

ZIMBABWE COUNTRY INFORMATION



In preparation for your Zimbabwe Sojourn please find below some interesting facts about the country. For further information you can visit the official Zimbabwe Tourism Authority's website <http://www.zimbabwetourism.net>



The country:

Zimbabwe, a landlocked country in south-central Africa that is slightly smaller than California. It is bordered by Botswana on the west, Zambia on the north; Mozambique on the east, and South Africa on the south.

Zimbabwe now provides excellent value and has acquired relatively increased stability, due to the dollarization of the economy. The geographical nature of Zimbabwe allows one to visit many different areas without long travelling times.

The country offers some of Africa's finest walking and canoeing safaris alongside the Zambezi River in the Mana Pools National Park; cruise on a house boat on Lake Kariba, enjoy magnificent big 5

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viewing in Hwange National Park; the World Heritage Site of Victoria Falls where some of the best white water rafting experiences can be enjoyed whilst on the Eastern side some fantastic golf and trout fishing opportunities are on offer in the mountains.

Harare in the capital city whilst Victoria Falls in the west of the country is one of the main tourist hubs.

The remains of early humans, dating back 500,000 years, have been discovered in present-day Zimbabwe. The land's earliest settlers, the Khoisan, date back to 200 B.C. After a period of Bantu domination, the Shona people ruled, followed by the Nguni and Zulu peoples. By the mid-19th century the descendants of the Nguni and Zulu, the Ndebele, had established a powerful warrior kingdom. The first British explorers, colonists, and missionaries arrived in the 1850s, and the massive influx of foreigners led to the establishment of the territory Rhodesia, named after Cecil Rhodes of the British South Africa Company. In 1923, European settlers voted to become the self-governing British colony of Southern Rhodesia. After a brief federation with Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyasaland (now Malawi) in the post-World War II period, Southern Rhodesia (also known as Rhodesia) chose to remain a colony when its two partners voted for independence in 1963. The white minority finally consented to hold multiracial elections in 1980, and Robert Mugabe won a landslide victory. The country achieved independence on April 17, 1980, under the name Zimbabwe. Mugabe eventually established a one-party socialist state, but by 1990 he had instituted multiparty elections and in 1991 deleted all references to Marxism-Leninism and scientific socialism from the constitution. Once heralded as a champion of the anticolonial movement, Mugabe is now viewed by much of the international community as an authoritarian ruler responsible for egregious human rights abuses and for ruining the economy of his country.

Currency:

The country accepts payments in US Dollars (mostly accepted) but at certain camps and hotels they will also accept Pounds Sterling, Euros and South African Rand. Please bring cash in small denominations (eg: USD 1, 2, 5, 10 and 20's) as change is very limited. Visa and MasterCard credit cards are accepted in most hotels and camps. ATM's are found at most banks in Zimbabwe, but they do not always work.

Note: There is an extreme shortage of cash in Zimbabwe so we suggest that you do not rely on drawing cash from the ATM's. Please bring sufficient cash to cover your visa entry fees, any park fees which are not included in your prepaid trip, for shopping in the markets and for any tips. Please also note that Zimbabwe has the Zimbabwe Bond notes which appear to be denominated in USD but have no value outside of Zimbabwe. We suggest you try to pay for things in exact cash to avoid change in Zimbabwe Bond notes.

Visas:

Most European and USA passport holders do require a visa to enter Zimbabwe. These prices are subject to change at any time. Visas can be paid for on arrival in exact cash (no change is usually given). If you are unsure if you require a visa please check with your nearest embassy.

USA passport holders: USD 30 per person, single entry

Medical:

Many parts of Zimbabwe are considered to be located in malaria areas. Please speak to your doctor about the best medication to take. There are no mandatory inoculations unless you have been in a yellow fever area in the last 6 months.

Victoria Falls:

Visitors are able to visit the Falls on their own. Entrance fee for international visitors is USD30 per person per visit. Passports must be presented and entrance fees must be paid in foreign currency. (Subject to change). If you intend to visit the Zambian side of Victoria Falls (for a day trip or overnight) you will need to pay for day visa and additional park fees.

Power:

Electricity is supplied at 220/240v. Square and wall plugs are used. Most camps run on generators and supply international adapters. Expect to experience power cuts in the cities due to extreme power shortages in the country. Most city hotels do have back up generators.

Communications:

Most camps are located in remote areas so cell phone and Internet connections are almost non-existent. Camps maintain contact with their head offices by radio. If you need to have guaranteed communication then we suggest you rent a satellite phone in South Africa prior to your arrival. There is cell phone coverage in the cities but this can be unreliable and slow.

