

AFRICA · WILDLIFE · ADVENTURE · HISTORY · OFF THE BEATEN PATH



Zimbabwe

Victoria Falls is the headline, and the Zimbabwean side faces most of its 1.7 km-wide curtain, but the country's deeper appeal is wildlife: Hwange's great elephant herds, walking and canoe safaris at Mana Pools, and rhino tracking in the Matobo Hills. The granite walls of Great Zimbabwe add the ruins of a medieval African capital.



Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Zimbabwe and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 15 July 2026.

 CAPITAL Harare	 CURRENCY US dollar (USD) £1 ≈ US\$1.34	 LANGUAGE English, Shona Ndebele	 BEST TIME May–Oct
 DAILY BUDGET £50–£400 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type D, G 220V · UK plugs fit	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 14h 30m via Johannesburg ~£850–£1,400 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+2 standard time

Zimbabwe's big sights sit around its edges. In the north-west, Victoria Falls town is the adventure hub, with Hwange National Park a few hours south-east and Botswana's Chobe a short drive west. The Zambezi valley in the north holds Lake Kariba's houseboats and the canoe and walking safaris of Mana Pools. In the south, Bulawayo is the base for the granite Matobo Hills, and Great Zimbabwe lies near Masvingo; the Eastern Highlands offer cool hiking. First-timers often pair the Falls with Hwange, while a longer road trip loops Harare, Great Zimbabwe, Matobo, Hwange and the Falls.

Zimbabwe runs largely on US dollars and is not cheap: park fees, lodges and fly-in camps are priced at international rates, though self-drivers and campers can travel for much less. In return, the parks are uncrowded and the guiding is among Africa's best, with a famously demanding licensing system for walking guides. Infrastructure can creak, with power cuts and potholed roads. The dry winter months bring the best game viewing and chilly nights, while October is fiercely hot. It suits safari lovers who want to walk rather than just drive, and travellers curious about the region's history.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

NATURE

Victoria Falls

The Zambezi plunges more than 100 metres into a basalt gorge along 1.7 km. A rainforest path on the Zimbabwean side links a string of viewpoints; come at full flood (about March–May) for thunder and spray, or later for clearer views and white-water rafting.
- 2

WILDLIFE

Hwange National Park

Zimbabwe's largest park, on the edge of the Kalahari sands, is famous for elephants, which crowd its pumped waterholes in the dry season, alongside lions, wild dogs, sable and buffalo. Self-drive from Main Camp or stay in private concessions.

3

WILDLIFE

Mana Pools National Park

A UNESCO-listed Zambezi floodplain and one of the few African parks where walking is allowed: approach elephants beneath the winterthorn trees and canoe past hippos and crocodiles. Most camps open only in the dry season.

4

HISTORY

Great Zimbabwe

The stone capital of a Shona kingdom that flourished from the 11th to the 15th century, and the source of the country's name. The Great Enclosure's curving mortarless granite walls, up to 11 metres high, are the largest ancient structures south of the Sahara.

5

NATURE

Matobo National Park

Domes and balancing piles of granite south of Bulawayo shelter San rock paintings, Cecil Rhodes's hilltop grave at World's View, dense populations of leopards and black eagles, and rhinos that you can track on foot with rangers.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Harare

≈ 2.4 million people

A green, spread-out capital of jacaranda avenues, purple in September and October, with the National Gallery and Mbare market; most visitors pass through, but its restaurants and craft shops reward a day.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Bulawayo

≈ 670,000 people

Zimbabwe's second city has broad colonial-era streets, the Natural History Museum and a relaxed pace; it is the gateway to the Matobo Hills and the UNESCO-listed Khami ruins.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Mutare

≈ 225,000 people

A pleasant town in a mountain bowl by the Mozambican border, and the gateway to the Bvumba's forests, Nyanga's trout streams and the Chimanimani mountains.

Harare's figure covers Harare Metropolitan Province, including Chitungwiza and Epworth; counted separately, Chitungwiza would rank third. Figures are from the 2022 census.

