

The Great Victoria Falls (Zambia)— Spectacular! The Smoke that Thunders! In the Footsteps of Dr David Livingstone

(Level A2-B1-B2)

The Great Victoria Falls— A force of nature to reckon with

The first time I saw the Victoria Falls was on my phone. I was sitting at my desk, busy typing when I noticed that I had some video messages on WhatsApp. They were from my husband.

I had been eagerly waiting for his messages as he was working in Zambia on a water project. What awaited me was beyond my wildest dreams.

Here was some incredible raw footage featuring the mighty Zambezi river and its glorious curtain of water. The Victoria Falls. Roaring in the distance and offering an awe-inspiring vision of nature's sheer force.

How I reacted to this will always surprise me until the end of time.

Floods of emotions engulfed me. Torrents of tears broke out of my eyes and I became tongue-tied. As I watched this representation of nature's grandeur, I couldn't help it but feel the presence of God. Or at least a strong natural force that impelled me to stop and marvel at this vision.

My spirit was moved. Images on a tiny screen had managed to stir my soul. How would I react if I were physically present at the site? The roar breaking out of those sheets of water came out of my phone speakers and moved me beyond understanding. How many tears would come cascading down my face in the presence of Mosi-oa-Tunya, the 'Smoke that Thunders'?

I can still remember the date. February 14th, 2025. Valentine's Day. The day the Victoria Falls became a living entity in my body. The day the waterfall became alive within my soul and I felt the burning urge to encounter it.

Roughly a month later, my wish would be granted. I would be travelling to Livingstone with my husband to see the Victoria Falls in the flesh.

Livingstone, the home of the waterfall. Livingstone, a relic of David Livingstone, the first European to have seen the colossus and publicise his experience. That was on November 16th, 1855. Almost two centuries ago.

This is what the great man wrote in one of his journal entries:

"No one can imagine the beauty of the view from anything witnessed in England. It had never been seen before by European eyes; but scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight."

Indeed. Understandably.

Visiting the Victoria Falls—An Out of This World Experience

The Victoria Falls are located on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe. They are a [World Heritage Site](#) since 1989. They are also considered to be one of the [7 natural wonders](#) of the world along with the Grand Canyon, the Great Barrier Reef, the harbour of Rio de Janeiro, Mount Everest, Aurora Borealis (the Northern Lights) and Parícutín Volcano.

Visitors to the site can partake in different types of [outdoor activities](#) such as bungee jumping, white water rafting, hiking, river cruises, swimming in the Devil's Pool and many more.

Nevertheless, the main attraction here is the Victoria Falls.

Seeing the waterfall for the first time unravels something primal in your spirit. It forces you to acknowledge a force greater than yourself. The sheer height and width of the waterfall reduces us to our insignificance. Who are we standing next to this great force of nature?

Victoria. The name of a queen. Victoria for victory. Victory over disease, fear and self-doubt. Victorious over obstacles littered along the way during the expedition. Livingstone. Paving the way to our future visit in 2025.

Prior to this, the Victoria Falls were just mere statistics for me. They had little resonance within the scheme of things in my life. Yes, they were the world's largest falling sheet of water. Yes, they were 1,708m wide and 108m high. So what? They were mere memories of a Geography lesson and a trivia question, their name a bone of contention between local people and colonialists: 'The Victoria Falls' or Mosi-oa-Tunya?

March 11th, 2025. A day I will always remember.

It started in the morning. Seeing the waterfall in real life proved to be more than a tourist experience. It was a spiritual awakening. The white mist rose into the sky and met my awestruck gaze from the comfort of my airplane seat. It was true. The waterfall was a force to reckon with.

Later in the day, we made our way to the famous tourist site. We saw the usual handicrafts being sold, sellers calling out at us to bring back a hard copy of the waterfall. We wanted the real deal.

After we bought our tickets, we walked down the path which had felt David Livingstone's footsteps. We felt as if we were part of history. His journey had been arduous. He had walked in the face of the unknown. The pains of our journey were insignificant compared to his. Yet we shared a common point. Our thirst for discovery. Our thirst for truth.

The waterfall thundered in the distance and we took our time before coming face to face with it. We stumbled upon treasures of nature and felt overwhelmed with incommensurable gratitude.

Monkeys broke the monotony and the rainforest revealed its stunning beauty in portions. Sweat poured into our backs and we trudged on because we knew that soon our lives would never be the same again.

We were alone in this vast expanse of nature and we felt vulnerable. Meeting fellow travellers brought some solace and recognition. We smiled at each other, a subtle acknowledgement of our luck. Yes, we were lucky to experience this and we would never forget. Never ever forget.

After minutes of wondering and wandering, we finally met the spectacle. Bared-headed and unprotected. We wanted to feel the mist soaking into our skins and become wet from the breeze.

Mosi-oa-Tunya. The smoke that thunders. Finally.

I stood there and faced it. My interior walls broke again. I stared at the falling sheets of water and felt my soul connect with the spirit of the wilderness. Tears trickled out of my eyes in torrents and it was as if something ancient, something buried was waiting for this moment to be released.

I was alive.

Nature became a witness to my disarray, unwillingly. My salty tears blended into the mist and became one. Gradually, the trembling in the distance joined the sound of my heartbeat and quietened my interior din. Even today, I still carry that pivotal moment like the echo of the falls in my bones.

Victoria Falls—Walking Across Knife Edge Bridge

We continued exploring and finally had the privilege to go near its bosom. What an experience! It was just out of this world. I can now understand why this is a sacred place for many local tribes in the area.

The moment I stepped onto that narrow bridge, everything else fell away. I felt afraid but my fear quickly dissolved into the mist. I could feel my heart racing. Luckily enough, the bridge remained solid and sturdily carried my weak frame.

Then my senses became drawn to the roar of the waterfall. It was not just sound. The thunder was a powerful voice that filled the sky and my body at once.

In front of me and on both sides, mist rose ominously like incense, curling in the air and delivering promises of a beautiful forever. Then I saw the rainbow. It was radiant and perfect, arching its way through the smoke. Almost otherworldly. To say that I was awestruck is an understatement.

I was mesmerised, not just by the colours, but by the feeling that swept over me. It was as if time had paused, and I had stepped out of the world and into something unattainable. This was not mere beauty. I was in the presence of something vast and holy, something that could trace its origins to time immemorial.

Today, I can still recall those intense emotions. On that day, I felt an overwhelming certainty that I was standing in the presence of God. Not the God of churches, mosques, temples or books, but the raw, uncontainable divine that lives in thunder and light and water. The God of creativity.

In that moment, I didn't need answers. I didn't need words. I only knew that I was seen, known, and held by something greater than myself. And I knew I would never be the same.



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