

General Information Zambia **THE PEOPLE**

Zambia has over 73 different tribes, with a population of just about 10 million people, most of whom live in and around the urban centres. The population growth however, at 3.7 % p/a is among the highest in the world.

In the cities, especially Lusaka, where there is massive unemployment and poverty, the informal sector has been allowed to multiply. There is a growing number of thieves, pickpockets and beggars, but if you don't walk around with anything obviously stealable, it's quite safe and most will be more than willing to chat or give directions. For the most part Zambians are very friendly people.

There is no predominant ethnic culture and Zambians are fast becoming westernised. There is however, an attempt to maintain traditional customs with the revival of tribal ceremonies amongst the various tribes in different parts of the country. If any of these are taking place during your visit, they're well worth attending. ([See The People of Zambia](#))



SAFETY

As far as personal safety is concerned, one could easily hitchhike alone throughout the country without a problem. Theft however is rife in the bigger towns and cities. Don't walk around with things you can't do without, like your passport or airline tickets. Carry minimum amounts of cash and keep it hidden or in a money belt and if possible, don't leave your car unattended. This is less of a problem in the rural areas.

MEDICAL EVACUATION

Zambia has very comprehensive Medical Rescue Services. See [Speciality Emergency Services](#).

CLOTHES

Zambia has mild winters and the summer days can get quite hot. Lightweight casual clothes can be worn all year round, with a jacket or jersey for early winter mornings and evenings. On safari keep clothes to a minimum and mostly of neutral colouring - khakis, browns and greens. A sunhat, sunglasses, sunscreen and insect repellent are a must.

LAUNDRY

Most hotels and lodges will offer a laundry service. For low budget travellers there are no coin operated laundromats at all so consider drip dry clothing and be prepared for hand washing. In most places one could hire someone to do your washing.

HEALTH

A yellow fever certificate is mandatory if you are travelling from an infected area. Vaccinations for cholera, tetanus and yellow fever are advised. Malaria is virulent in the low lying areas of the country which include most of the good wildlife destinations. Take prophylactics two weeks before arrival and continue two weeks after leaving. Your chemist or doctor can advise you of the most suitable drug available as certain drugs lose their effectiveness.

Tap water in the major towns is purified and perfectly safe to drink. In the more remote areas always boil it first, except if you're staying at a lodge or hotel where drinking water is boiled already. Bottled water is readily available in the bigger towns. www.medicineplanet.com

PHOTOGRAPHY

Zambia is an extremely photogenic country. From panoramic scenery, wildlife and birds to people and vibrant ceremonies. Rich colour and good low lighting conditions abound. It is considered rude to take pictures of people without asking them first. Always bring plenty of film as it is difficult to get in Zambia. Only print film and processing is available in Lusaka, not slide. Keep your cameras in a dust resistant, padded case and out of the midday sun. A 200mm (or longer) telephoto lens will prove very useful on safari.

WHEN TO GO

Zambia's three distinctive seasons provide visitors with different perspectives depending on the time of year. The [Luangwa Valley](#) for example is best for game viewing during the dry season from June to October, but the rainy season, with its spectacular profusion of greens and reds changes the landscape dramatically and the bird populations increase with the arrival of migrants from the north.

The [Victoria Falls](#) are at their most spectacular between April and May after the rainy season but often the spray is so thick it is difficult to see the full width of the falls. To appreciate the magnificent rock formations and gorges, it is just as interesting to come when the water is low at the end of the dry season from October to December.

[Kafue National Park](#) is best from May to October as is the [Lower Zambezi](#). Ideal road travelling months are April to September as the heat is at it's most bearable.

VEHICLE TRAVELLERS

If you're doing a vehicle trip through Zambia it is a good idea to carry a range of tools and essential spares with you. Two spare wheels and a couple of spare tubes are a must due to the condition of the roads. Spare jerry cans of fuel and water, a tow rope, compressor, winch and a spotlight are useful items to have. Many of the villages along the main routes offer tyre mending services at a very reasonable fee. Road maps are available in Lusaka from the Map Centre in Nationalist Road or the Tourist Board in Lusaka Square, Cairo Rd.

ON SAFARI

Always remember that while some animals have become accustomed to the presence of people they are still wild animals. Keep your distance. It is illegal to feed any animal, make excessive noise to attract their attention, or deviate from designated roads for that closer photograph. Never get out of your vehicle except at designated points. Close all windows and zippers when you leave your room or tent and spray it with insect repellent.

The best way to get the most out of your safari is to take an active interest in everything going on around you, not just the number of species you can see in the shortest possible time. Ask all the questions you can think of and take reference books on not only wildlife but birds, insects and trees and read up about everything you see.

CAMPING

Zambia is a fascinating country to travel around by vehicle. Even though camping facilities are marginal, if you're well prepared you can find some of the best, unexplored and remote places in the country and very often have them all to yourselves. Be fully equipped for spending the night with no facilities at all except perhaps a nearby river. Have a bucket for washing pots and clothes, all cooking gear and all the food you need for the whole journey apart from fresh vegetables. Meat is not always available in the remoter areas so bring substitutes. Most villages will sell onions, tomatoes, potatoes, bread, sugar, salt and oil. You can buy just about anything you need for your journey in Lusaka, but tinned food is pricey. Always have at least twenty litres of drinking water in the vehicle at all times as well as spare jerry cans of petrol. It is best to boil all water before drinking it.

Be very careful in towns and villages not to leave your vehicle open and unattended. People with little are easily tempted. You should have no problem sleeping outdoors in designated camping areas or remote places along the way, but get into the habit of locking things away before you go to sleep.

ACCOMMODATION

Zambia has a wide range of standards when it comes to places to stay - from five star hotels and first class luxury lodges, to rustic bush camps, guesthouses and campsites. Foreigners must pay in hard currency except for the smaller guesthouses. Not all of the small town hotels are equipped to take travellers cheques or credit cards. Be

aware of the 'extra's' added onto your bill - 10% service charge and 20% VAT (1995) See Listings for [Hotels](#) or [Game Lodges](#) or see the "Where to stay" options at each destination.

CURRENCY

It's best to come into the country with either travellers cheques or dollars or pounds which can be exchanged at any of the many Bureaux de Change in the main Towns. If you are offered an exchange on the black market at the borders, exercise extreme caution as they are notorious for cheating you without you even realising it. Travellers cheques attract a commission when changing to other currencies.

The Zambian currency is the Kwacha and it fluctuates quite regularly.

In 2005 - 1 US\$ buys you 4800 Kwacha . Nobody uses ngwee coins any more as they are worthless.

Most used denominations are K500 and K1000, K5000 and K10 000 notes