

BY GILL STADEN, MAR 07, 2012

With the new government and hopefully a change of image for Zambia, the information “out there” is becoming more positive. Travel agents are making tentative steps to promote Zambia, but still a bit in “wait and see” mode. Nothing has actually changed much in the tourism industry, but there are hopes that, in a few years, Zambia will be able to compete favorably. With visits from UN, World Bank, and other international organizations who are constantly trying to promote investment in the tourism industry, we can only hope that things will improve. Not only can tourism bring in a lot of money for Zambia, it can create employment, too.

So, what has Zambia got to offer? One of Zambia’s most unexploited assets is its rivers. If you have ever looked at a map of Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, or South Africa, you will see that they do not have our abundance of water. We have the Zambezi, yes, but there are Kafue, Luangwa, Lunga, Kabompo, Kalungwishi, Chambeshi, and lots more. Many of the rivers have amazing waterfalls; they all attract birdlife. We have lakes, swamps, and floodplains, again a magnet for wildlife and birds.

We have culture, too. With over 70 different tribes and their cultural diversity, this, too, can be promoted (Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Namibia have around 8-9 tribal groups each). Chief Mukuni, over the years, has re-awakened his people’s self esteem by bringing back many of their old traditions and using their ceremonies to attract international visitors. Can you imagine Zambia if we rekindled the ceremonies of all our 70 tribes – we could have a traditional ceremony somewhere in Zambia almost every day!

Anyway, I could go on and on, but I won’t. I was spurred to write the above, because I have seen some good literature about Zambia on one of the websites. I will quote some bits of it:

Zambia is a land blessed with natural beauty and an abundance of wildlife. The country also enjoys the title of one of the world’s fastest economically-reformed countries (World Bank, 2010) and is regarded as one of the safest destinations to visit. The multitude of attractions and activities make Zambia an ideal travel destination for everyone from seasoned safari goers and thrill seekers to honeymooners and families alike.

Unusual tree-climbing lions found only in Kafue National Park.

Despite the remoteness of a lot of areas in Zambia, getting to the country is a lot more straightforward than people think. The international airport in Lusaka, Zambia’s capital, serves several major airlines, including KLM, SAA, and Emirates. Once there, smaller chartered planes or overland transfers take you to your destination with ease.

A lot of camps in Zambia are seasonal (especially in the South Luangwa), which means that they’re taken down during the rainy season, and rebuilt at the start of each safari season, by skilled local craftsmen. This, coupled with the fact that the camps are pretty small, means that availability is something one must definitely take in to consideration. It’s advisable to book well in advance, so get those Zambian thinking caps on early.

Zambia is famed for walking safaris.

During the rainy season, also known as the emerald season, the bush is really lush, thick, and green, which makes for amazing photographs. Seasonal flowers bloom and the entire landscape is transformed into an Eden for birds and animals. There are over 740 recorded species of bird in Zambia, with each vegetation habitat hosting its own distinctive set. A bird lovers' treat!

Zambia is one of the best places to go on walking safari in the world. If you've been on safari before, and are seeking a more authentic, purist experience, then a walking safari is for you. Experience nature the way our ancestors did by walking in amongst it in the South Luangwa National Park. Experienced, trained guides escort you safely through the African bush whilst educating you on the unique fauna and flora as you go. This exhilarating experience is one that you won't soon forget.

Speaking of elephants, the local herd at Mfuwe Lodge are known to wander through the lodge and right up to reception en route to eat mangoes off a nearby tree in fruiting season. Where else in the world could you pass elephants peacefully munching on mangoes on your way to breakfast?

Zambia awaits!