



A view of Victoria Falls from high above a microlight is an experience that will stay with visitors for life.

PHOTOS BY D J CLARK / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Soak up the splendor of the WHITE THUNDER

The magnificent Victoria Falls is to Africa what the Great Wall is to China, and Zambia's Livingstone offers the perfect place to experience it, says **D J Clark**

In China it is often said that you really have not seen the country properly unless you have climbed the Great Wall. In Africa they say no visit is complete without seeing the Victoria Falls.

The falls lie on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe and can be viewed from both banks. However, the unstable political situation in Zimbabwe has put tourists off and pushed prices up, allowing its lesser-known neighbor, and in particular the town of Livingstone, the chance to revive its historical past.

Back in the colonial days, Livingstone was the center for the exploitation of the area's natural resources with the world's tallest bridge, the world's longest railway line and a thriving town.

In Zambia the falls have a far more descriptive name, *Mosi-oa-Tunya* (the smoke that thunders), which by the end of the rainy season is a pretty fair description. From the Royal Livingstone hotel on the Zambian bank you can take a small boat to Livingstone Island on the edge of the waterfall and experience the might of the gushing water by standing on the edge and looking down.

The view is both breathtaking and very wet but not to be missed for the full Victoria Falls experience. A sight the explorer David Livingstone described as "unimaginable to anyone who had not left the shores of England".

**ONLINE**  
For more pictures and complete video of the Falls, visit our website:  
[CHINADAILY.COM.CN/VIDEO](http://CHINADAILY.COM.CN/VIDEO)

The island trip is best rounded up with a meal, served under a tarpaulin sheet to protect you from the constant spray.

There are many ways to experience the Victoria Falls and you can easily spend two days taking in its splendor. Paths take you around the side of the falls to a variety of viewpoints, all of which are extremely wet, so come prepared for a soaking. The more adventurous can walk down to the Devil's Cataract at the bottom of the falls and gaze up. However, the spray makes viewing from land a selective process as only small sections can be seen from any one spot.

A better alternative is to view them from the back seat of a microlight. It is an expensive option with tickets starting around \$100 each for a 15-minute ride but an experience that will stay with you for a long time.

As well as the falls, Livingstone has other attractions worth visiting. The Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park that borders the town is home to many of Africa's better-known animals, such as white rhinos, buffalos, elephants, giraffes, zebras, monkeys and several species of antelope, and can be reached with

a game drive or simply by taking a boat trip up the Zambezi.

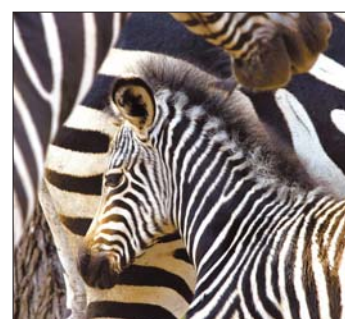
The Royal Livingstone Express steam train also passes through the park on its 15 km sunset dinner ride. Traveling along the *Mulobezi* track, built by Cecil Rhodes in 1916, you will be pampered in true colonial style with South African wines and a five-course evening meal. However, the railway is not the best way to see the wildlife, which tends to steer clear of the train.

Hotels in the town are plentiful and cater for all tastes and budgets but for those who can afford it there are some very distinctive options.

The Royal Livingstone Hotel, voted best hotel in Zambia and temporary home to many a president and movie star, takes you back in history to Livingstone's heyday. The 176 old-style rooms all have views of the river, some of the falls, and the lounge and bar seem a fitting place for any would-be 19th Century explorer.

For those prepared to skip a little luxury and experience the bush in style, the Tongabezi Lodge and the River Club both offer open-air rooms right on the river with just a mosquito net between you and the water. The eco friendly Tongabezi even owns an island with five rooms, and offers dawn and dusk boat rides to view the wildlife.

The River club boasts "the world's best" infinity swimming pool, that melts into the Zambezi river and offers the perfect place to finish the day.



The Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park is home to many of Africa's better-known animals.



Tongabezi Lodge offers open-air rooms looking out over the river.

## Stay at the top

By JI TAO  
CHINA DAILY

Corporate executives enjoy staying at the top as the Island Shangri-La Hong Kong knows only too well.

Rising 56 stories above the island's prestigious shopping and entertainment complex Pacific Place, the hotel aims to make sure guests staying on their Horizon Club floors — the 52nd to 55th — feel right on top of things at breakfast.

At its newly launched Exclusive Horizon Club lounge on the 56th floor, continental breakfast is served with a bird's-eye view of Victoria Harbor.

Though the food selection is limited compared with the variety on offer at Café TOO on the 7th floor, not many Horizon Club guests are willing to sacrifice altitude for choice.

A day that starts above the hustle and bustle of the city's financial district puts the guests head and shoulders above the rest.

For most guests, the Island Shangri-La Hong Kong has everything they desire — a good location, great views, and a name that assures superior standards.

