

Z I M

U N P L U G G E D

Whether you're a history nerd or hunting for the ultimate shot with your Nikon, Zimbabwe has something to offer everyone. Looking for the quintessential itinerary? Here's how the locals roll





Historic Zimbabwe

Bulawayo, Matobo and Great Zimbabwe ruins

Paul Hubbard has an insatiable fascination with the past. The guide, ranked one of the best in Africa by *Vanity Fair*, holds a degree in archaeology and is always on the lookout for little-known sites around his native Zimbabwe.

DAY 1 Afternoon: Bulawayo's historic city centre, known for its outstanding examples of various architectural styles, holds a captivating collection of colourful stories – such as the ghosts that haunt Bulawayo's oldest social club, and the antics of early prospectors



who would drink the town dry in a crazy weekend of excess. Join a walking tour (hubbardstours.com) to bring the city to life.

Evening: Stay at Banff Lodge (banfflodgehotel.com), a B&B with title deeds that date back to 1896.

DAY 2 Morning: Dive into the latter days of the Zimbabwe empire at the Khami

STONE WORK

The final resting place of arch-coloniser Cecil John Rhodes at Malindidzimu (above); the ruins of Great Zimbabwe, built between 1100 and 1450 AD (below)

World Heritage Site, where the Torwa and Rozvi people fought for control of the gold, ivory and cattle trade before they were overrun by Portuguese explorers in the 17th century. Visit the dam which, when built in 1929, drowned some of the ruins. Next to the wall is a rock gong, a naturally balancing rock that, when struck just right, produces a ringing tone audible at great distances.

Afternoon: Makokoba, Bulawayo's oldest suburb, is home to many icons of the liberation struggle as well as nationally famous artists and sportsmen. Sample local foods at the market, and meet traditional healers and craftspeople.

DAY 3 Morning: The Matobo National Park (zimparcs.org) is a haven for white rhinos. It's an unforgettable experience to see these animals on foot (africanwanderer.com), and to learn about the dangerous work done by the rangers who protect them.

Afternoon: Explore Zimbabwe's colonial history in one of the country's most spectacular

André van Rooyen, supplied

of the best preserved rock art sites in the region, with thousands of images on the granite wall: animals, birds, insects and a panoply of humans hint at the complex religious beliefs and spiritual practices of the hunter-gatherers in times past. Look out for the gigantic and colourful 'formling', a mysterious image thought to represent the interior of a termite's nest, associated with spiritual potency and healing.

DAY 5 Morning: The enigmatic ruins of Great Zimbabwe were once the capital of a mighty trading empire that produced gold, ivory, iron and other goods sold and desired around the world. Wander among the giant dry-stone walls and soak in the stories of adventure and exploration.

Afternoon: Ramble through the Valley Ruins and Great Enclosure (the stonework improves in quality on the eastern side); take advantage of the setting sun for unique photographs.

THE ENIGMATIC RUINS OF GREAT ZIMBABWE WERE ONCE THE CAPITAL OF A MIGHTY TRADING EMPIRE THAT PRODUCED GOLD, IVORY, IRON AND OTHER GOODS SOLD AND DESIRED AROUND THE WORLD

landscapes. Visit battlefields within the park and have sundowners at View of the World, the burial place of Cecil John Rhodes. Near the summit is the mausoleum of the Allan Wilson Patrol, a group of soldiers who died in pursuit of the Ndebele king, Lobengula, while trying to capture him and bring the 1893 Anglo-Matabele War to a close. To get there, circle along the edge of the hill and walk up to the mausoleum, because the traditional route (down from Rhodes's grave) renders the monument rather unimpressive.

Evening: Stay at Amalinda Lodge (amalindacollection.com) and you'll feel like an integral part of the iconic Matobo landscape.

DAY 4 It'll take a full day to hike to and from Nanke Cave, in the rugged eastern side of the Matobo National Park. It's one

Evening: Norma Jean's Lakeview Resort (normajeanelakeviewresort.com), which caters for a range of budgets, is 10 minutes away.

DAY 6 Morning: Catch sunrise over the Hill Complex, once the home of the king, and explore the enclosures, passageways and other archaeological remains on the summit, with views of the ancient city below. At the site museum (nmmz.co.zw), witness the skill of the artists who carved the Zimbabwe Birds, the national symbols of the country and source of many a legend.

