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Zimbabwe

Rock of AGES

In southwest Zimbabwe, an ancient and mysterious landscape of time-sculpted granite guards a rich, multi-layered past. When Mike Unwin set out to discover its secrets, he found special wildlife and a fascinating cultural heritage, and learned why every visitor is seduced by its unique allure →

Layers A fine example of onion-skin weathering fronts a spectacular vista in the northern Matobo Hills

They call it onion-skin weathering," says Blessing. "First one layer comes off, then the next one. It's just like peeling an onion." He taps his boot on the lichen-encrusted surface, which clangs like a loose drain cover. I see what he means: already this thin granite crust is coming away, undermined by elemental forces. At some point it will peel off completely, like a flake of exfoliated skin.

I'm standing on the sloping flank of an immense domed rock, one of the countless *awakas*, or whalebacks, that make up the Matobo Hills of southwestern Zimbabwe — known to locals as simply 'the Matopos'. It's October, the start of the summer rainy season, and the sun is setting on another blistering day. My private guide, Blessing Masenga of Bushmen Travel, is explaining the processes that have fashioned the dramatic terrain around us; how, over unimaginable stretches of time, wind, rain and chemical corrosion have sculpted two-billion-year-old granite into this wonderland of hidden caves and standing stones.

"Matobo means 'bald-headed' in Sindebele, our local language," says Blessing. He tells me that the name was reputedly coined by King Mzilikazi in the 1840s, when he first set eyes on these bare domes after journeying with his entourage from the Zulu wars down south. The great ruler made the place his new home.

Mzilikazi may be long gone, but the weird moonscape remains, stretching unbroken to every horizon. Whalebacks — some nearly a kilometre long — loom from its densely wooded interstices, like hippos emerging from a weed-choked lake. Each is crowned with its own signature rock formations of monumental balancing boulders that suggest everything from anvils and cathedrals to a mother carrying her child or even a bust of John F. Kennedy.

Geology tells us that these fantastical forms are the tops of volcanic butoliths that punctured the Earth's perforating crust and have since, over millions of years, been whittled away along their joints. But it's hard to grasp that they are merely the product of erosion and not the work of some giant hand — mechanical attrition rather than inspired creation.

It's hardly surprising, then, that this otherworldly place has been revered as sacred since before recorded history, casting its spell over everyone who has ever settled here, from the Stone Age to Zimbabwe's war of independence. And it is equally unsurprising that today the hills are a UNESCO World Heritage Site, celebrated not only for their unique geology and cultural history but also their rich biodiversity.

Wildlife is certainly plentiful: multi-hued flat lizards skitter away at our feet, baboons bark from the valley and a pair of klipspringers perch, statuesque, near the summit. But this afternoon our agenda is archaeological: we've come to admire one of the park's many (reputedly around 3000) ancient rock art sites. Blessing leads us back down the slope to a shadowy recess where, in the fading light, I can make out a frieze of figures — human and animal — on the back wall. This is the work of the Khoisan, the Stone Age hunter-gatherer people who inhabited the area thousands of years ago. Most striking is the

faint but perfect outline of a rhino, from which this site — the White Rhino Shelter — gets its name. Blessing tells us how the painters' colours, mixed from blood, ochre and other natural pigments, remained intact for millennia until some thoughtless enthusiasts in the 1920s attempted to 'preserve' them using linseed oil.

White rhinos no longer roam Africa in the numbers of yester year, but they still find an important refuge in these hills, which remain one of the best places on the continent for a close encounter. The next morning, Blessing and I head out with a National Parks ranger, following the three-toed tracks to a mud wallow deep in the bush, where seven of the endangered pachyderms are hanging out. There is no sense of threat: round-the-clock protection has habituated the Matobo rhinos to humans. Nonetheless, we keep a low profile as the great beasts crop the grass just metres away. A frisky seven-month-old calf careers in and out of the wallow and gallops around its morn, whinnying like an over-excited pony.