When to go to Zimbabwe

Best time: **May–Oct.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

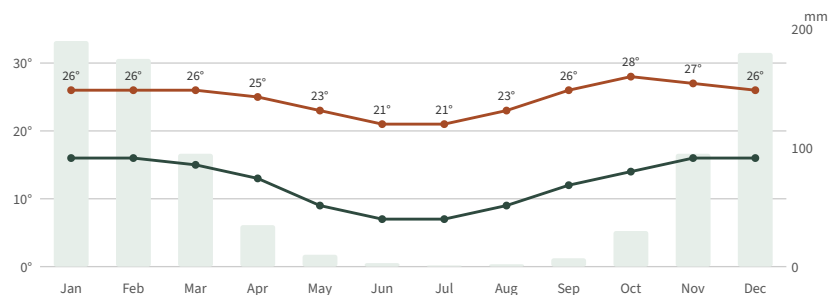
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Harare

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Apr–Jun	Lunar rainbow at Victoria Falls On nights around the full moon during high water, the falls' rainforest opens late for viewings of the moonbow, a pale rainbow formed in the spray by moonlight.
Oct	Kariba Invitation Tiger Fish Tournament One of Africa's biggest freshwater angling competitions, held on Lake Kariba each October, when hundreds of teams chase the hard-fighting tigerfish and the lakeside town fills up.

How much does Zimbabwe cost?

SHOESTRING £50 per person / day ≈ US\$66.82 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £140 per person / day ≈ US\$187 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £400 per person / day ≈ US\$535 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

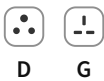
Sadza with muriwo Sadza, a stiff white maize porridge, is the staple of every Zimbabwean meal: roll a ball in your right hand and scoop up muriwo, greens cooked with tomato and onion.	Kapenta Tiny sardine-like fish from Lake Kariba, dried or fried crisp and cooked with tomato and onion; a cheap, protein-rich relish for sadza.	Dovi A rich peanut-butter stew of chicken or greens, sometimes with okra, served with sadza or rice in homes and local eateries.
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Getting around

Most safari visitors fly into Victoria Falls and let lodges arrange road transfers or light-aircraft charters to Hwange, Mana Pools and Kariba. Air Zimbabwe and Fastjet link Harare, Bulawayo and Victoria Falls. Self-drive is popular, and roads between the main towns are mostly tarred but potholed, with frequent police roadblocks. Intercity coaches are cheap and reasonably comfortable, but rarely reach the parks.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



220V — UK plugs fit

DIALLING CODE

+263

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **112** (ambulance, fire, police)
Econet (mobile service provider) subscribers: **112**
NetOne (mobile service provider) subscribers: **114**
Landline: **0800 3222 911**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC+2 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the left

TIPPING

Tip safari guides and trackers in US dollars at the end of a stay, following lodge guidelines, and leave about 10% in restaurants.

ETIQUETTE

Greet people warmly before getting down to business, and receive things with both hands as a sign of respect. Avoid loud political discussion, and never photograph police, soldiers or government buildings.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Victoria Falls International Airport (VFA), Victoria Falls; Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport (HRE), Harare; Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo International Airport (BUQ), Bulawayo

Visas & entry for Zimbabwe

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to visit Zimbabwe. Most visitors get their visa on arrival.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Measles

Rabies

Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

High risk of malaria

- There is a high risk of malaria in Zimbabwe below 1,200m from November to June: antimalarial tablets recommended.
- There is a low risk of malaria in this part of the country during the rest of the year (July to October): awareness of risk and bite avoidance recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Zimbabwe

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Tue 22 Dec 2026

Unity Day

Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Boxing Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Sun 21 Feb 2027	Robert Gabriel Mugabe National Youth Day
Mon 22 Feb 2027	Robert Gabriel Mugabe National Youth Day (observed)
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sat 27 Mar 2027	Easter Saturday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sun 18 Apr 2027	Independence Day
Mon 19 Apr 2027	Independence Day (observed)
Sat 1 May 2027	Workers' Day
Tue 25 May 2027	Africa Day
Mon 9 Aug 2027	Zimbabwe Heroes' Day
Tue 10 Aug 2027	Defense Forces Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Shona

ENGLISH	SHONA	SAY IT
Hello	Mhoroi	<i>mhoh-ROY</i>
Thank you	Ndatenda	<i>n-dah-TEN-dah</i>
Please	Ndapota	<i>n-dah-POH-tah</i>
Excuse me	Pamusoroi	<i>pah-moo-soh-ROY</i>
How much is this?	Imarii?	<i>ee-mah-REE</i>

Know before you go

Bring plenty of small US dollar notes in good condition: change is scarce, damaged or older notes may be refused, and change is sometimes given in the local ZiG currency.

Victoria Falls changes with the seasons: from about March to May spray can hide the view, while by October the Zambian side may be nearly dry; the Zimbabwean side flows all year.

Self-drivers meet frequent police roadblocks: carry your licence and vehicle papers, and check that the hire car has warning triangles, a fire extinguisher and reflective stickers.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.