To offer a new experience to guests, includ-

ing its many returning guests, on December 7 last year, the hotel introduced the Exclusive Horizon Club lounge on the 56th floor, the highest executive lounge among all of Hong Kong's hotels.

As the flagship property of the Shangri-La Group, the hotel, overlooking the Victoria Harbor and Hong Kong Park, boasts 565 spacious rooms with stunning views. Among them are 123 Horizon Club rooms with an enhanced level of service, comfort and convenience.

Exclusive privileges include access to the club lounge, evening cocktails and Continental breakfast at the club lounge or the wider breakfast options at Restaurant Petrus.

Though it has been in operation for 19 years, dedicated maintenance and refurbishing has kept the hotel sparkling fresh.

A new roof garden of 150 square meters has been created for guests to relax and embrace nature, and free broadband connection was introduced in all guest rooms starting 2009, with free Wi-Fi available in the hotel's fleet of limousines from early this year.

In the atrium, the world's largest Chinese silk painting, *The Great Motherland of China*, spans 16 stories. The painting, 51 m tall and 18



Island Shangri-La Hong Kong's Horizon Club lounge on the 56th floor.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

m wide, featuring famous Chinese landscapes, took 40 Beijing artists six months to finish. It not only displays the Shangri-La Group flagship property's ambition to be the best, but also the hotel's warm welcome to mainland guests, whose numbers have been rising steadily over recent years.

Aside from winning prominent industry awards, including the most recent "Best Meeting Convention Hotel in Hong Kong" by TTG China Travel Awards, the hotel has also been winning the people's endorsement.

As one of the top three rated hotels among some 250 hotels in Hong Kong on Tripadvisor.com, a major hotel search portal based on peer evaluation, the hotel has been receiving unreserved praises for its service and hospitality.

On May 4, a family from London, who planned to stay only two days at the hotel, but had to extend eight more days due to the volcanic ash that grounded flights to Europe, concluded their long and detailed appraisal with one word — "fabulous!"

### MY HOMETOWN WANG JIAN



ZHANG DADONG / ASIA NEWS PHOTO

Sunset over the Yangtze that flows through Anqing, Anhui province.

## How I miss the place I longed to escape

My hometown Anqing is one of the least known cities on the lower reaches of the Yangtze River in the southwestern part of Anhui province. It is so small that when I left I was happy to escape it.

As a little girl with big dreams, I was growing increasingly disappointed with the simplistic lifestyle and lackluster economic profile of Anqing. A voice kept whispering in my restless mind, "Escape... escape... go as far away as you can, exploring the world and never looking back..."

I traveled as often as I could, looking for excitement in tourist attractions both in and out of China. Now as a college student, I am living in Shanghai — one of the country's biggest cities — renowned for its prosperous economy and cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Am I satisfied now? Well...not exactly! Maybe I was born an annoying escapist. I am becoming tired of the over-commercialization of those tourist hot spots; and the sound and fury of the city are getting on my nerves.

I now miss the simplicity and tranquility of my home city. Every time I return home, my mind is at rest and my soul in peace.

With nearly one-third of its surface area covered in mountains, rivers and lakes, Anqing is like an exquisite landscape painting in and of itself.

The riverside is the ideal place to spend a sleepy afternoon. Wandering on the banks of the Yangtze River, hearing the water flowing on its way to the sea, it is easy to be carried away by its solemnity and sense of history.

If you want to get more intimate with the Yangtze, just board one of the local ferries. You will pass through scenic areas of outstanding beauty unreachable by foot or car. More importantly, you will be served with fresh and delicious seafood expertly cooked. My favorite is the stewed Yangtze catfish, which is especially thick, hearty and flavorful.

On the riverbank stands the famous Zhenfeng Pagoda in Yingjiang Temple, known as "the greatest pagoda along the Yangtze River". Built in 1570, it has been worshiped by generations of pilgrims from across the country throughout its history.

As a child, I was a self-professed Buddhist and one of my major recreational activities was kneeling in the middle of Yingjiang Temple, pleading to Buddha to make all my dreams come true. Frustrated that my millions of prayers remain unanswered, I am now a non-believing secularist.

Despite this, I am still a frequent visitor to the Yingjiang Temple as it makes me calm. Whenever I walk into the temple, the fragrance of incense and the sound of chanting immediately put me in a meditative state of mind.

Yingjiang Temple and Zhenfeng Pagoda are just two of the many Buddhist shrines in Anqing. As an ancient city recognized as the "birthplace of Zen Buddhism", Anqing is a must-do for those who are interested in a deeper understanding of Buddhist culture.

Here, you will not be disturbed by peddlers and crowds like you would in many other scenic spots, and you will be given a golden chance to be enchanted by a beauty that is unique and sublime.

Today, my hometown is already a part of my reality and sweet memories of it can light up any gloomy day in my life.