After a while, the group moves slowly away, armoured grey ghosts slipping silently into the mopane. It's been a moving encounter. On the one hand, timeless: the great animals seeming to provide an unbroken link with the ancient past. On the other, sobering: the stumps on their noses a reminder that these white rhinos, like all their kind, are severely threatened, their horns sawn off every two years to make them a less tempting target for poachers. Either way, the scene seems eminently worthy of a cave painting.

* * *

The Matobo Hills lie just 30km south of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second city and the capital of its western Matabeleland region.

This is where I began my journey five days ago. I set out keen to reacquaint myself with a place I thought I knew reasonably well, having lived and worked here back in the late '80s. But this trip is revealing that there's a lot more to it than I had ever grasped back then, and that the two locations — city and hills — are intimately bound together. Indeed, onion-skin weathering seems an apt metaphor for my explorations, as everything I discover seems to peel back yet another layer of the region's enthralling history.

Bulawayo is often described as a 'heritage city', celebrated for its unusually wide, jacaranda-lined streets and, overlooking them, an attractive mishmash of architecture that spans Victorian to Art Deco. However, the city has long lived in the shadow of Harare, its larger and more cosmopolitan sister 360km to the northeast. The gulf between the two has widened since independence in 1980, and today Bulawayo feels itself somewhat short-changed and neglected — developing, in defiance, a proud identity all of its own.

Much of this pride rests in knowing that the city has not always played second fiddle. "The City of Kings" was the first capital of what we now know as modern Zimbabwe, founded in the 1890s by Mzilikazi's son Lobengula on the site of his father's kraal. European →