Afternoon: The 'Italian Chapel' on the outskirts of Masvingo was built by Italian internees during WWII as a memorial to their imprisonment. Drive to the dam wall at Lake Mutirikwi, where the setting sun transforms the bare granite hills into chunks of gold. ☺



Urban Zimbabwe

Bulawayo, Victoria Falls and Harare

With more than two decades' experience in the international travel industry, Dionne Mutsonziwa thrives on creating unforgettable trips. Harare is her home city and she's now based in Zimbabwe's adventure capital, where she manages the elegant Victoria Falls Safari Club.

DAY TRIPPER

The Jack Tar was the first locomotive to cross the Victoria Falls Bridge (below); a Bulawayo street market (bottom)





(pureafricavictoriafalls.com) is exceptional.

Evening: For something different, eat at vibrant Dusty Road (dustyroad.africa), a traditional Zimbabwean restaurant in Chinotimba township – the food and service is impeccable. Or splash out and take the steam train that runs from Vic Falls on Tuesday and Friday evenings. The luxurious experience is unforgettable (visit-victoria-falls.com).

Harare

Breakfast: Bottom Drawer Tea Garden (facebook.com/thebottomdraweriteagarden), a country garden paradise, is a tranquil place to start the day (don't skip the homemade bread).

Morning: Peek into a day in the life of the average Zimbabwean on a cultural tour of Mbare, the oldest township in Harare (facebook.com/hararetownshiptours.co.zw).

Lunch: Gavas (gavas.co.zw) claims to make 'sadza with soul' (maize porridge). It really is good – a personal favourite, along with the whole bream. Gavas serves traditional Zimbabwean delicacies, and live music on weekends.

Afternoon: Stone sculpture is iconic Zimbabwean art, and at Chapungu Sculpture Park (chapungusculpturepark.com) you can watch artists at work, as well

Bulawayo

Breakfast: The coffee at Brooks Café and Deli (facebook.com/brookscafedelil) is delicious, and the orange juice is reason enough to breakfast at this well-known café.

Morning: Rail is a huge part of Zimbabwe's modern history, and it's documented at the Bulawayo Railway Museum. Don't miss Rhodes's elaborate personal coach. The Friends of the National Railway Museum Bulawayo organises steam journeys ([facebook: Friends of the National Railway Museum Bulawayo](https://facebook.com/FriendsoftheNationalRailwayMuseumBulawayo)).

Lunch and afternoon: Studio Nosh, the courtyard café at the beautiful National Gallery of Zimbabwe (nationalgallerybyo.com), is a popular hangout with creatives. The gallery has beautiful ethnographic collections and modern art exhibitions that are always changing. There are several studios here, as well as an arts-specific library and a shop.

Evening: Have a drink at the historic Bulawayo Club (bulawayooclub.com), where little has changed since it was founded in 1895; try The Smokehouse (www.facebook.com/thSmokehousebyo) for dinner. There's often

live music and, on Saturdays, gin and jazz on the lawn.

Victoria Falls

Breakfast: Located in town, both Pariah State (pariahstate.co.zw) and Shearwater Café (shearwater-victoriafalls.com) have a variety of delicious breakfasts on offer.

Morning: Walk through the forest opposite the Falls; it's in the morning that you're likely to have those stunning misty views and rainbows. Set out on the Victoria Falls Bridge for a spectacular view of the gorge and the spray.

Lunch: At 1pm every day Victoria Falls Safari Lodge (victoria-falls-safari-lodge.com) has a supplementary feeding programme for vultures. Learn about these endangered birds over lunch at the beautiful Makuwa-Kuwa restaurant, which overlooks a water hole.

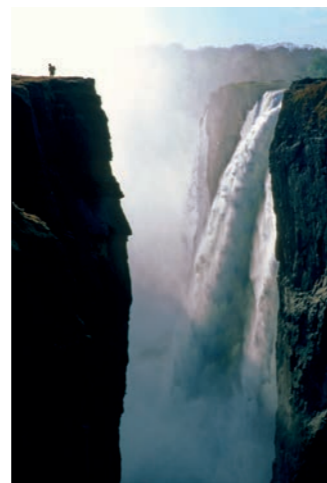
Afternoon: There are interesting speciality shops and studios at Elephant's Walk Shopping and Artist Village (elephantwalk.com). Don't miss the music store – it specialises in African albums.

