

## ZIMBABWE COUNTRY INFORMATION

### Climate

The climate is tropical, although markedly moderated by altitude. There is a dry season, including a short cool season during the period May to September when the whole country has very little or no rain. The rainy season is typically a time of heavy rainfall from November to March.

### General

Located on the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia, Victoria Falls is a town in the province of Matabeleland North, Zimbabwe. It lies on the southern bank of the Zambezi River at the western end of the Victoria Falls, a UNESCO World Heritage site. While it is neither the highest nor the widest waterfall in the world, Victoria Falls is claimed to be the largest. This claim is based on a width of 1,708 meters (5,604 ft.) and height of 108 meters (354 ft.), forming the largest sheet of falling water in the world. Zimbabwe is the 61st largest country in the world, just larger than Japan or Montana but smaller than Paraguay, with a total area of 390,580 square kilometers.

### Topography

Most of Zimbabwe is rolling plateau, with over 75% of the country lying between 600 and 1,500 meters above sea level, and almost all of it over 300 meters. The area of high plateau, known as the highveld, is around 650 kilometers long by 80 kilometers wide, and stretches northeast to southwest at 1,200 to 1,675 meters. This culminates in the northeast in the Inyanga mountains, reaching the country's highest point at Mount Inyangani, 2,592 meters. On either side of the highveld is the middleveld, a plateau ranging from about 600 to 1,200 meters in height. Below 610 meters are areas making up the lowveld, wide and grassy plains in the basins of the Zambezi and the Limpopo. The highveld is a central ridge forming the country's watershed, with streams flowing southeast to the Limpopo and Sabi rivers and northwest into the Zambezi. Only the largest of the many rivers have an all year-round flow of water.

### Demographics

Zimbabwe has an estimated population of 13.12 million people and nearly 98% of Zimbabwe's populace is African. The Shona ethnic group comprises approximately 82% of the population and occupies the eastern two-thirds of Zimbabwe. The Ndebele make up approximately 13% of the population, and are descended from Zulu migrations in the nineteenth century. Approximately 5% of the population is made up of other ethnic groups. Zimbabwe has 16 official languages with the prominent dialects being Shona and Sindebele. English is also an official language, which is used widely in administration, law, broadcasting and schools. Only 4% of the population lives in urban areas. About 50% of the population has syncretic religious beliefs (part Christian, part indigenous beliefs), while Christians account for 25%, indigenous beliefs 24%, Muslim and other beliefs 1%. VICTORIA FALLS INFORMATION

As a tourist visiting Zimbabwe, there are many cultural and logistical factors to consider as you prepare for your trip. We have developed a list of details specific to your time on the volunteer programme in Victoria Falls, which should ensure you are fully prepared.

## Public Holidays

If one of the following public holidays falls during your volunteer program, you may have a free day, as volunteer projects do not generally run on public holidays. It is also important to note that only some shops and shopping malls will be open on these holidays.

### Public Holidays 2016

Jan 1	New Year's Day
Mar 25	Good Friday
Mar 28	Easter Monday
Apr 18	Independence Day
May 1	May Day
May 25	Africa Day
Aug 8	Heroes Day
Aug 9	Defence Forces Day
Dec 22	National Unity Day
Dec 25	Christmas Day
Dec 26	Boxing Day

## Visa

All volunteers must apply for a business visa in order to participate at the Nakavango Conservation Centre in Victoria Falls as volunteer work is not permitted on a tourist or visitor visa. Most nationalities can obtain a business visa upon arrival, provided they meet the documentation requirements:

1. Payment (costs outlined below)
2. Passport with at least six months of remaining validity and four blank pages for visa stamps, plus one copy of the passport details page
3. Two recent color passport photos, plus one copy
4. Invitation letter provided to you via email by Nakavango staff once you have sent your arrival details, plus one copy
5. Proof of departure (two copies of flight itinerary or ticket)

For volunteers planning to visit neighboring countries while on the programme, some nationalities can obtain double entry visas. The cost varies depending on nationality. Single entry visas can be obtained for US\$30 for citizens of the United States, Australia & most European Union nations. Canadian citizens can obtain a single entry visa for US\$75 & citizens of the UK and Ireland can obtain one for US\$55.

