



## Adventure beyond the safari

A trip to Victoria Falls is on the bucket list of many, and this hotel allows for an immersive experience

It's dusk at the Royal Livingstone. As the Zambian heat slowly dissipates, and guests drift from their rooms to enjoy the orange and rosy glow of the sun setting over the Zambezi river, they're stopped in their tracks by a towering set of legs. Camouflaged in the foliage above is the long neck and head of a resident giraffe, quietly munching on leaves.

It's one of six giraffes that wander freely around the grounds of the 46-hectare property, a magical place where herds of zebra drink from the small lake (also reportedly home to a "naughty" crocodile) and clusters of impala playfully lock horns – each a wondrous sighting, surprising every time, and a product of the hotel's location in Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park.

The nearby spray rising from the Zambezi – or as the locals called it, 'the smoke that thunders' – is a further reminder that the hotel is just a short walk from one of the great natural wonders of the world, Victoria Falls. One can only imagine what Scottish explorer and missionary David Livingstone thought he was witnessing as he stood on a nearby island (now named for him) in 1855.



South African Airways flies from Australia to the Harry Mwanga Nkumbula International Airport in Livingstone, via Johannesburg. The Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Zambia Hotel by Anantara, rooms from \$910 a night and suites from \$1475 a night. [flysaa.com](http://flysaa.com) [anantara.com](http://anantara.com)

Indeed, one of the great advantages of the 173-room Royal Livingstone Hotel by Anantara, which references British colonial style with its dark wood, sumptuous leather, botanical drawings and maps, and butlers on hand, is that it has direct access via a private entrance to Victoria Falls – enabling guests to visit the majestic sight at any time of the day.

The property is also a (more than) comfortable base from which to partake of the many activities on, around and even over the Falls and the Zambezi.

One exhilarating option is the microlight flight offered by Batoka Sky. Once you overcome the terror of being strapped by a lap belt to what is essentially a chair attached to a hang-glider, you can enjoy the waters as a bird might – taking a swooping path hundreds of metres above the gaping gorges around Victoria Falls and the various tributaries that have carved their way through rocks over thousands of years, spotting elephants, water buffalo, and hippos below.

For the arguably certifiable, the Devil's Pool is a short boat ride from the hotel. Accessible from Livingstone Island at certain times of the year (when the flow of the river has slowed), those brave enough can swim to the small rock-edged pool on the edge of the falls. With strong currents flowing through the pool, it's far from a languorous dip, and the knowledge that you're mere centimetres from a plunge to certain death certainly gets the adrenaline running, with captured photos enabling bragging rights for years to come.

More relaxing is the sunset river safari, providing an opportunity to get up close to the wealth of wildlife living in and around the Zambezi – with a drink in hand, of course. On our safari, we watched as an elephant forded the river to cross to its awaiting herd on the opposite bank, signalling in no uncertain terms with trumpeting and spraying water that we were getting too close.

For more pachyderm encounters, Chobe National Park in Botswana, home to the country's largest elephant population, can be reached in a day trip from the Royal Livingstone.

Between such expeditions, there are opportunities to relax by the picturesque pool, enjoy a spa treatment in a tent on the riverbank as the hippos roar to one another, sip cocktails (crafted from the local Mundambi gin that's infused with African rosella) on the sundeck or lounge, and taste true 'paddock to plate' menu offerings with local African delicacies, meat and other produce sourced from 400 farmers within a 50-kilometre radius.

The whole experience puts paid to the theory that hitting the safari camps is the only way to have a true African adventure. – FREYA PURNELL



(from top) Getting a bird's eye view of the Falls; close to the edge in the Devil's Pool; a calmer spot for a dip; the Presidential Suite