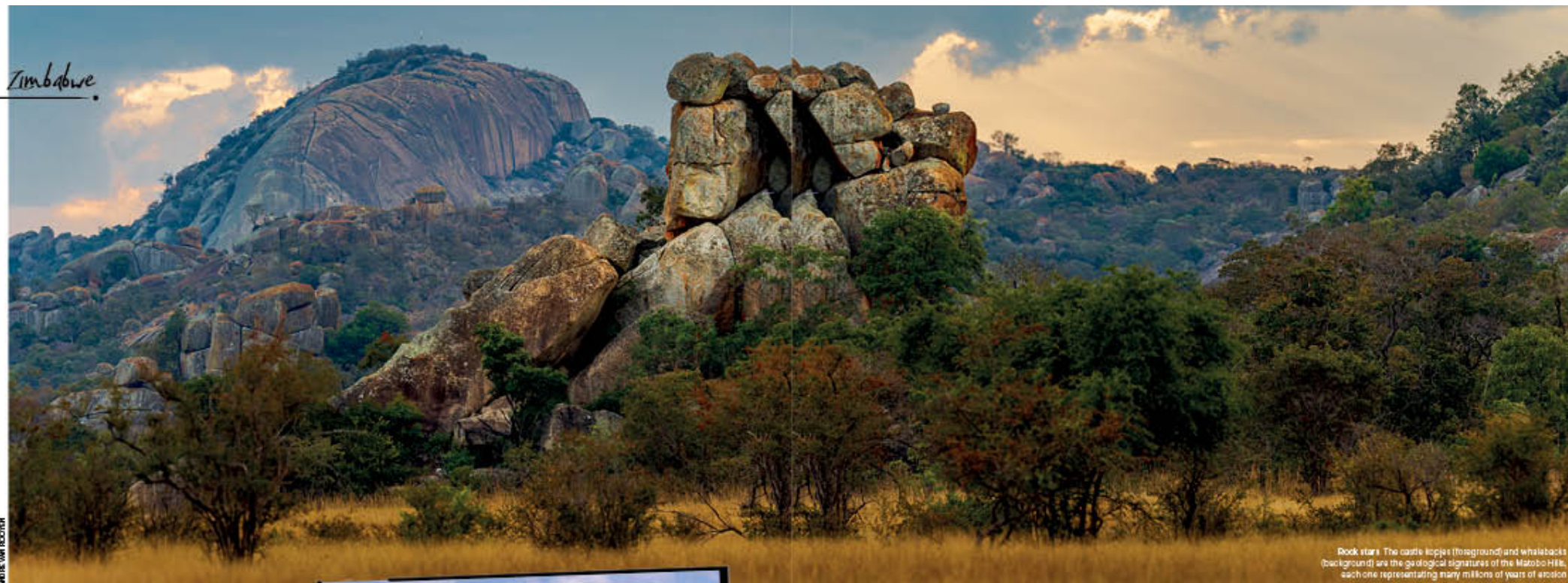


ALL IMAGES: MIKE UNWIN



Inset: Perched to pounce A brown-headed kingfisher keeps an eye out for insect prey on the woodland floor

Opposite: Wild life Exploring the hills brings plentiful rewards. Rock figs and resurrection plants adorn lichen-stained topjes, where boulders and crevices provide refuge for rock hyrax (the yellow-spotted variety is pictured), Kirk's rock agama and fleet-footed klipspringer. White rhinos graze the clearings, revelling in seasonal mud wallows



Rock stars: The castle kopje (foreground) and whalebacks (background) are the geological signatures of the Matobo Hills, each one representing many millions of years of erosion

ANDREW HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES

settlers arrived in 1893 in the form of Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company and, after the bloody Matabele Wars, prevailed over Lobengula's Ndebele, who retreated to the Matobo Hills. By 1923, when the British annexed the territory as Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo was its hub, with a thriving industrial sector and important railway connections. However, from the 1940s, development spread further east into Mashonaland, where Salisbury (now Harare) sat at the heart of the nation's agricultural breadbasket and soon became its capital.

All this, and much more, I learn at Bulawayo's renowned Natural History Museum, reputedly the best in southern Africa. A thunderstorm is brewing as I arrive and, while I'm buying my entrance ticket, a power cut kills all the lights. The receptionist is unfazed — power shedding is par for the course nowadays — so I press on regardless, climbing the stairs in semi-darkness and peering at the exhibits by the light of my phone torch.

In the event, the darkness enriches the experience: I feel like Howard Carter entering Tutankhamun's tomb as I shine my thin beam on one case after another, while the storm rumbles outside. By the time the lights come back on, I've worked my way through multiple layers of history, studying a scale model of Great Zimbabwe, admiring a cornucopia of cultural artefacts and reading the original draft of the notorious Rudd Concession, with which the British swindled the Ndebele out of their land. Downstairs on the natural history level, things become especially atmospheric, with the world's second largest



MILES LEWIS

Bulawayo
A walking tour gives insight into the city's historic architecture and a feel for the ebb and flow of daily life. The renowned Natural History Museum is often visited in combination with the Railway Museum



CHRISTOPHER WOOD

mounted elephant looming from the gloaming, and a selection of snakes and scorpions lurking in the shadows.

The promised downpour fizzles out and the following day is again cloudless and sweltering. Afternoon finds me on a walking tour of Bulawayo with local historian and author Paul Hubbard. While most tourist guides offer well-worn clichés about streets built 'broad enough to turn a full span of oxen', Paul champions lesser-known claims.

"I have to blow our trumpet yet again," he tells me, explaining proudly that the city boasted the country's first national library and is home to the only basilica in the southern Hemisphere — specifically St Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, in whose generous shade we enjoy a few minutes respite from the merciless October sun.

Paul carries a folder of sepia-tinted archive photos and we stop periodically to compare a building today with its image from a century ago. But he is equally keen that I raise my head from the past to take in modern Bulawayo — the surface layer of my metaphorical onion. Yes, the city may look a little dogeared, but it does not seem the sleepy backwater that is often painted. The streets are teeming — with traffic, schoolkids, traders, commuters — and the vibe is friendly and surprisingly cosmopolitan. "You can hear more than 30 languages on a good day," says Paul.

It's hard to reconcile this bustle with what I've read about Zimbabwe's economic woes. Paul explains how 90 per cent of the local economy is informal. "Your traditional economists have no way to measure it." In relation to the difficulties, he employs a certain gallows humour. "That's very much emblematic of Bulawayo," he says

as we pass a street sculpture by Adam Madebe whose fountains have all run dry: "It has no water in it!"