Sunset: A sunset river cruise is magical. Book a dinner cruise – the food on the *Zambezi Explorer*

SOUND JOURNEY

Drums of Peace perform in Makokoba, Bulawayo (above); the Smoke that Thunders – about 550 million litres of water drop into the chasm below every minute during high water, from February to May (below)

WALK THROUGH THE FOREST OPPOSITE THE FALLS; IT'S IN THE MORNING THAT YOU'RE LIKELY TO HAVE THOSE STUNNING MISTY VIEWS AND RAINBOWS



as wander the gallery. For more sculptures and curios, visit the Avondale Flea Market (zimfieldguide.com); look out for the used book stall for rare historical books.

Sunset: Take a picnic basket to Domboshava Hill (zimfieldguide.com); the balancing rocks are symbolic of Zimbabwe. Keep an eye on Hidden Culture (hiddencultureonline.com), which occasionally hosts silent sunset discos in this beautiful setting.

Evening: Queen of Hearts (facebook.com/queenofheartscafeharare) serves trendy cocktails and has a wide menu. ©

Annelie van Rooyen



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Scenic Zimbabwe

The Eastern Highlands

Harare photographer Steven Chikosi is celebrated for his powerful images that capture everyday Zimbabwe life. While he often photographs people, there's another aspect of the country he knows well: the evocative landscapes of the Eastern Highlands, where he grew up.

DAY 1 Morning: From Harare drive the A5 to Rusape, then the A14 to the spectacular Nyanga National Park (zimparcs.org), home to the sacred Nyangani Mountain. Take a full morning (you may not walk it after noon) to walk the trail. At 2,592m it's Zimbabwe's highest peak, and the view from the summit is well worth the climb. **Afternoon:** A tripod will be useful to capture the cascading water and open vista of the pretty Nyangombe Falls and dramatic Pungwe Gorge. This is a fantastic area to shoot atmospheric misty landscapes in the early mornings, so you might choose to overnight nearby – check Zim Field Guide (zimfieldguide.com) for options. In the Honde Valley the 'skywalk' crosses a deep gorge to the 772m high Mutarazi Falls (farandwide.co.zw) – an excellent opportunity to get some adventure shots. Stay overnight in Mutare.

DAY 2 Morning: Practise your street photography skills at Musika Wehuku (which loosely translates to 'the market of chickens') in Sakubva Mutare. Get there by 6am, when deliveries arrive from the farms. **Afternoon:** From Mutare take the A9 and then A10 to the Chipinge and Chimanimani area, where the tall trees, winding roads and lush

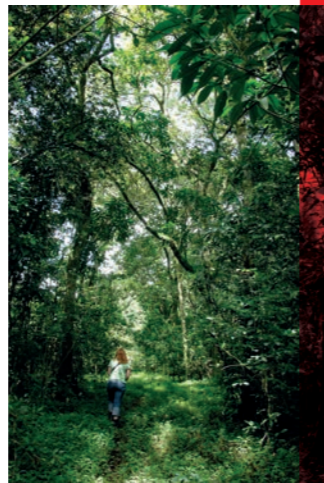


Tanganda tea estates provide opportunity for landscape photography. Give yourself the afternoon to explore the side roads and play with the changing light. The delicate Bridal Veil Falls near Chimanimani is another spot where your tripod will be useful. Overnight in Chimanimani.

DAY 3 Morning: Get an early start and return to Mutare via Bvumba, a scenic mountainous area where the Bunga Forest Botanical Reserve (zimparcs.org) is a birder's paradise. The drive is picturesque. Stop at Prince of Wales View to see the mountains that border Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Refuel at Tony's Coffee Shop ([facebook.com/tonyscoffeeshop](https://www.facebook.com/tonyscoffeeshop)), known for its cakes, and look for the endangered samango monkeys. **Afternoon:** The peaceful Vumba Botanical Garden (zimparcs.org) is good for shooting with your macro lens and also to watch for birds. Peter Magosvongwe (petermagosvongwe@gmail.com) is a renowned bird guide – if there are specials you'd like to see, he's your man. For wildlife images, stay overnight at the Leopard Rock Hotel (leopardrockhotel.com), which has a small game park. **Evening:** Spend the night in Mutare, but first head out of town on the A3 to Christmas Pass. There are beautiful views of Mutare – a good opportunity to slow your shutter and get some cityscapes.