All volunteers should state their destination as "Stanley and Livingstone Private Game Reserve".

The business visa is valid for 30 days. Volunteers who plan to stay beyond the initial 30 days are **subject to paying a US\$500 fee to Zimbabwe Immigration**, in order to obtain a temporary work permit for a total stay of up to 90 days. Our local staff will be happy to help with the process at the local immigration office in Victoria Falls.

You will need to have the below documentation on arrival.

1. Two copies of your CV/Resume
2. A certified copy of your Birth Certificate
3. Chest X-Ray Certificate (showing you are free of Tuberculosis. This can also be completed once in Victoria Falls for US\$20)
4. 4 passport size photographs (these can also be obtained once in Victoria Falls)
5. Police Clearance/Background check

For more information on visa costs and to download the application form, please see: [www.zimbabweconsulate.co.za/main/visainfo.html](http://www.zimbabweconsulate.co.za/main/visainfo.html) Volunteers from countries which require the pre-arrangement of a business visa for entry into Zimbabwe must apply for this through their nearest Zimbabwean embassy.

### **Zimbabwean Embassies Abroad**

To find the contact details of embassies and consulates of Zimbabwe, visit the Go Abroad website.

### **Travel Documents**

It is highly recommended that you make two copies of all your important travel documents (passport, flight tickets, and travel insurance) before you leave home. Leave one copy with a friend or family member and take the spare copy with you. Bring your passport as well as an identification card (such as driver's license or student card) for traveling as you may be asked to present this when making tour bookings or checking in for flight/bus trips. To enter Zimbabwe, your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond the date of departure from Zimbabwe.

### **Getting There**

Several airlines fly in & out of the area, including Air Botswana, Air Namibia, Air Zimbabwe, British Airways & South African Airways. All fly directly into Victoria Falls International Airport.

### **Money**

The currency of Zimbabwe is the US Dollar– please visit the XE website to check the current exchange rate at the time of your program. Please note that the US Dollar is the most widely accepted currency. Be wary of schemers who try to take advantage of tourists by offering “currency exchange” for Zimbabwean notes in the trillions of dollars – this is an obsolete currency.

We recommend taking around US\$200 in cash to keep in case of emergencies and a MasterCard or VISA credit/debit card to withdraw cash as you need it.

It is strongly advised that you notify your bank of your plans to travel in Zimbabwe, so they do not put a hold on your account due to activity which may appear suspicious. ATMs that distribute USD are readily available in Victoria Falls. You will need cash for public transportation, as well as for weekend travel, shopping and personal expenses.

## General Health & Vaccinations

It is expected that all volunteers have their own health insurance. Vaccinations are not typically required to enter Zimbabwe; however this can vary depending on your travel path. We therefore recommend carrying out independent research and talking to a travel doctor about the required vaccinations if you plan to travel before or after your volunteer program. You may choose to get vaccinated against some illnesses (please see our list below of recommended vaccinations).

On the off chance that you fall sick and need a doctor's attention, Nakavango has access to an emergency medical service and will take you to the hospital if necessary. There are good and reputable hospitals where you can be treated. It is important to note that in the unlikely event you require medical care, doctors and hospitals require immediate payment. Although you will be covered by your travel insurance it is recommended to take a credit card of US\$250 cash to cover any unforeseen medical care, which can be claimed from your travel insurance provider upon your return.

Before you go to Victoria Falls, it is important that you discuss your trip with a travel doctor, ideally 4 to 6 weeks prior to your programme start date. You may wish to get vaccinations or prophylactics against some illnesses. Please see the list below as a guide on which to discuss with your doctor.