When I return that evening to the Travellers' Guesthouse, my pleasingly laid-back retreat in the leafy suburb of Hillside, I find two businessmen from Harare sitting by the pool with laptops open. We share a Zambezi beer or two, chatting about how this city, despite its challenges, still seems to be ticking over, while bulbuls chirrup in the bougainvillea. After dark, I stroll next door to the New Orleans restaurant and order a biltong pizza. A saxophonist plays a jazzed-up 'happy birthday' to a mixed party of students.

* * *

But there are still more layers to peel back. The next morning, I drive out to Khami Ruins, the country's most important archaeological attraction after Great Zimbabwe, and another World Heritage Site. The short journey west reveals a side to Bulawayo that you won't find in the tourist brochures: the potholed roads, derelict factories and overgrown railway tracks of the once-thriving industrial quarter; and the ramshackle dwellings and garbage heaps of the high-density Western Suburbs.

Khami, however, is a delight. Amazingly, given its UNESCO credentials, the place is deserted, and I wander alone between stone terraces and passageways more imposing than I'd anticipated. This was once the capital of the Torwa dynasty, which — my guidebook tells me — arose from the collapse of the Great Zimbabwe kingdom in the mid-16th century and so flourished long before Malilkezi and

the Ndebele incursions. The brickwork resembles that of Great Zimbabwe but is more ornate, embellished with its own unique motifs. Archaeologists have discovered imported artefacts here that prove ancient trade links with the Portuguese.

There's only so much history I can handle. Besides, it's getting hot. I pack away the guidebook and find a shady spot to sit down and just absorb Khami's ambience – an alluring blend of antiquity and wildness. There is little development here beside a small museum and some discreet signage. Meanwhile, nature appears to be reclaiming the place: rock figs send their snaking roots over boulders, while vervet monkeys scamper along walls, grey hornbills hop through the trees and vivid rainbow skinks scuttle into crevices. I'm more naturalist than archaeologist, and this is definitely how I like my ruins.

In fact, you needn't even leave Bulawayo to find nature running riot – as I discover back in town that afternoon. Just a short stroll from the Travellers Guesthouse lies Hillside Dams Conservancy, a protected slice of suburbia that encompasses two reservoirs once built to provide the city's water. At just 80 hectares, it is barely half the size of London's Regent's Park, but strolling its dense woodland and tumbling kopjes, you could be deep in the bush.

My guide Bernadette Mophindanzanga takes me around. We pass picnic sites and a camping ground, then follow trails into wilder recesses. As we walk, she talks history: how rock art reveals that this area has been inhabited since the Stone Age; how it once provided a favourite R&R refuge for Lobengula himself; and how it became a sanctuary in 1934 after the dams fell into disrepair. More of those onion lepers.

"It's very much a spiritual place as well," says Bernadette, as we pause in the impressive aloe garden. She explains that traditional healers are still permitted to harvest medicinal plants here. Elsewhere, she describes how the Conservancy is working to remove invasive species and re-establish indigenous trees, such as the impressive marulas, kiasats and sycamore figs that overhang the trails. "We're conducting a war against *Lantana camara*."

Wildlife is everywhere. Not big game – although the place seems made for a browsing kudu – but smaller critters: water monitors, tree squirrels, a slender mongoose. Bernadette has seen the winding



Aloe aloe Over 20 species of aloe and succulent flourish in the aloe garden at Hillside Dams Conservancy located between the upper and lower dams.

track of a large python, though not yet the snake itself. Birders could wander here all day. The trails resound to the strident voices of brown-hooded kingfisher, black-headed oriole and red-chested cuckoo, while I spy dinky blue waxbills flitting between bushes, a gyronene gliding overhead and hammerkops stalking the dam walls.