GREENSCAPES
Mutarazi Falls are the highest falls in Zimbabwe and second highest in Africa (above); Bunga Forest Botanical Reserve is home to brightly coloured Livingstone's turacos (below)

If you'd like to donate old camera gear to school photographic clubs in Zimbabwe, contact Steven (contact@stevenchikosi.com)



Zimbabwe for families

Harare, Lake Kariba, Hwange and Victoria Falls

With three children under the age of 13, Zimbabwean guide and businessman Beks Ndlovu has a knack for making family trips special. The founder of African Bush Camps, who grew up on the fringe of Hwange and lived many years in Bulawayo, is passionate about exploring Africa and supporting local communities.

DAY 1 Evening: Stay at the homely Highlands House Boutique Guest Lodge (www.highlandshouse.co.zw), where the children can burn off energy in the large garden and pool.

Gallo/Getty Images, supplied

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HAVE LUNCH ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER AT ECLECTIC ZAMBEZI HOUSE, THEN SPEND A TRANQUIL AFTERNOON SAILING ON THE ZAMBEZI BY DHOW

DAY 2 Morning: Exploring Harare on foot and with a local guide is a great way to connect with Zimbabwe's capital. The tours by Guruwalk.com and Free Walking Tour Harare ([facebook.com/freewalkingtourharare](https://www.facebook.com/freewalkingtourharare)) operate on a 'tipping' payment system.

Afternoon: Travel from Harare to Lake Kariba. The landscape is picturesque, but the six-hour drive is a long stretch for kids. There are many large trucks on the potholed road, so flying to the Bumi Hills airstrip is a better option.

Evening: One of the most magical ways to spend an African evening is to stay on a houseboat. The *Lady Jacqueline* (karibahouseboats.com) is big enough to house a large family and cosy enough for the kids to enjoy bunking together.

DAY 3 Morning: Drop your bags at Bumi Hills Lodge (africanbushcamps.com) then head out to explore life in the Mola community nearby. Children can make friends at the schools.

Evening: Back at Bumi Hills Lodge, enjoy a sunset swim with exceptional views of Lake Kariba, then once it's dark, settle next to the campfire for a stargazing expedition. Learn about the constellations, and listen to the guides tell intriguing folk stories. They are from the surrounding

communities, and are a genuine source of the area's history.

DAY 4 Fly from Bumi Hills into Hwange National Park, and leave everything but a small overnight bag at Somalisa Acacia Camp. Spot wildlife as you drive to a nearby village for an unforgettable overnight experience at a homestay. It is truly enriching to participate in some of the day-to-day tasks that help maintain the village: join the daily walk to collect water, observe the harvesting of crops (depending on the time of year), farming rituals, and learn more about cattle herding and the boma project that is supported by the African Bush Camps Foundation.

DAY 5 Morning: Game drive back to Somalisa, then fly to Victoria Falls. The iconic Victoria Falls Hotel (victoriafallshotel.com) is an ideal family base as its sprawling lawns offer the opportunity for the kids to play.

Afternoon: Have lunch on the banks of the river at eclectic Zambezi House (zambezihouse.com), then spend a tranquil afternoon sailing on the Zambezi by dhow (hideawaysafrica.com; booking is essential).



Take a soccer ball, some blow-up balls or school shoes your family no longer needs to Bumi Hills Lodge for the children of the Mola community



QUIET TIME

A dhow on the Zambezi (top); Bumi Hills Lodge (above); elephants at the watering hole at Somalisa Acacia Camp in Hwange National Park (below)

Evening: Celebrate the last night of your family holiday with a vibrant interactive drumming show at The Boma restaurant (theboma.co.zw).

DAY 6 Morning: End your family holiday with a burst of adrenaline. A canopy tour (wildhorizons.co.za) is a novel way to see the rapids, the bridge and the spray; you'll also get to fly through the riverine forest and mingle with the birds. ■



British Airways flies daily to Harare and Victoria Falls from Jo'burg.

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