

The Smoke That Thunders by Day, a Swim at World's Edge — A 5-Day Victoria Falls Itinerary

Locals call it Mosi-oa-Tunya, “the smoke that thunders” — and five days is just enough to see it from both sides of the border. Zimbabwe’s rainforest walking trails hold the widest, most photogenic views and a colonial-era high tea; a short walk across the 1905 Victoria Falls Bridge into Zambia adds a bungee jump over the Batoka Gorge and, water levels permitting, a swim at the very lip of the falls in Devil’s Pool; and a full day of white-water rafting below the falls closes out the trip — with real lodges, licensed operators, and 2026 prices for every stop.

DURATION

5 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

August – January

for calm water and safe swimming at Devil’s Pool, plus dry, sunny days for rafting and river cruises (the falls run at their fullest, most thunderous volume in April–May, when Devil’s Pool closes due to strong currents; daytime highs run 75–90°F / 24–32°C year-round)

FROM

\$1,400 USD / person

for 2 people

DAY 1

Arrive in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

Land at Victoria Falls Airport on the Zimbabwean side, settle into a colonial-era lodge within earshot of the falls, and ease into the trip with a sundowner cruise on the Zambezi.

Airport Transfer to Victoria Falls Town

~20 minutes · From \$15 USD, taxi or hotel shuttle for 2

Victoria Falls Airport sits about 18 km from town, and every lodge runs its own shuttle or can arrange a metered taxi straight to your room — request pickup after collecting luggage.

Check-In: Ilala Lodge Hotel

From \$260 USD / night, for 2 people

A colonial-style hotel on the edge of Victoria Falls National Park, close enough that the roar of the falls carries to the garden terrace, with a five-minute walk to the park entrance and the Big Tree.

Ilala Lodge Hotel · www.ilalalodge.com

Sundowner Cruise on the Zambezi

~2 hours · \$65–\$75 USD / person

A slow double-decker boat drifts upstream past hippo pods and elephant herds on the riverbank as the sun sets over the Zambezi, with drinks and snacks included.

Wild Horizons · wildhorizons.co.za

DAY 2

Victoria Falls — Zimbabwe Side

A full day on the Zimbabwean side of the falls, home to the widest viewpoints, followed by a colonial-era high tea and an evening of drumming and dance.

Guided Rainforest Walk, Victoria Falls National Park

~2 hours, guided · \$30 USD park entry + ~\$20 USD guide fee

Zimbabwe's side of the falls holds roughly three-quarters of the viewpoints along the mile-wide curtain, including Devil's Cataract and Danger Point — a local guide points out where the spray forms its own permanent rainforest microclimate.

High Tea — Stanley's Terrace, The Victoria Falls Hotel

~1 hour · ~\$50 USD / person

A century-old colonial hotel serves scones, finger sandwiches and cake on a terrace framed by the Victoria Falls Bridge and the spray cloud rising over the gorge.

The Victoria Falls Hotel · www.victoriafallshotel.com

Dinner — The Boma: Dinner & Drum Show

~3 hours · \$75–\$85 USD / person

A traditional boma-style feast of game meats and local specialties around a fire pit, followed by a marimba band and an audience drumming circle led by local performers.

The Boma · victoria-falls-safari-collection.com

DAY 3

Cross to Zambia: Bridge Adventures & Devil's Pool

A short walk across the Victoria Falls Bridge into Zambia opens up the adrenaline side of the falls — a bungee jump over the Batoka Gorge and, water levels permitting, a swim at the very edge of the world.

Border Crossing — Victoria Falls Bridge to Zambia

~15 minutes on foot · KAZA UniVisa, from \$50 USD

The KAZA UniVisa covers both Zimbabwe and Zambia (plus day trips into Botswana) with a single fee, and the walk across the 1905 bridge is itself one of the best free views of the gorge.

Bungee Jump or Bridge Swing, Victoria Falls Bridge

~15–20 minutes · \$137–\$201 USD / person

A 111-metre plunge off the bridge toward the Zambezi below, or the gentler swinging arc of the bridge swing for anyone who wants the view without the free fall.

Shearwater Victoria Falls · www.shearwatervictoriafalls.com

Devil's Pool, Livingstone Island

~1.5 hours, seasonal (Aug–Jan low water) · \$150–\$195 USD / person

A short boat ride to a rock-rimmed pool perched right on the lip of the falls, where a natural barrier lets swimmers peer over the edge — only possible when the river runs low enough for it to be safe.

Livingstone's Adventure · www.livingstonesadventure.com

Check-In: Avani Victoria Falls Resort

From \$300 USD / night, for 2 people

A resort on the Zambian side of the river, close enough to the falls that the spray drifts over the pool deck, with its own path down to the Knife-Edge Bridge viewpoint.

Avani Victoria Falls Resort · www.avanihotels.com/en/zambia

DAY 4

Full-Day Zambezi White-Water Rafting

A full day riding the Zambezi's rapids through the Batoka Gorge below the falls, rated among the best one-day white-water trips in the world.

White-Water Rafting, Batoka Gorge

Full day, ~7:30 AM–3 PM · \$161–\$173 USD / person + \$12 USD park fee

Grade 3–5 rapids (depending on the season) carve through a 100-metre-deep basalt gorge just downstream of the falls, with a safety briefing, all gear, and a riverside lunch included.

Shearwater Victoria Falls · www.shearwatervictoriafalls.com

Dinner — Olga's Italian Corner

~1.5 hours · \$15–\$25 USD / person

A Livingstone institution run by a local training project for at-risk youth, serving wood-fired pizza and pasta on a garden patio — a relaxed, low-key close to the trip's most physical day.

Olga's Italian Corner · olgasproject.com

DAY 5

Departure

One last morning for curios and a final view of the falls before the transfer to the airport closes out a trip that crossed two countries and one very large waterfall.

Curio Shopping — Mukuni Craft Village or Elephant's Walk

~1 hour, self-guided · Prices vary

Zambia's Mukuni Village and Zimbabwe's Elephant's Walk shopping village both sell Shona stone carvings, wood masks and beadwork direct from local artisans and cooperatives.

Departure — Livingstone or Victoria Falls Airport

~20 minutes to either airport · From \$15 USD, taxi or hotel shuttle

Both Livingstone International Airport (LVI) in Zambia and Victoria Falls Airport (VFA) in Zimbabwe sit roughly 20 minutes from town, closing the loop on a trip that ran from rainforest viewpoints to a swim on the lip of the falls — check international carriers' recommended arrival times, typically 2–3 hours before departure.