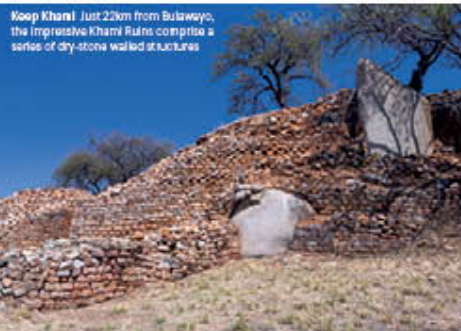
* * *

Today, most safari itineraries to Zimbabwe focus on Victoria Falls and the famous national parks of Hwange and Mana Pools to the north. Bulawayo and its environs seldom receive the same attention. Yet the wild bush of Matabeleland once supported vast herds of game, and the Matobo Hills – though famed more for landscape and culture than for wildlife – are an important refuge for numerous species, including some very special ones.

To find out more, I talk to Verity Bosman and Nicky Pegg at Dambari, a local conservation NGO. I've already seen some of their impressive camera trap images online. Now they tell me how they founded Dambari in 1997 with the primary goal of protecting the beleaguered rhinos of the Matobo Hills, but today – supported by overseas donors such as Paignton Zoo – they have a broader mission, working for the betterment of both the region's natural environment and the communities who depend upon it.

"We thought it better to make a big impact in a small area than dabble in a wide one," says Verity. She explains how Dambari develops awareness and skills, including through conservation clubs in schools around the park boundaries. One goal is to make better use of natural resources in the communal areas to reduce pressure on the park, which suffers from livestock incursions. Another is to establish a reliable dataset for wildlife – hence the cameratrapping.

Since Dambari first set up their camera traps in 2011, they have been able to keep closer tabs on the rhinos and gain a much clearer idea of which other mammal species use the park (the terrain making this almost impossible by other means). Results have been both positive and negative. No cheetah has yet been recorded, for example – which corroborates fears of the species' steep decline throughout Matabeleland – and the leopard population, often cited as the 'densest in Africa' on the basis of 1970s surveys, is clearly lower than once thought. On the plus side, the cameras have recorded every small carnivore species known in Zimbabwe, bar bushy-tailed mongoose,



Keep Khami Just 22km from Bulawayo, the impressive Khami Ruins comprise a series of dry-stone walled structures

MIKE LYNNE



CHRISTOPHER SCOTT / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Whalebacks – some nearly a kilometre long – loom from its densely wooded interstices, like hippos emerging from a weed-choked lake. Each is crowned with its own signature rock formations, monumental balancing boulders that suggest everything from anvils and cathedrals to a mother carrying her child

while a nascent spotted hyena population appears to be increasing. Surprises have included wild dogs and, astonishingly, a single elephant.

The region's rich birdlife has also inspired some impressive conservation schemes. The Ground Hornbill Project was founded in 2015 to protect this iconic, endangered species. Director Evans Mabiza tells me how the bird – known locally as *Dindindutsu* – is rare inside the park, where it finds the habitat too dense, but thrives in the communal lands outside. "Culture has contributed to its conservation," he says. "People respect the bird; they revere it." He explains how in the Matopos this tree-nesting species has taken to using holes in rock outcrops, and that school children now help him to locate nest sites. "Anyone who shows us a site, it's named after them – they become a nest custodian."

The Black Eagle Project is much older. In fact, it began in 1964, making it the world's longest-running breeding raptor survey. The bird in question – now known as Verreaux's eagle, to distinguish it from an Asian species with the same common name – lives only in rocky habitats and subsists almost entirely on rock hyraxes. The Matopos has no shortage of either and hosts the highest known density of this species anywhere.

John Brebner of Birdlife Zimbabwe became co-ordinator of the Black Eagle Project in 2012.



View to a kill A Verreaux's eagle (aka black eagle) scans for hyraxes – its staple diet – from a raised vantage point

MIKE LYNNE

When I alight from my car at his Bulawayo home, his wife Jenny slaps a baseball cap on my head, seconds before their tame spotted eagle owl swoops in to land on it, talons-first. Over a cuppa, as I recover, John shows me the decades-worth of data he has inherited, with maps and records of all known nest sites, many occupied for generations. Every breeding season, between April and July, he and Jenny visit each site to update their records. The precipitous terrain makes this an arduous task and the couple are getting no younger. "We need more young people to do the hiking for us," says John. "Besides, they're good at fixing punctures." Before I leave – returning the baseball cap only once I'm safely inside my car – we agree to meet in the Matopos to see some of his sites.