### Recommended Vaccinations and Prophylactics for Victoria Falls are as follows:

- Polio
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Diphtheria/Tetanus
- Typhoid
- Rabies
- Yellow Fever (required for entry in many African nations)
- Malaria (please consult with your doctor about how to prevent malaria while traveling)
- Medication for stomachaches and headaches

## Communication

Most parts of Zimbabwe have a reasonably good communications infrastructure. WiFi access is available at the volunteer house and in many cafes and restaurants throughout the country; however periodic outages are not uncommon. If you bring an unlocked, SIM-compatible mobile phone you will be able to buy a local SIM card for approximately US\$5, with airtime credit in intervals of US\$5. Both international and local calls can be made. The country code is +263.

## Zimbabwe Wall Plugs & Adapters

The socket type found in the volunteer accommodation in Victoria Falls is the square three-prong plug (Type G), as commonly used in the UK. Please bring an adaptor for any items that are not compatible with this plug type. The voltage in Zimbabwe is 220 V and the frequency is 50Hz.



## Clothing & Culture

Casual, modern clothing is permitted as suitable attire in Victoria Falls. However, it is advisable to dress neatly and wear clean, conservative clothing that covers the shoulders and knees while volunteering on your project. Clothing should not be overly tight or show excessive skin. Volunteers love to go out socializing in Victoria Falls on the weekends, so bring something you like to wear out.

## Laundry

A weekly laundry service is provided for volunteers by the housekeeping staff at the volunteer accommodation. Please ensure that all of your clothing and towels are labeled with your name to ensure that you receive all of your laundry back in your own laundry bag. Laundry bags are provided.

## Transport

The most common methods of transport for volunteers in Victoria Falls is taxi or the programme vehicles. Volunteers travel to and from their work site using programme vehicles or walking, depending on the activities for the day. Volunteers will use taxi transport in their free time. To travel into the town of Victoria Falls during the weekends will typically cost US\$30 for a round trip.

## Shopping

There are grocery stores, pharmacies, markets and shopping centers in the town of Victoria Falls, where you will be able to purchase everything that you need; from toiletries, to snacks and drinks, to sanitary and other personal items. If you want to eat out on the weekends, there are a selection of restaurants and bars in town, on which Justine will be happy to provide recommendations.

## What's happening in Victoria Falls?

After registering, volunteers often like to know what is happening in the country they will be traveling to. The following websites contains up to date news and information from Victoria Falls: [Victoria Falls 24](#)

## Culture & Customs

- Zimbabweans are very warm, friendly people and will typically greet you enthusiastically.
- Handshake greetings are very common in Zimbabwe, which typically comprise of three stages: a normal handshake, which is followed by a connection of hooked fingers (thumbs raised and touching) and finishing in a normal handshake – ask a local to show you how!
- Speaking to someone with your hands in your pockets is considered very rude.
- When you wave hello, be sure to rotate your wrist. A simple palm-outward raised hand is a sign of opposition to the president and government. It's an easy mistake to make that could be misinterpreted as offensive!
- Tips of 10% are customary

## Packing List

- Copies of important travel documents, such as passport, criminal background check, travel insurance, visas, plane tickets and passport photos
- Medical kit with aspirin (or a similar pain reliever), antihistamine for relief from allergies or insect bites, diarrhea 'stoppers' (such as Diastop) scissors and tweezers, band aids, antiseptic cream for cuts and grazes, sunscreen, lip balm, insect repellent and any personal medication
- Toiletries, including toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, soap/body wash and contact lenses
- Towel(s)
- Work Gloves
- Laptop, iPad or Smartphone so you have access to WiFi
- You can buy a SIM card for around US\$5 (to make local calls, send texts and receive international calls)
- Camera
- Plug Adapters and chargers for your electronics
- A set of nice clothes - it is most likely you will want to go out for dinner or dancing
- Sun hat and sunglasses
- Swimsuit
- Day Pack
- A small padlock for securing bags and valuables
- Torch, binoculars and water bottle
- Sleeping bag for weekly camp out
- Books, music and other entertainment for long travel and 'down time'
- Travel guide (many volunteers find Lonely Planet to be very helpful for preparation and once they are in Victoria Falls)
- This information booklet
- Journal and pens to keep a diary
- Clothing
  - Neutral-colored clothing, khaki colors – camouflage clothing is banned in Zimbabwe
  - Collared khaki shirts, both short and long-sleeved
  - Khaki pants and shorts
  - Comfortable walking shoes, preferably hiking boots
  - Sun hat/cap and a warm hat/beanie
  - Sweatshirt/fleece top and windbreaker/rain jacket
  - Casual clothing for evening wear
  - Underwear and socks

