

Welcome to Zimbabwe

“Zimbabwe is a song which, once heard, is never forgotten, a mood to suit the needs of any soul, any time, a spell that binds all those who know her”

Home to the magnificent Victoria Falls and mighty Zambezi River, lively capital city of Harare, historic Great Zimbabwe stone ruins and stunning Hwange National Park- one of Africa's best safari destinations- Zimbabwe is truly a once in a lifetime destination. With some of the best wildlife viewing in Africa, magnificent and varied scenery and welcoming friendly people, Zimbabwe is one of the most beautiful and unspoilt of the Southern African countries. Our advice - come and find out for yourself!

Know your History

The word Zimbabwe derives from the Shona 'dzimba dzemabwe' directly translating as 'houses of stone' as exemplified by the Great Zimbabwe Ruins found in the South East of Zimbabwe. With a history rich in accomplishment, innovation and collaboration, as well as conflict and trials and tribulations, Zimbabwe represents a nation full of energy and diversity.

Pre-colonial era

Pre colonial Zimbabwe was home to a multi ethnic society occupied by a number of different groups such as the Shangni in the south east, the Venda and Karanga in the south, the Tonga in the north, the Ndebele in the south west, the Zezuru and Korekore in the northern and central Zimbabwe and the Manyika and Ndau in the east. Huge empires also emerged in the Zimbabwean pre colonial era, namely the Mutapa state, Rozvi state, Torwa state, Rozvi state, Ndebele state and the largest of all states, the Great Zimbabwe state.

Great Zimbabwe was an imposing pre colonial city that prospered from about 1290 to 1450 on the strength of an influential and structured civilisation. It thrived on the underpinning of good agricultural circumstances, cattle keeping and, perhaps most notably, the creation of both a regional and long distance trading system. Trade was conducted with China, India and the Middle East, as well as East and West Africa. The majority of traded merchandise from Great Zimbabwe included glass beads, brass wire, seashells, iron wire, axe heads and chisels, whilst local goods included ivory, iron ornaments, gold wire, beads and a variety of other items.

The 14th century of pre colonial Zimbabwe saw the process of political reformation begin, largely attributed to favourable financial conditions. This permitted fruitful agricultural harvests, leading to population growth and allowing certain people to assume important and much needed positions of leadership.

The era of success of Great Zimbabwe however was followed by significant decline with widespread food shortages and the abandonment of pastures and other natural resources. By the end of the 15th century, Great Zimbabwe had wholly lost its wealth, trading and political power and cultural importance.

Colonial era

A combination of Christianity, colonialism and capitalism gradually displaced the pre colonial socio-political and economic frameworks, bringing about a colonial era marked by the arrival of new identities, merchandises, languages and cultures as well as new political and economic attitudes.

It was the arrival of Cecil Rhodes, an English born South African businessman and a strong believer in British colonialism, that saw the colonial period of Zimbabwe begin. Encouraging colonisation, Cecil Rhodes and his British counterparts took control of labour as well as valuable metals and other mineral assets. Soon after the arrival of the British, the name Southern Rhodesia (what is now known as Zimbabwe) was adopted.

Following unsuccessful opposition from several Zimbabwean ethnic groups to British colonialism, Southern Rhodesia became a self governing British colony serving on behalf of the United Kingdom during World War II. However, strong African opposition and civil wars ensued with the British gradually beginning to lose power. Colonial rule was beginning to collapse throughout the African continent, with African majority governments assuming control in neighbouring territories. The nation became known as the Republic of Rhodesia in the late 1900's.

Independence

Zimbabwe regained independence on April 18th 1980. Robert Mugabe, head of Zimbabwe African National Union, known as Zanu, took power as prime minister. Dr Canaan Banana was elected president whilst Joshua Nkomo, head of the Zimbabwe African People's Union, known as Zapu, Mugabe's partner in the struggle for independence, became an important government minister.

