



Boating & Birding the Zambezi

Mongu to Falls - July 2021 Special

Start & end date: Sat 3 – Sat 10 July 2021 (7 nights, 8 days)

Start & end location: Lusaka. Please enquire for start & end at other localities along route (e.g. Livingstone) which can be offered at similar rate.

Number of people: minimum of 3, maximum of 8.

Your guides: Frank Willems (start to end) & Yakov Sabag (boating days).

Package type: “Birds & Bush” guided boating safari: *We’re spending as much time as feasible in wild places, where the focus is on birding while exploring, typically with ample attention also for other wildlife such as reptiles and amphibians.*

Accommodation type: lodging, chalets or tented (2/3-star).

Package price: \$2,999.-- pp

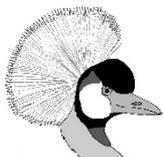
The rate is a 2021 Special on sharing basis. Included are transfers from and to Lusaka, boats, guiding services, all catering, tea & coffee, accommodation, entry fees to Ngonye and Victoria Falls. Excluded are drinks (available on-site), lunch at Royal Livingstone and items of a personal nature.

Discounts for children are available.

The rate applies to BirdWatch Zambia members, non-members pay an additional \$25 with which comes BWZ membership for 2021 and 2022.

For each booking, a donation will be made to BirdWatch Zambia.

In collaboration with Zambezi Birding



BIRDING ZAMBIA

Web www.birdingzambia.com - email birdingzambia@gmail.com

Introduction

The world-famous Victoria Falls are considered one of the Seven Natural World Wonders. Much less known and hardly visited is the water-wonder-world shaped by the mighty Zambezi River upstream of the Falls. Millions of hectares of sandy floodplains, beaches and swamps are interspersed by numerous rocky rapids and falls. This land is home to the Barotse people as well as tens of thousands of waterbirds, several of which in internationally important concentrations.

In this package suited for birders and non-birders, we cover the Mongu to Victoria Falls area, much of which will be covered by boat. We will transverse four Important Bird Areas (Barotse Floodplains, Simongoma, Mosi-oa-Tunya N.P. and the Namibian IBA Eastern Caprivi Wetlands), the Ngonye Falls Community Partnership Park & National Monument, two National Parks (Mosi-oa-Tunya and the Zambezi NP on Zimbabwe side), and one World Heritage Site (Victoria Falls). We expect large numbers of African Skimmers and other waterbirds, including scarce species such as Slaty Egret, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Pied Avocet. Pods of Hippo, large crocodiles and the occasional Spotted-necked Otter are expected in Barotseland, with megafauna including Elephant and Lion being possibilities closer to the Falls. Non-birders will equally enjoy exploring this amazingly diverse route from the unique perspective of a small boat.

Visits to the Ngonye (Sioma) Falls and the Victoria Falls are included.

Birding Zambia is proud to offer this route, which is unexplored by any other operator, in collaboration with Zambezi Birding. The package forms part of the “Zambezi from Source to Border” route. The Source is part of the Mwinilunga package available in August 2021, with other stretches scheduled to be available in future.



Detailed program

Day 1 - Arrival, Mongu

Early start from Lusaka. Depending on the number of participants, we will choose our (rental) vehicle of preference. The drive to Mongu will take about 8 hours. We will have a coffee break in the Kafue NP hoping to see a few of the bird and large mammal species of the park, which may produce Grey Crowned Crane, various raptors, Lichtenstein's Hartebeest and Sable for example. Arrival at the comfortable Liseli Lodge, Mongu, in the afternoon, where we will stay in chalets. We may opt for an hour's birding in the Barotse Floodplains on arrival, depending on time.



Day 2 – Mongu-Senanga

Early dawn start from Liseli. We will use an hour to scan the floodplains along the Mongu-Kalabo Rd for the likes of Marsh Owl (amazingly common here) and Slaty Egret. We will get in the boats at the main bridge over the Zambezi. From here we will have some 8-10 hours boating ahead of us, up to Senanga, a 106 km stretch in a straight line, but nearly twice that by boat. Here the Zambezi is a broad, strongly winding river, pushing through endless, open, dynamic sandy floodplains. We'll hardly see a tree this day, instead pass one after the other sandy beach or riverside cliff.

In 2019, this stretch held the highest concentration of African Skimmers (>1,000 birds). We'll see very large numbers of waterbirds like Whiskered Tern, Collared Pratincole and Reed Cormorant. Scarce species seen in 2019 included Pied Avocet (Zambia's only breeding population), Lesser Black-backed Gull, Gull-billed Tern and Eurasian Curlew. The river cliffs hold breeding Southern Carmine Bee-eater, Horus Swift and Brown-throated Martin. Swamp Boubou, Mourning Dove and Red-billed Francolin are among characteristic inhabitants of the reeds.

We'll arrive at Senanga Safari Lodge just before dusk, where we'll stay in chalets.



Day 3 – Senanga to Ngonye

Early start by boat from Senanga. Water levels will dictate the distance we can cover by boat, after which we will continue by vehicle to Ngonye Falls. The falls are 66 km in a straight line from Senanga, but a bit more by boat. We'll take our time to bird the river, aiming to reach the upstream side of the falls mid-afternoon. This stretch is the transition between the Barotse Floodplains and the more forested stretch below Ngonye. We will keep an eye out for the likes of Pel's Fishing Owl and Schalow's Turaco. We will stay overnight at Ngonye River Camp, where we'll have a mixture of chalets and luxury safari tents.