## Volunteer Supplies

Often it is difficult for volunteers to travel abroad with supplies due to limitations on baggage weight. However, you will have access to shopping centers in Victoria Falls where supplies can be bought once you arrive. This is our recommended and preferred way to contribute to your project, as not only does it mean you do not have to carry the supplies on the plane with you, it means any money you spend will stimulate the local economy.

As community development initiatives are carried out in conjunction with conservation activities on the Nakavango Victoria Falls program, some volunteers choose to bring supplies to the local schools they will be working in. Below is a list of supplies that are useful for the community development initiatives involved in the programme. Students can choose any number of items from this list to bring with them.

- First aid materials
- Flip-flops/shoes
- Children's clothing
- Bubble solution
- Face Paint
- Music player and some children's music
- Musical instruments
- Stickers, stamps and certificates
- Group games without small pieces, such as Twister
- Colored drawing paper
- Pencils/pens/markers/crayons
- Books (any type)
- Posters
- Colored pavement chalk
- Chalk

## Safety

Traveling abroad can always bring out a mixture of excitement and nervousness. However, when you are immersing yourself in a foreign culture through volunteering and living among the local community, this apprehension can often be compounded.

If you have not traveled much before, it is difficult to know what to expect and often volunteers (and their loved ones) are concerned for their safety and security. Although it would be foolish of us to try and "guarantee" anybody's safety, we do everything we can to ensure your volunteer programme is as safe and secure as possible.

Every programme that we offer has been personally inspected and selected by a director from the company. We have lived in the accommodations, experienced the orientations, worked on the projects and built strong and trusting relationships with our local staff. If we did not believe the programs were safe enough to send our own children to, we would not offer them.

In the unlikely event that something was to happen, volunteers have various layers of support that they can go through (and people who will help them in the case of an accident).

- Victoria Falls Volunteer Coordinator
- Placement Staff
- Accommodation Managers
- Nakavango Programme Manager

Programs are monitored on an ongoing basis to gauge volunteers' experiences and we are continually improving our placements and projects through this feedback. The safety and security of our programs is constantly being reviewed and if you have any concerns, we encourage you to discuss these with the local staff during your programme orientation.

During orientation, the local staff will also provide guidance in the area of safety and security. Listed below are some general safety tips.

- Avoid wearing jewelry on the streets – especially gold neck chains or items that would be appealing to “would be thieves”.
- Handbags are always a temptation. However if you must carry one, keep it in front of you. A backpack is better.
- Be alert.
- Always tell someone where you are going before you attempt long journeys and ensure you are confident with directions. Be especially careful at night. Use taxi drivers you know (keep a telephone number) or who are connected to the place where you are traveling. Our local staff will recommend some specific drivers during orientation. If you are unsure, always ask local staff whom to use.
- Keep in groups at night and never walk down dark, empty streets. If possible use transport from door to door after dark. Keep in mind the recognized tourist areas can be considered potentially high-risk areas for pickpockets and thieves.
- Leave your valuables behind before a night in town.
- For traffic safety, keep looking to the left and right and walk slowly when crossing the road.
- Always keep an eye on your drinks when out socializing.

