continue 1.3km on foot over the Victoria Falls Bridge. Just past the bridge is the Zambian border crossing, and 100m beyond it, the entrance to Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park.

Combis (US\$0.50) and share taxis (US\$4) leave when full to Livingstone, about 11km away. Mugging is common along this route, so it may be unwise to walk or ride a bicycle (and don't stop your car to take photos either).

Most travel agencies and hotels in Vic Falls and Livingstone charge about US\$25 for minibus transfers between the two towns. If you're planning on spending several days in Zamiba, contact your accommodation in advance as it's sometimes possible to arrange for a visa-waiver in exchange for a pre-booking. Note that a similar programme does not exist if you're crossing into Zimbabwe from Zambia.

If you're crossing into Zambia for the day, advise the Zimbabwean officials before leaving the country so you won't need to buy a new visa when you return later in the day. Similarly, Zambian officials charge only US\$10 for day visas – this is a concession for participants in adrenaline activities 'north of the border', though it applies to all foreign tourists. Note Zimbabwean day visas do not exist – if you're heading into the country from Zambia, you will need to buy a proper visa at the border.

TRAIN

The *Mosi-oa-Tunya* train leaves Vic Falls daily at 6.30pm for Bulawayo (US\$1/3/4 for economy/2nd/1st class, 12 hours). Make reservations at the **ticket office** (☎ 44391; 🕒 7am-12pm & 2-4pm Mon-Fri, 7am-10am Sat & Sun) inside the train station.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Victoria Falls Airport is located 20km south-east of town, and is easily accessible by taxi (US\$20 each way).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Be advised that petrol is a rarity scarce commodity in Zimbabwe, so it's best to keep your driving to a minimum.

TAXIS

A taxi around town costs about US\$5; slightly more after dark. None of them use meters, so you'll have to bargain.

VICTORIA FALLS NATIONAL PARK

The entrance to the **national park** (Map pp624-5; admission US\$20, 🕒 6am-6pm) is located just before the Zimbabwean border post. The admission

price must be paid in US dollars. One of the most dramatic spots is the westernmost point known as **Cataract View**. Another track leads to the aptly named **Danger Point**, where a sheer, unfenced 100m drop-off will rattle your nerves. From there, you can follow a side track for a view of the **Victoria Falls Bridge**.

Like its counterpart on the Zimbabwean side, the park is open again in the evenings during (and just before and after) a full moon in order to see the amazing **lunar rainbow**. The tickets cost an extra US\$10 – hours of operation vary, though you can inquire through your accommodation.

ZAMBEZI NATIONAL PARK

This **national park** (Map p627; admission US\$10; 🕒 6am-6.30pm) consists of 40km of Zambezi River frontage and a spread of wildlife-rich mopane forest and savanna. The national park is best known for its herds of sable antelopes, but it is also home to lions, giraffes and elephants. The entrance to the park is situated only 5km northwest of the Victoria Falls town centre, and is easily accessible by private vehicle.