Day 4 – Ngonye Falls, Sesheke

A day without boating because of the many rapids between Sioma and Sesheke. The morning will be dedicated to exploring the Ngonye Falls, the largest falls on the Zambezi above the Vic Falls. This stunning area, which we'll explore on foot, was recently designated as a Community Partnership Park. It may produce interesting birds such as Yellow-throated Leaflove, a recent arrival, and our first Rock Pratincoles of the trip. Spotted-necked Otter is often seen fishing here. The dry surroundings of the falls hold typical Kalahari species like Bradfield's Hornbill and Cape Starling.



We will pass through Ngonye River Camp for a quick lunch and to collect our bags, after which we transfer by vehicle to Sesheke, a 2-hour drive. We will spend the afternoon birding the eastern end of the Simungoma Floodplains, best known for Slaty Egret and occasional records of Kori Bustard and Burchell's Sandgrouse as well as a range of Kalahari sands species. Overnight at the new Meno a Ngweshi Lodge, where we'll stay in chalets, with catering provided by our own team.



Day 5 – Sesheke-Mambova

Early morning start by boat. Today we are boating the border with Namibia, just under 100 km in a straight line. The river is now much broader than in Barotse. After the forested Katima area, the river pushes through the sandy Simungoma and Simalaha floodplain complexes, and eventually the papyrus-flanked channels above the Mambova rapids near Kazangula. Hippo's and crocodiles are common on this stretch, as are African Skimmer, African Fish Eagle, White-breasted Cormorant (curiously absent in Barotse) and a range of other waterbirds. Caspian Tern seems regular on this stretch.

From Mambova, we will transfer to Nampene Island, reached by a 10-minute boat ride from Katombora. We will stay overnight in comfortable tents.

Day 6 – Nampene & Katombora

Whole day of boating and walking in the Katombora area. Proposed is a boat ride in the morning upstream to the new bridge at Kazangula, birding along the way. The afternoon we will have on Nampene Island, looking for the likes of African Finfoot and Half-collared Kingfisher.

Nampene Island is owned and managed by Zambezi Birding, the company of Yakov and Christie Sabag. The lodge only recently became operational, after years of hard work and love invested into it by Yakov and Christie.

Day 7 - Vic Falls and surrounds

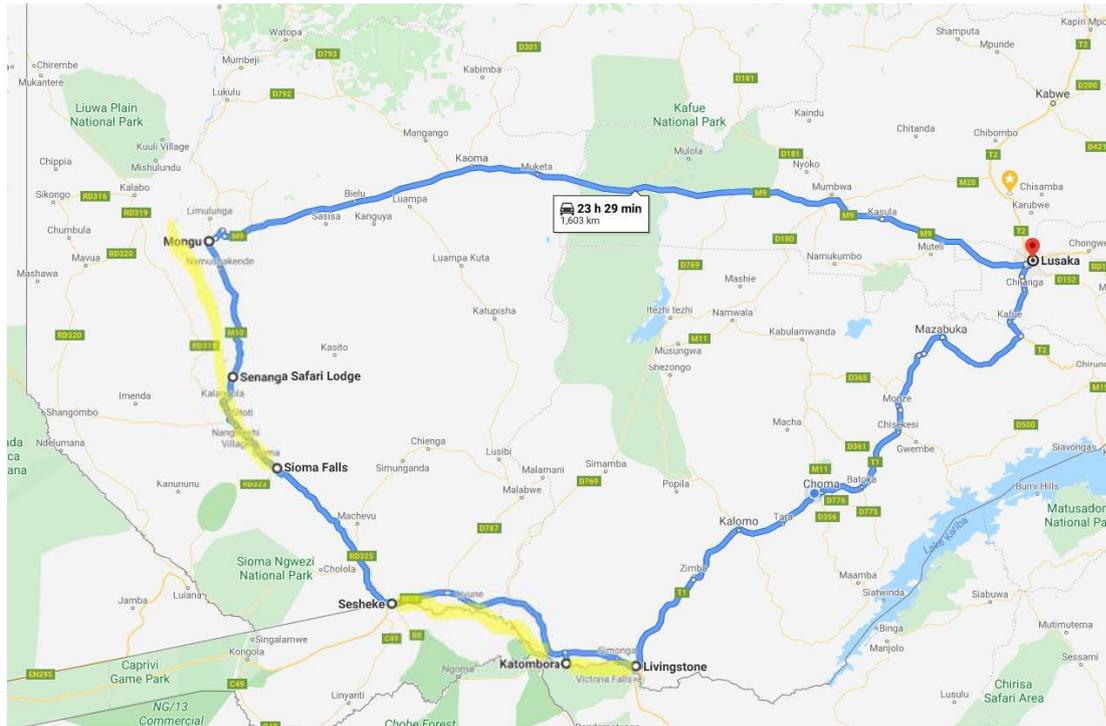
Depending on water levels, we hope to boat down to the upstream side of the Falls in the morning, passing the Mosi-oa-Tunya NP on the way. We are likely to come across several species of large mammals including African Elephant. We will have a couple of hours to explore the Vic Falls, followed by a lunch break at the Royal Livingstone. After lunch, we explore the Batoka Gorge down to Taita Falcon Lodge where we will spend the night in comfortable large chalets.

Day 8 – Batoka and departure

Early morning birding around Taita Falcon Lodge, enjoying the starkly different scenery and rock-loving species like Mocking Cliff Chat, Striped Pipit and African Black Swift, hoping for raptors like Verreaux's Eagle and Augur Buzzard to give an appearance, with the off chance of seeing Taita Falcon. After a good breakfast, vehicle transfer back to Lusaka, where we shall arrive late afternoon.



BIRDING ZAMBIA – MWNILUNGA AUGUST 2020



Package route (Google Maps). Yellow marking indicates the stretches to be covered by boat.