Post-Independence

Robert Mugabe won elections in March 1996 elections, receiving 92.7% of the total votes, although only a small number of Zimbabweans voted. The significant decrease in participation in voting exposed the mounting dissatisfaction of Zimbabweans with Mugabe.

In the late 1990s Mugabe introduced several controversial programs. In 1997 he started seizing white owned land without compensation, subtly encouraging landless black Zimbabweans to move onto what used to be white owned farms. These farms had previously fed a large proportion of Zimbabwe and provided work for large numbers of people; predominantly the black Zimbabwean population.

In 2002 Mugabe took control of the remaining white owned land and ordered white farmers to offer payments to former workers. As many of the black Zimbabweans who moved onto the farming land had inexperienced farming skills, the nation soon faced a serious food crisis. Critics claimed that Mugabe handed out the best land to his family, friends and close supporters. Famine conditions still persist in Zimbabwe, whilst the people struggle with ever inflating prices and extremely high unemployment rates.

Present Day

Early 2013 saw the two main political parties work together to deliver a new constitution focused on the aspirations of ordinary Zimbabweans, bringing greater empowerment to women, forbidding torture, guaranteeing freedom of expression and taking steps to ensure the provision of healthcare, education and food. The new constitution also introduces term limits with each future elected president being allowed a maximum of two five year terms in office.

Money Talks

Intro

In spite of its political insecurity Zimbabwe's economy is steadily developing, recording a growth of 9% in 2011 and a further 5% increase in 2012. However, the government of Zimbabwe still faces a

number of complex economic issues such as infrastructure shortages, policy ambiguity, a significant external debt and inadequate employment opportunities.

Zimbabwe's involvement in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1998-2002) diverted hundreds of millions of dollars from the country's economy. The government's ensuing land reform project badly damaged the commercial farming industry. Agriculture formed a central and long-established source of exports and foreign exchange in Zimbabwe whilst providing over 400,000 jobs. Significantly, the project transformed Zimbabwe from a net exporter of food products to a net importer. Until early 2009 the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe regularly printed money to finance the budget deficit, causing hyperinflation. Dollarisation in early 2009, which allowed currencies such as the Botswana Pula, the South Africa Rand, and the US Dollar to be used locally, ended hyperinflation and restored price stability but exposed considerable structural weaknesses that continue to inhibit Zimbabwe's economic growth.

Exports

Zimbabwe currently exports goods worth approximately \$1.9 billion. The predominant exports of Zimbabwe include: platinum, tobacco, cotton, gold, and textiles. Zimbabwe's largest export partner is South Africa, accounting for 32.4% of its total exports, followed by the Democratic Republic of Congo at 9.8%, and Botswana at 8.8%. Outside of Africa, China represents the fourth largest export country, with a 5.6% share.

Imports

As of 2001, Zimbabwe has been forced to import its goods in order to compensate economically for domestic shortfalls. It is predicted that this sudden increase in imports will adversely influence Zimbabwe's economy, with the country needing to import over a million tons to make up for this deficit. Zimbabwe has not had any grain reserves for exportation purposes for more than a decade following the eviction of white farmers in spite of assurances by President Mugabe of a return to 'food self-sufficiency' in 2010.

Get Culture Savvy

With a variety of diverse African cultures, each rich in tradition, historical legacy, religion, food, art, language and sport, Zimbabwe presents a unique opportunity to experience a melting pot of traditional African culture and heritage. The friendly and welcoming nature of Zimbabwean people, of which there are nearly 13 million, combined with its rich and diverse cultural appeal, provides all the ingredients for a travel experience never to be forgotten.

Art

Zimbabwe holds a long history of artistry, with evidence of ancient pottery structures and rock paintings (many depicting humans and recognisable animal figures) dating back to the late Stone Age. Sculptures from prehistoric Shona tribes are commonly accepted to have been some of the most important to emerge from Africa, contributing to the African art movement as a whole. Awareness of Zimbabwean art in the UK increased substantially in 2000 with the help of a high profile exhibition at Kew Gardens in London.

