

Trails of Africa Tours and Safaris

Zimbabwe Travel Guide and General Information

Is it safe to travel to Zimbabwe? What's the currency in Zimbabwe? Do I need a visa for Zimbabwe? Planning a trip to one of Africa's less commercial countries brings up many important questions. Below we've gathered our knowledge and tried to answer the most frequently asked questions about Zimbabwe for our travelers and potential travelers.

Safety in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is generally a safe country to visit. As in any country, you need to be cautious and careful in the cities and major towns like Harare and Bulawayo. Tourist police in Victoria Falls have been a massive help in reducing the nuisance factor from touts and hawkers, and the national parks which most people visit on safari holidays in Zimbabwe experience little crime. In recent years, politics have caused great distress and damage in Zimbabwe, bringing an image of chaos and insecurity to mind. Whilst the situation in the country has vastly improved from the days of white-owned farm invasions and violent urban unrest, some political tensions and troubles prevail and you should always avoid large gatherings. We keep a close eye on developments in Zimbabwe, and always urge all of our potential travellers there to do the same – the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and BBC websites are good resources for current information.

Time in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe doesn't operate daylight saving time, and is two hours in advance of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT+2) during the summer months, as well as during the winter months.

Currency in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe abandoned the now infamous Zimbabwe dollar in 2009 after years of record high levels of inflation. It has been using the US dollar as its currency ever since, the South African rand is also widely accepted. Credit cards are becoming easier to use in tourist and business hubs such as Victoria Falls, Harare and Bulawayo but many visitors will still favour cash over plastic when visiting Zimbabwe's more remote areas.

Rather bizarrely, due to a lack of dollar and rand coins circulating in Zimbabwe, change in supermarkets and at petrol stations is sometimes given to customers in sweets or pens. As charming as some may find this quirk in Zimbabwe's economy, it's hardly a solid base on which to build a solid monetary policy. With that in mind Zimbabwe's central bank introduced special coins into circulation in mid-December 2014. The coins, which are pegged to the US dollar, come in denominations of one cent, five cent, 10 cent and 25 cent. It's hoped the introduction of smaller denominations into circulation will help further stabilise Zimbabwe's economy – which should further help ordinary Zimbabweans return to a degree of normalcy.

Zimbabwe's International Dialling Code

Zimbabwe's International Dialling Code is +263. Calling to Zimbabwe, you need to dial 00 263, followed by an area code (e.g. 4 for Harare); calling from Zimbabwe, you need to dial the relevant country code (e.g. +44 for the United Kingdom, or +1 for the United States of America). Currently (Aug 09), international calls with TelOne cost between US\$0.23 and US\$1.10 per minute, depending on the destination of the call (which country; fixed/mobile) and the time of the call (peak/off-peak).

Food in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's safari camps and lodges serve high-quality European-style food. Their chefs are adept at coping with shortages, and most visitors will never be aware of any! The traditional diet of local Zimbabweans is mainly based on a corn-meal dish called sadza - which is powdered maize, mixed with water and cooked to the consistency of thick mashed potatoes. This is supplemented with relishes, or sauces, which might include beans, squash, pumpkins, yams, peanuts, mapopo (papaya), kapenta (a small, dried fish) – and meats from chicken and beef to biltong (dried meat) and game meats (kudu and

impala).

Health in Zimbabwe

Travelling to Zimbabwe, hepatitis B, tuberculosis, cholera and rabies vaccines are sometimes advisable, although not required; a yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from those travellers coming from areas at yellow fever risk. Malaria occurs in the areas below 1200m and in the Zambezi Valley, so you should take anti-malarials when going there. Always check the latest requirements with the nearest embassy or High Commission of Zimbabwe.

HIV infection rates are high; AIDS is widespread in Zimbabwe. Usually, this isn't an issue for travellers, but they should be aware of this situation, and take sensible precautions to avoid infection. Trails of Africa understands that blood supplies used by Zimbabwe's private hospitals have been carefully screened for years.

Language in Zimbabwe

English is the official language in Zimbabwe, although the majority of Zimbabwe's population also speaks Shona or Ndebele. Most guided safaris are usually conducted in English.

Visas for Zimbabwe

Currently (Feb 15), most citizens need visas when travelling to Zimbabwe. Some can get the visas on arrival while other nationalities are required to apply in advance. Please check with your nearest Zimbabwean Embassy or High Commission for the latest regulations, general visa requirements and fees.

For those travellers who may wish to combine a visit to Zimbabwe with one to Zambia it is now possible for travellers to obtain a dual visa, known as the Kaza Univisa. It is currently available for purchase at both Victoria Falls and Harare Airports as well as at the Victoria Falls border. The cost is US\$50 per person and allows entry into both countries. It is valid for 30 days as long as you stay in Zambia and Zimbabwe during this period. It also allows day trips into Botswana through the Kazungula border crossing too.

Weather and climate in Zimbabwe

The weather and climate in Zimbabwe is similar to Malawi's and Zambia's weather pattern – generally very warm and tropical, split into a wet and a dry season.

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