Access:

Most camps are accessed by light aircraft flights. There is a luggage restriction of 20kgs (44lbs) per person in soft-sided bags (no hard framed suitcases) on these flights. If an individual weighs over 100kgs (220lbs) please ensure you have advised us.

Shopping

Zimbabwe sells a wide range of locally made soapstone statues, wooden carvings, baskets, crotchet-ware and hand printed African sarongs. Always to remember to bargain and start at half the asking price! The largest market is in Victoria Falls but the safari camps do carry a small selection of items to purchase in their shops.

Language:

English is the official language. Other widely spoken languages are Shona and IsiNdebele, which also have various dialects and other minority languages.

Time:

Zimbabwe shares the same time as all southern Africa, except Namibia, which is Greenwich Mean Time – (GMT) + 2 hours.

Economy:

The country has mineral reserves of coal, asbestos, copper, nickel, gold, platinum and iron ore. Historically the country had farming and tourism as its other main industries. The economy of Zimbabwe has shrunk significantly after 2000, resulting in a desperate situation for the country and widespread poverty and an 80% unemployment rate. Hyperinflation has been a major problem from about 2003 to April 2009, when the country suspended its own currency.

Public Holidays:

The dates of certain public holidays change from year to year.

01 January	New Years Day
Varies	Good Friday
Varies	Easter Monday
18 April	Independence Day
01 May	Workers' Day
25 May	Africa Day
11 August	Heroes' Day

Second weekend August
22 December
25 December
26 December

Defence Force's National Day
National Unity Day
Christmas Day
Family Day

The Zimbabwe flag:

The flag was adopted on April 18, 1980, when the country became an independent nation. Officially, the colours of the flag of Zimbabwe carry political, regional, and cultural meanings. Green represents the agriculture and rural areas of Zimbabwe. Yellow stands for the wealth of minerals in the country, predominantly gold. The red symbolizes the blood shed during the first and second Chimurenga (wars) in the struggle for independence. The black indicates the heritage, ethnicity and community of the native Africans of Zimbabwe. The white triangle is a symbol for peace. The golden bird, known as the "Great Zimbabwe Bird" is the national symbol of Zimbabwe. A representation of most likely the Bateleur eagle or the African Fish Eagle, it "exemplifies the strong bond that ancestral humans had with animals, nature and spirit guides" and it is treated with a high level of importance and respect. The red star represents the nation's hopes and aspirations for the future.

Climate:

You can do a safari all year round in most parts of Zimbabwe but the Mana Pools area on the Lower Zambezi is closed from November to April due to the rains.

The summer is from October to March. This is the hottest time of year with the most rain falling in February and March. This period is a haven for all types of migrant birds and wonderful butterflies and flowers.

The winter is from May to September. This is the dry cooler season. Temperatures in winter can drop quite dramatically at night and in the early morning, particularly when on safari in the open vehicle, so we suggest that you pack accordingly with very warm clothing including a warm winter jacket, a beanie, scarf and gloves. However, daytime temperatures are pleasantly warm. This period tends to see the higher concentration of game at the waterholes and larger herds of animals. The bush is dry and thin and very dusty towards the end of the dry season!

The in-between periods – April/early May and mid September, still tend to be dry, however, the days are cooler than in summer and the nights are warmer than in winter.

Weather Conditions, Victoria Falls.

Temperature (°C) - These are the average lows and highs

	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>	<u>Jul</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sep</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
Vic Falls	17/32	17/30	18/31	14/29	10/29	7/25	6/25	8/28	14/33	18/34	18/31	17/31

Rainfall (mm) - This varies according to the year and where you are.

	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>	<u>Jul</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sep</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
Vic Falls	215	185	100	45	5	3	1	3	4	20	100	190

Recommended reading (in no particular order):

- Zimbabwe - The Bradt Travel Guide – Chris McIntyre
- Selous Scouts: Top Secret War; Ron Reid-Daly
- The Battle for Zimbabwe; Geoff Hill
- Zimbabwe - The Beautiful & Zimbabwe - Beautiful Land; Peter Joyce
- Zambezi - The River of the Gods; Jan & Fiona Teede.

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- *Hwange - The Retreat of the Elephants; Nick Greaves*
- *The Last Resort: A Memoir of Zimbabwe; Douglas Rogers*
- *Mukiwa: A White Boy in Africa; Peter Godwin*
- *Cocktail Hour Under the Tree of Forgetfulness; Alexandra Fuller*
- *The Fear: Robert Mugabe and the Martyrdom of Zimbabwe; Peter Godwin*
- *Love in the Direst Season: A family Memoir; Neely Tucker*
- *African Laughter: Four Visits to Zimbabwe; Doris Lessing*
- *House of Stone: The True Story of a Family Divided in War-Torn Zimbabwe; Christina Lamb*

African Sojourns wishes you a wonderful and exciting holiday!