## Security

Victoria Falls is a relatively safe area comparative to other developing nations. Theft is a relatively low risk in Victoria Falls, but snatch-theft on the street and theft from hotel rooms are not unknown. You are cautioned to make sure that you have your valuables kept safe, somewhere you can feel them at all times, especially when you are in crowded market places or nightclubs. Our local staff will also guide you in orientation on areas to stay away from. Most tourists in Victoria Falls never experience any trouble and as long as you stay alert and use common sense you should not have any problems. Our local staff will guide you more on safety and security during orientation. If you are ever unsure of anything just ask the local staff, they are only too happy to help.

## Security Warnings

The following governments publish useful travel advisories, highlighting entry requirements, medical facilities, areas with health & safety risks, civil unrest or other dangers, and are generally very up to date:

United States	<a href="http://travel.state.gov">http://travel.state.gov</a>
Canada	<a href="http://www.voyage.gc.ca">www.voyage.gc.ca</a>
United Kingdom	<a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel">www.fco.gov.uk/travel</a>
Australia	<a href="http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au">www.smarttraveller.gov.au</a>
New Zealand	<a href="http://www.mft.govt.nz">www.mft.govt.nz</a>

## Responsible Drinking

While in country on your volunteer trip, it is natural that you and other volunteers will want to socialize and go out together as a group. This is great and while we encourage this, it is important to recognize the risks and dangers that can occur while out partying. Many of our volunteers are at an age where they enjoy socializing and going out regularly. All we ask is - please drink responsibly! It can be exciting to be in a foreign country - the nightlife is great, the people are different, you have new friends and it can be easy to get overexcited and lose control of how much you are drinking. When you are drunk, you start to lose awareness of your surroundings and your judgment starts to deteriorate, which can be incredibly dangerous. Always assign at least one person in your group to remain sober and remember you are in a new environment and outside of the comfort zone of your home country. Enjoy your night, but drink responsibly!

## Drug Use

It goes without saying that the consumption of illegal and prescription drugs (if you do not have a prescription for the drugs), is forbidden. Our local staff will outline our rules regarding this during your orientation, however if a volunteer is caught using illegal drugs, he/she will be removed from the programme immediately with no refund. To consider buying or taking illegal drugs is extremely foolish and the consequences are extreme. We do not want our volunteers having their volunteer holiday turning into life imprisonment in a third world jail. It is important that all volunteers are aware of the consequences, should they be silly enough to buy or consume any illegal substances.

## Travel Insurance

It is mandatory to purchase travel insurance when participating on a Nakavango volunteer programme. It is inevitable that things may not always go to plan while you are traveling and although Nakavango does everything it can to ensure your trip abroad goes smoothly, it is essential to ensure you have adequate travel insurance should you fall sick, your bags go missing, or something is stolen.

Nakavango has therefore partnered with travel insurance provider, World Nomads, to ensure volunteers have access to the best insurance deals designed specifically with volunteer travelers in mind. World Nomads are recommended by highly regarded travel experts, Lonely Planet, and are underwritten by insurance giants Allianz, IHI, BCS Insurance Group, BUPA, Mondial Assistance and Millstream.

This insurance covers medical emergencies, emergency evacuation, trip cancellation, personal belongings and personal liability. World Nomads quotes are extremely competitive and they are one of the only insurance companies that allow travelers to claim whilst traveling, or extend their policy if they decide to stay longer. Find out more information and obtain a free no obligation quote from our recommended travel insurance partner via our Travel Insurance page.

### **Social Media**

Social media provides an excellent platform for our past, present and future volunteers to network with each other. As we are unable to give out individual volunteer details, we manage a number of networks where volunteers can connect with each other before, during and after their volunteer programs.

### **Newspaper Article - Get Recognized For Your Work**

Many volunteers choose to share their volunteer trips with local newspapers and community magazines to help promote awareness of the work they will be doing and inspire others within their community to volunteer abroad. This means we are constantly finding stories about volunteers in newspapers from all around the world! Some volunteers also use the media coverage as a way to help fundraise for their volunteer trips and placements.

If you are interested in gaining recognition for your work and promoting awareness of volunteering abroad, we encourage you to contact your local newspaper or community magazine, who in our experience, are generally very interested and willing to share our volunteers' stories.