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Bucket List Destination: Victoria Falls

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Victoria Falls in southern Africa is one of the largest in the world.

Victoria Falls is on the bucket list of anyone who has ever been or ever wants to go to [Africa](#). The waterfall, one of the largest in the world, is situated in southern Africa on the Zambezi River between Zambia and Zimbabwe. And with a wide variety of accommodations and tour options, agents can arrange trips ranging from economical to five-star.

Where to Stay

Jim Holden, president of [African Travel](#), says that backpackers and the budget-conscious go to a “charming place called [Fawlty Towers](#),” which fans of classic British comedies will recognize from the cult-classic TV series starring John Cleese. “The well-heeled go to [Tongabezi](#) or [The River Club](#) for their exclusivity. All these properties are on the Zambian side of the falls. Then there’s the Grande Dame herself, [The Victoria Falls Hotel](#) with its lovely colonial atmosphere being the very first hotel at the falls on the Zimbabwe side. And now there’s the more modern [Royal Livingstone Hotel](#) on the Zambian side right beside the falls. There are also Zambezi safari lodges on the Zimbabwe side, which give that African bush lodge feel. So there’s definitely something for everyone at Victoria Falls.”

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The Victoria Falls Hotel exudes a lovely colonial atmosphere.

Elizabeth Gordon of [Extraordinary Journeys](#) recommends [Elephant Camp](#), which is just 10 minutes away from the falls, for privacy. The camp, she says, is “beautifully decorated” and offers elephant-back safaris and has a resident cheetah. This summer, Elephant Camp opened three new suites, increasing the camp’s capacity to a total of 12 tented suites with 24 beds. The new suites are “to the west of the camp and have absolutely amazing views of the gorges and the spray of the falls. One of these is a gorgeous new honeymoon suite.”

For a more value-minded option, Gordon suggests [Ilala Lodge](#), the closest hotel to the falls. “You can see the spray of the falls from the lawn,” she says, and notes that animals from Zambezi National Park can often be seen grazing on the grounds. “The hotel is also in the town of Victoria Falls, which is safe and welcoming and a great place to walk around. Be sure to request rooms on the second floor for the balcony space.” The hotel generally costs \$150-\$215 per person per night for a standard double room.

How to Get There

South African Airways has daily flights to both Victoria Falls and Livingstone, Zambia, via Johannesburg. From the U.S., the airline offers daily flights to Johannesburg from New York and Washington, D.C. (Dulles), which connect to both destinations.

Plans are reportedly underway to construct a new runway at Victoria Falls that will allow larger aircraft to use the airport. Larger aircraft will mean direct access to the falls by long-haul flights from the Americas, Europe and Asia. The expansion of the airport will also include the construction of a new terminal building.

Sandy Salle of [Hills of Africa Travel](#) likes the Victoria Falls Safari Club, a new part of the [Victoria Falls Safari Lodge](#). “Specifically, it’s a section of 16 rooms and four suites that overlook a private watering hole. The property is just two miles from the Victoria Falls Town Center.” Like Holden, she also likes The Victoria Falls Hotel, noting in particular its three restaurants, traditional High Tea and spa services.

What to Do

“There is a good range of activities to do [in Victoria Falls], from white-water rafting to microlighting to game walks in the Victoria Falls National Park,” Holden says.

Microlighting is a private flight for one person and a pilot in a small fixed-wing aircraft that lasts for 15 or 30 minutes and offers a truly exclusive look over the falls. A 15-minute flight will take visitors over the falls and the Zambezi River, while a 30-minute flight goes over the falls, the Batoka Gorge, the Zambezi River and the Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park. Children eight and up can try microlighting, but younger kids big enough to fit into the harness can also take part. Those who would rather opt for a more traditional mode of flying can take a helicopter tour.

Salle recommends an elephant-back tour at The Elephant Wallow, a wilderness concession on the edge of the Batoka Gorge along the edge of the Zambezi gorges, or a visit to Livingstone Island, which caters for Tongabezi Lodge and other hotels and lodges and the people around the area. Livingstone Island is in the middle of the Zambezi River, touching the tip of Victoria Falls. Access to the island is seasonal and depends on the water level in the Zambezi River. Only 12 guests may visit at any one time during one of five daily visits, restricting the island to only 60 visitors per day.



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Salle says that her clients also like participating in an interactive meal at Aunt Flatter's. "During dinner, Aunt Flatter discusses cooking techniques and ingredients that are traditional to Zimbabwe. It's a great experience for food lovers, as well as individuals who are interested in immersing themselves into the local culture. It's also a great activity for larger groups."



Gordon recommends bungee jumping and canoeing excursions, as well as the [Steam Train](#), a two-hour sunset trip across the Victoria Falls Bridge that also goes through the neighboring Zambezi National Park.

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