Zimbabwe's most famous historical artwork is a depiction of eight birds which are carved out of soapstone on columns more than sixteen inches in height. The sculptures have both human and avian elements, substituting human features such as lips for a beak and five toed feet for claws.

Excavated at the turn of the century, archaeologists have suggested that the birds served as emblems of royal authority, possibly representing Zimbabwe's ancestral rulers. Although their precise significance is unidentified these sculptures remain influential symbols of rule in the modern Zimbabwean era, decorating the flag of Zimbabwe as national emblems.

Food

As with much of Southern Africa food in Zimbabwe is quite simple. The core staple is corn and most dishes are made with a cornmeal which is usually mixed with water to produce a paste known as bota. Aside from bota most Zimbabweans rely on dried fish, known as kapenta, and a lightly curdled milk known as mukaka wakakora. However, wealthier Zimbabweans may have more meat and rice in their diet.

Religion

Christianity is the predominant religion in Zimbabwe with 85% of the population and most Zimbabweans identify themselves as being very religious, attending services regularly. The Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England are the largest denominations in the country, with seventh day adventists and methodists making up the remainder. 1% of the population identifies as Muslim. The rest of the population practises traditional spiritual systems primarily focused on ancestor worship.

Holidays

1st January – New Year's Day
18th April – Independence Day
25th May – Africa Day
2 July – Public Womens Day and Childrens Day
Second Monday in August – Heroes Day
Second Tuesday in August – Armed Forces Day
18th-23rd December – Unity Week
25th December – Christmas Day
26th December – Boxing Day
27th-31st December – Shangani Week

Learn the Lingo

Three official languages are spoken in Zimbabwe; Shona, Ndebele and English. It is estimated that 70% of the population speak Shona as their first language, although a good knowledge of English is typical throughout the country.

The Shona language is spoken by approximately 9 million Zimbabwean inhabitants. Although numerous different dialects of the language exist it is officially known as one language. Below are some pronunciation tips and phrases you may find useful!

Pronunciation

Spelling	Pronunciation
'dy'	'jig' or 'jg'. For example 'kudya' would be pronounced 'kujga'
'ty'	'chik' or 'chk'. For example 'mbatya' would be pronounced 'mnachka'

'mbw'	'mbugg'. For example 'imbwa' would be pronounced 'imbugga'
'sw'	'skw'. For example 'ndaswera' would be pronounced 'ndaskwera'
'zv'	Sounds like 'je' and spoken with a whistle tone

Useful Phrases

English	Shona
Hi	Hesi
How are you?	Wakadini
I'm good thanks	Ndakasimba, waita hako
What is your name?	Zita rako ndiani?
Nice to meet you	Ndafara kukuona
Do you speak English?	Unotaura chirungul here?
Sorry	Ndine uromobo
Can you help me?	Ndingakubatsira here?
Where is the airport?	Nhandare yendege iri kupi?
What is this?	Ichi chii?
How much is this?	Ichi imarii?
I am sick	Ndiri kurwara
I need a doctor	Ndiri kuda chiremba
Help	Rubatsiro

Lay of the Land

Zimbabwe, formerly known as Rhodesia, is a land locked Southern African country bordering Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Namibia. Its capital city is Harare. Spanning a total area of 390,580 Km² the majority of Zimbabwe is on a high plateau (also known as Highveld, with approximately 75% of the country lying between 600m and 1500m above sea level) comprising mostly grassland African bush terrain and bordered by mountains found towards the East of the country and the occasional forest scattered throughout. The North West border of Zimbabwe is epitomised by the remarkable spectacle of Victoria Falls and the magnificent expanse of Lake Kariba. The Zambezi River has become one of the world's best water based adventure travel destinations, offering outstanding adrenaline filled white water rafting opportunities.

What's the Weather like?