* * *

I've now spent four packed days in Bulawayo. The more I discover, the more it seems that all roads lead to the Matopos. Clearly, there's only one thing to do. I check out of the Traveller's Guesthouse and head south to the sacred hills.

This should, in theory, be a simple half-hour drive. But on Paul Hubbard's advice, I eschew the main road and instead take a slower, rougher alternative to the west. After 45 minutes, I spy what I've been looking for: a rusty signpost directing me to King Mzilikazi's memorial. I pass through a gate, shooting away some skinny cows, and park in a dusty clearing beneath an acacia. Here, a modest stone plinth bears a small plaque. *Mzilikazi ka matshobana, inkosi yamandabane*, it reads. "In memory of Mzilikazi, King of the Amandebele Nation."

Zimbabwe

Inset: Summer visitor The European bee-eater is one of several migrant species that arrive in the Matobo Hills every October

Right: Wall storkes Nswatugi Cave is one of the most accessible rock art sites, with some of the most impressive paintings



The heat is intense – it's only mid-morning and already the dashboard shows 39°C. I take a moment in the shade to imbibe history, before jumping back into my vehicle. A few miles further south, the road begins a gentle descent and the first hills swing into view. The flat bush is now more broken and undulating, studded with boulder formations and stands of euphorbias looking like upturned candelabras. Soon, I can see the park entrance and, beyond that, vistas of rock stretching to the horizon. It's every bit as impressive as I'd hoped.

The Matobo National Park, I discover, is one of those 'turdid' locations: on the map, it measures just 424sq km – a postage stamp compared with many Zimbabwe parks – but once you're inside, its horizons feel limitless. Thankfully, there's a decent road network (though rough in places) and helpful signposting. It's thus a perfect destination for self-drive.

For the first three nights, I'm based at Rowallan Camp, a secluded self-catering retreat alive with birdsong, that sits just inside the park entrance. I stay in Mamazala's Cottage, which overlooks a looming dwala named Imadzi, and at sunset I watch a baboon troop swagger in silhouette over its muscular contours. After dark, I sit by the fire, while jackals keen and bushbabies wail in the darkness. Camp warden Polite Ncube tells me that a white rhino bull occasionally wanders in during the night to crop the lawns.

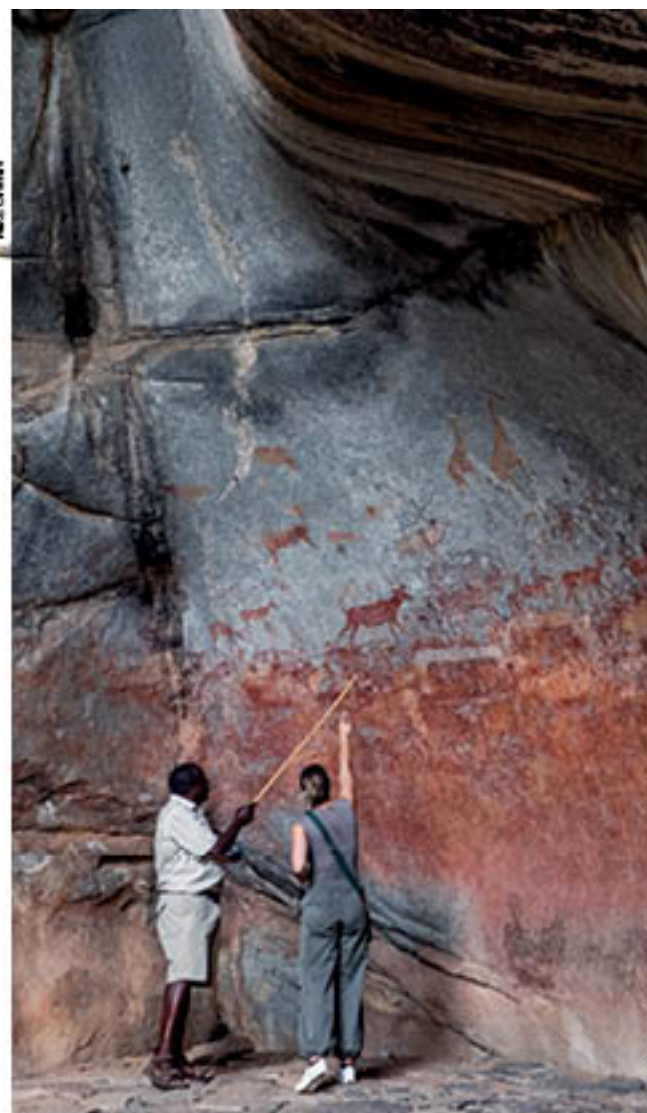
It's on day one that Blessing takes me to see the White Rhino Shelter and the following morning that we go tracking the real thing. After that, I'm left to my own devices. Two days of scenic drives and knackered climbs bring more stunning rock art and soul-stirring panoramas, plus a steady drip-feed of wildlife, including local specials such as boulder chat and rock elephant-shrew.

