



Most walking safaris, like those from Mwaleshi Camp, start the day with a light breakfast around dawn

## NORTH LUANGWA NATIONAL PARK

North and South Luangwa national parks are part of a continuous rift valley, sharing the same geology, soil types, vegetation and landscapes. Their ecosystems and game are almost identical, though North Luangwa seems to have more eland and, especially, Cookson's wildebeest – which are abundant here, yet rarely seen in South Luangwa.

Most of the 'North Park' is a wilderness area, set aside for walking safaris. It has few access tracks or game-drive loops. The one camp we feature is set along the shallow, perennial Mwaleshi River, reached by a short flight from South Luangwa. It's the ultimate wilderness, far from anything resembling the modern world.

**Mwaleshi Camp** is a superb little safari camp standing beside the crystal-clear Mwaleshi River, most of which is shallow enough for a refreshing paddle or wallow to be safe. The camp's bar and dining area is ingeniously made of reed and thatch, and open at the front for views over the river. In front is the fire, around which dawn breakfasts and well-deserved evening drinks are served. The chalets are also made of reed and thatch, with solar lanterns, handbasins, en-suite flushing toilets and hot showers. Vehicles are only used to increase the areas available for walking, so if you are keen to experience a true walking safari, with no distractions from other vehicles or groups, then Mwaleshi couldn't be more perfect.

The wildlife is abundant, with particularly good populations of lion and buffalo. A stay of four nights at Mwaleshi is ideal, and is best combined with Tafika, Chikoko and Crocodile (see page 147, and the Giraffe Safari in the suggested itineraries booklet).



Buffalo eating a sausage tree flower



North Luangwa is so remote that the fresh food has to be flown in by light aircraft

## LIVINGSTONE & THE VICTORIA FALLS

For many years we've recognised Livingstone as the perfect location from which to visit the great Victoria Falls. Once eclipsed by the busier Zimbabwean town of Victoria Falls (see page 119), Livingstone now equals it in many ways, and offers a great range of accommodation and activities.

### BESIDE THE FALLS

For a great-value option just a few hundred metres' walk from the Falls, choose the **Avani Victoria Falls Resort**, formerly the Zambezi Sun. The atmosphere is informal and the design colourful and fun, with 212 compact and comfortable en-suite rooms. At the centre of the hotel are a curving swimming pool, a restaurant and a café/bar. The Avani Victoria Falls Resort is large, but its superb location and excellent value make it a popular choice.

The five-star **Royal Livingstone** has 173 well-appointed rooms, complete with satellite TV. They are modest in size, but by contrast, the hotel's lounge and dining room are grand, reminiscent of the colonial Victoria Falls Hotel. A short walk from the Falls, the Royal Livingstone has the same great location as Avani, but a more formal style.

Set on a hilltop slightly back from the Falls, **Stanley Safari Lodge** is one of the few lodges not on the river, but it makes up for this with sweeping views across the Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park towards the Zambezi, where spray from the Falls can often be seen. With ten chalets, it caters to a range of tastes, and being run by Robin Pope Safaris, the service is excellent. Unlike most accommodation around Livingstone, Stanley's feels more like a lodge than a large hotel.



The Zambezi drops over 100m at Victoria Falls: a spectacular sight even with very low water levels

### UPSTREAM OF THE FALLS

In contrast, there are several excellent small lodges beside the Zambezi. These intimate, quiet lodges often cost more than hotels, but usually include your meals and activities such as a tour of the Victoria Falls, river cruises, village visits and fishing excursions.

**Waterberry Lodge** offers very good value in congenial surroundings, a 45-minute drive from the Falls. The seven comfortable en-suite twin or double rooms are dotted around pretty, manicured gardens. The neighbouring four-bedroom colonial-style **River Farmhouse** is self-contained, an excellent alternative for families, or groups of friends looking for exclusivity.

Further upstream, **Islands of Siankaba** is built on two tranquil forested islands, linked by suspension bridges. The lodge's six stylish tented rooms are built on stilts around the shore of one island, with views over the river from large verandas, while the bar, dining area, massage suite and swimming pool are all nearby on the neighbouring island. Approximately 45km from Livingstone, you can easily visit the Falls, but activities focus on the lodge surroundings with boat cruises, walks around local communities, visits to schools, and trips on bamboo bikes, away from the buzz of the city.

To truly escape, consider **Sindabezi Island**, Tongabezi's private island in the middle of the Zambezi. With the same top service, but a more rustic approach than Tongabezi (below), it's a wonderfully serene place. The five beautiful en-suite chalets are on raised decks among the trees, and reached by soft sandy paths. All have completely open fronts facing the river, a sundeck, a hot outdoor shower, canopied bed and loo with a view.

The colonial-style **River Club**, once a 1940s' homestead, has 11 split-level chalets perched high on the riverbank, with large windows looking towards the Zambezi. Beside the smart lounge and dining room is a small library with parlour games, whilst outside is a swimming pool overlooking the river, a croquet lawn, tennis court and a spa.

Situated about 12km upstream from the Falls, in the Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, **Toka Leya** has 12 large walk-in tents raised on decks with outdoor showers. With glass sliding doors and air conditioning in the rooms, and an infinity pool, fully equipped spa, and riverside gym, the luxurious lodge has a relaxing vibe.

Next door, **Sussi & Chuma** has twelve smart chalets high on wooden platforms, reminiscent of treehouses. For extra privacy, there are two two-bedroom houses, each with a private plunge pool, chef and butler. Activities focus on the river and the national park, with a chance of encountering the area's small rhino population.

**Tongabezi** is a lovely lodge set on a sweeping bend in the Zambezi, one of the region's most romantic hideaways with a smart and distinctly Zambian feel. Along with a thatched riverside bar and spacious lounge, there's a rock swimming pool, and decks looking over the river.

Tongabezi has five thatched 'river cottages', all tastefully furnished with elegant en-suite bathrooms. Set back from the river, the Garden House is ideal for a family or small group, with two en-suite bedrooms, a dining room, garden and plunge pool. There are also five spectacular river-facing houses, each with a unique style. Luxurious with top service, Tongabezi is a great place to stay with an excellent range of complimentary activities.

## LIVINGSTONE & VICTORIA FALLS



### Activities at the Falls

We can arrange many activities in this area before you arrive, from helicopter and microlight flights to romantic lunches on Livingstone Island. Call our team to discuss the available options. (Note that on ethical grounds we do not recommend that our travellers do any activities involving 'Walking with lions' here.)