For the most part, Zimbabwe has an agreeable sub tropical climate all year round, with warm but seldom hot temperatures. The summer lasts approximately 8 months, with October through to May experiencing daytime temperatures of roughly 30°C and 8-9 hours of sunshine a day. The winter climate in Zimbabwe is for 3 months from June to September with a typical average temperature of 20°C. However, winters are unlike the UK's, being pleasant and dry and a relief from the intense African summer. Average annual rainfall in Zimbabwe is 867mm with the majority of this falling

between November and March; be wary of a sudden thunderstorm during the wet season though!

Biodiversity

Widespread and unique biodiversity can be found throughout Zimbabwe. Home to an outstanding array of wildlife, awe inspiring landscapes, vast rivers, lakes and of course the magnificent Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe remains one of the most beautiful, unspoilt and bio diverse countries of Southern Africa.

Flora

Zimbabwe is predominately covered in savannah terrain, although mountainous regions can be found to the east of the country which are home to tropical evergreen and hardwood forests. A variety of African tree species survive in Zimbabwe including teak, mahogany, knobthorn and baobab.

Floral diversity and vegetation in Zimbabwe is for the most part uniform. Vegetative eco-regions of bushveld, thorny acacia savannah, miombo and dry open woodland prevail in both central and Western Zimbabwe, whilst thorny scrub, dry lowlands, and baobabs are found extensively in the South. Colourful and tropical wildflowers are typically found throughout Zimbabwe, particularly the country's national flower, the flame lily (*Gloriosa superba*).

Fauna

Zimbabwe's national parks are active with an abundance of fascinating wild animals. Perhaps the most popular and accessible is Matobo National Park, but Hwange and Matusadona National Park as well as some privately owned game reserves will also provide superb wildlife viewing experiences. Megafauna mammals found in Zimbabwe's National Parks include lion, elephant, gorilla, hippopotamus, zebra, giraffe, chimpanzee, rhinoceros, buffalo, cheetah, hyena, jackal, an assortment of monkey and antelope species and a huge variety of smaller mammals. Reptile species thrive in the Zimbabwean savannah with water monitor lizards (Zimbabwe's largest lizard) and crocodiles living in many of the country's rivers. Over 500 species of bird can be found throughout the different eco regions of Zimbabwe, such as the ostrich, drongo, cuckoo and bee-eater.

Farming

Agricultural development in Zimbabwe in the last 80 years has had a significant impact on the country's biodiversity. Increased conversion of natural habitats to arable land, excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides and intensive mono cropping have contributed to a loss of biodiversity. The loss of organic soil matter, the drainage of wetlands and the removal of trees from land conversion have impaired ecosystem functioning and integrity, diminishing carbon sequestration and reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide absorption. The resulting loss of habitats for flora, fauna, insects and micro organisms in Zimbabwe has weakened important ecosystem services and reduced species richness.

Good Books

Guidebooks

- Zimbabwe, 1st Edition. Paul Murray. Bradt Travel Guide, 2010. ISBN-10: 1841622958.
- Zimbabwe: The Rough Guide, 4th Edition. Tony Pinchuck. Rough Guides, 2000. ISBN-10:

1858285321.

- Zimbabwe Handbook, 1st Edition. Lizzie Williams. Footprint Travel Guides, 2010. ISBN-10: 1907263217.

Wildlife

- Wildlife of Southern Africa, 1st Edition. David Hosking. Travellers Guide, 2011. ISBN-13: 978-0007383078.
- Zimbabwe in Pictures, 1st Edition. Keith Hern. MX Publishing, 2010. ISBN-10: 1907685707.
- Southern Africa Wildlife, 2nd Edition. Mike Unwin. Bradt Travel Guides, 2011. ISBN-10: 1841623474.
- African Plants, 1st Edition. J. Timberlake, S.Kativu. Royal Botanical Gardens, 2000. ISBN-10: 1900347881.

History

- Becoming Zimbabwe, 1st Edition. B. Raftopoulos, A.Mlambo. Weaver Press, 2009. ISBN-10: 1779220839.
- Zimbabwe: Years of Hope and Despair, 1st Edition. Philip Barclay. Bloomsbury Paperback, 2011. ISBN-10: 1408809788.

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