On day three I meet up with John Brebner to take a peek at some black eagle nests. He points out distant stick platforms on precipitous cliff faces and at nest 54, near Maleme Dam, a single hunched fledgling. The youngster's parents soon appear, gliding in tandem above the ridge as though they own the place – which, in a way, they do.

The only place I meet other visitors is at World's View, in the centre of the park, where curio stalls and a car park suggest a greater tourist pull. As I arrive, two school buses pull up and disgorge an excited gaggle of schoolkids. They have come all the way from Gweru – 160km northeast of Bulawayo – and, like me, are here to see the grave of Cecil John Rhodes, who was buried on this spot, as he requested, on 10 April 1902.

The site is undeniably spectacular. The brass plaque marking the grave sits atop a granite dome named Malindidzimu, surrounded by 360 degrees of gobsmacking panorama and ringed by huge, spherical boulders that form an apparent guard of honour. This unspoilt grandeur takes me a little aback, given Zimbabwe's repudiation of its colonial past. It certainly contrasts with the anonymous patch of bush where Mzilikazi is commemorated.

A display of archive photos at the site museum show scenes from the funeral – an affair of great pageantry and vast expense, in which



the heavy coffin was hauled up the rock on two gun carriages by a team of ten oxen. The great and the good of colonial Bulawayo stand solemn-faced beside the grave. Little could they have imagined the joyfully riotous scene today: scores of schoolkids racing each other up the rock and posing beside the plaque for selfies. I ask one of their teachers what she thinks about the place. "Well, it's the past," she shrugs. "You can't destroy the past."

* * *

For my last 24 hours in the Matopos I decamp to Amalinda, an upmarket lodge built ingeniously into a large kopje on the park outskirts. Even my room here feels like part of the landscape, with a granite rock face behind my bed and a boulder screening the bathroom. The lodge's infinity swimming pool – also built into natural rock – offers blessed relief from the heat. After a blissful dip, I catch up with my thoughts over a cold beer at the pool bar, while rock agamas prostrate themselves on the path like sun-worshippers on the Riviera.

I reflect on that elusive 'sense of place' that we travel writers love to wax lyrical about. What exactly does it comprise? Is it the physical landscape – the rivers and rocks? Is it the history – the people who've been here; the things they've left behind? Is it nature – the wildlife, birdsong, scent of the plants? Or is it some combination of all of the above?

Whatever these mysterious properties might be, few places in my experience combine them quite as powerfully as do Bulawayo and the Matobo Hills. Beneath each layer of that peeling onion – if you'll →



AMALINDA LODGE

Above: Precious Revenue from guided walks, booked directly with National Parks or through your lodge (in this case, Amalinda), helps to fund rhino protection. Below: Royal sighting The Ilac-breasted roller was once known as Mzilikazi's roller, named by the Mandebale king buried in Matobo.

excuse my stretching the metaphor to breaking point – are yet more riches and revelations, from the rock art to the rhinos and the Khoisan to the colonials. And the more you peel, the more you reveal, until you realise that its stratification is its identity; you'll never reach a core.

My last day dawns with scattered cloud, and breakfast brings talk of imminent rain. Tonight I fly home, but first my guide Kevin Dawa has one adventure left for me. "I must show you Bambata," he insists. "It's my favourite cave". And so, two hours later, after lurching over the boulder-strewn riverbeds of the wild Whovi sector, we have parked the Land Cruiser beneath the shade of a wild olive tree and are following a narrow wooded trail between looming cliffs. Kevin has seen leopard in this area ("four and a half times!"), and today he points out the territorial tree rubbings of a notoriously grumpy black rhino bull. "Don't worry, these are two weeks old," he reassures me.

We emerge at the foot of a huge granite dome. Overhead, thunder clouds are piling up and the air feels pregnant with rain. Kevin strides ahead of me up the exposed rock. As we go, he explains that 'Bambata' derives from an old Zulu word for 'caress' and is said to reflect Mzilikazi's vertigo, the king reputedly hugging the slope when he visited this sacred site.

Near the top, we shoulder through a screen of bushes into a large, perfectly semi-circular cave, where a spectacular mural emblazoned across the back wall stops me in my tracks. There are elephant, giraffe, kudu and numerous other animals, plus human figures hunting, dancing and sleeping, all delineated with wondrous precision. There are also strange 'formlings' – abstract stippled ovals that remain unexplained. What do these images tell us, I wonder? Are they a record of actual events or the fantasy outpourings of shamanic ritual? Kevin prefers to avoid simplistic answers. "We should acknowledge our ignorance and try not to interpret with a 21st-century mind," he says. "Really, it's guesswork up on guesswork."

It's time to go. Outside, a sky of glowering purple now hangs over the hills like a wave poised to break. European bee-eaters dart and wheel low overhead, snapping at the insect-filled air. For a second I see us as a rock painting: two isolated stick figures on a wall of granite. Then lightning splits the horizon. "Better hurry," says Kevin, as the first fat raindrops hit my face. ☔



MIKE UNWIN



ROWALLAN CAMP

WHERE TO STAY

Bulawayo:

Most city hotels are favoured by business travellers, with leisure tourists preferring to stay in one of the owner-run guest houses set in lush suburban gardens, which offer altogether more relaxed and homey lodgings. Mike Unwin stayed at Travellers' Guesthouse, near Hillside Dams Conservancy.

The Matobo Hills:

The National Park is just a half-hour drive from Bulawayo, which makes it very doable as a day-trip from the city. To get the full experience, however, it is worth spending a few nights in the hills – it is well-suited for self-drive travellers (who can easily get supplies in Bulawayo) or all-inclusive stays.

Self-catering:

ZimParks operates a range of cottages and lodges at Maleme Dam and other locations, and campsite facilities are available at a couple of private operations. Mike Unwin stayed at Rowallan Camp, on the former site of the Girl Guides' Association within Matobo National Park, which offers three styles of accommodation: Umkhombo Tented Camp, Mamazala's Cottage and Sanderson's Camp.

Catered:

While there isn't an abundance of lodge operators here, there is a decent selection across a fairly wide price range, all of which include a range of activities. Mike stayed at the long-established and renowned Amalinda Camp, which is ingeniously set within the rock to create a unique sense of place.

Mike Unwin's trip was facilitated by the UK-based specialist tour operator Expert Africa, and he flew in and out of Bulawayo on Ethiopian Airlines.



TRAVELLER'S GUESTHOUSE



ROWALLAN CAMP



AMALINDA LODGE

Top to bottom: Umkhombo Tented Camp (Rowallan Camp), Travellers Guesthouse (Bulawayo), Mamazala's Cottage (Rowallan Camp), and Amalinda Lodge