

Zambian report (6) by Dr Lyndon Bouah

Today was our free day. It started last night already. GM Kenny Solomon, from Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town was supposed to go to Ocean Basket with me to have supper. I beat my opponent within two hours and then proceeded to wait for Kenny. I waited and waited. After five and half hours he beat IM Stanley Chumfwa to continue to lead the Zonal with 5/5. Kenny was at one stage against the ropes so offered a draw which Stanley refused. Now where Kenny and I come from and stay on the Cape Flats when a draw is refused it means blood must flow. Kenny then dug deep and beat Stanley who is not a slouch. IM Stanley Chumfwa is a South African Open Champion having won the title in 2003 with an emphatic 10.5/5. So Kenny and I proceeded to have supper in the hotel. I had eaten already but now proceeded to celebrate with Kenny his win. The necessary liquid refreshments (red wine) was on offer so we opted for that. He was very happy because it was a tough game and I was happy that I had also won. In fact if I am correct no South African lost in round five!

We were all up early today because we were all excited to visit the Victoria Falls that we had heard so much about. We left about 9:30am and proceeded the seven kilometres down the road in a bus commissioned by the organisers. Thank you Chanda! The entrance fee was 190 kwachas which is around R240. Once we were all in us then took a brisk walk. We then stopped at the first vendor hiring rain coats. We then all hired for ten kwachas the rain coats with Kenny getting one that made him look like Dr Kenny.

We then stepped through the entrance gates. Once we entered the first person we saw was Dr Livingstone. A giant statue there told us about the falls. It recorded that it was on 16 November 1855, that David Livingstone first laid eyes on the waterfall that would define his life story, which he named Victoria Falls to honour the Queen. (An interesting aside is of course that the Waterfront in Cape Town is also known as the Victorian and Alfred waterfront).



The team David Livingstone statue

The statue was presented by the Total Zambia limited to the Zambian government on 16 November 2005. The statue was erected on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the first European sighting of the Victoria Falls by Dr David Livingstone on 16 November 1855 and to commemorate the centenary celebration of the founding of the town of Livingstone.

In 1851, he first heard of the great waterfall, but it was only in 1855 that he first set out to visit it in the company of indigenous people of the Falls area. He spent a night on the Kalai Island, a few kilometres upstream of the falls, having come down the river by canoe.

The next morning he set off in a small canoe to approach the thundering smoke. He landed on the biggest island on the lip of the falls, now called Livingstone Island, where he obtained his first view of the falls. Of the surrounding area he wrote; "the most wonderful sight I had witnessed in Africa. 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 the flight" (Livingstone journal 1857).

I did not know what to expect. We took the first few steps and then stopped to take the first pic through the bushes. It looked magnificent. Totally awe inspiring. The Victoria Falls is according to Robert Zulu, (Bookmasters, 2014) the largest curtain of water dropping 9600 cubic metres of water per second down a series of basalt gorges at the highest peak of the year. It is about 1708 metres wide and 100 metres deep down the canyon. Riding up is an iridescent spray that can be viewed about 30km away along the road from Lusaka to Livingstone, in Zambia and 50km from Bulawaoy road to Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe.



The falls is located in the Mosi-oa-Tunya national park (Zambia) and Victoria National Park. (Zimbabwe) along the Zambezi river. It stands at an altitude of 915m above sea level and the gorges are a breeding ground for some endangered bird and wild animal species. It is also residence for the a lot if wild animals enjoying the rich green vegetation of the "Rain Forest". It forms the political border between Zambia to the north and Zimbabwe to the South, hosted by Livingstone city in Zambia and Victoria Falls town in Zimbabwe.

The Victoria Falls was a sacred place to the local people as they believed that a huge snake called Nyami- Nyami (river - god) lived there. Therefore human beings never walked there especially in the gorges.

Once we took the first photo we then proceeded along the path. A second photo was taken showing the Victoria Falls through the trees. As you start walking next to it you begin to realise why this is called one of the Seven Wonders of the World!(as an aside I am sure the seven wonders must be more because table mountain is also part of the seven. So readers what are the original seven wonders. I shall share a bottle of red with the first person to write back!)

The track makes many different tracks but we stayed close to the barriers where we could marvel at the falls. We of course had to make use of the rain coats we hired. The waterfall is really spectacular. It is stupendous and really a marvel to behold. I was looking at all that water gushing down and was wondering if our beloved mother city in South Africa can't create a waterfall as well! It is a world heritage site and according to the sign boards the volume of water at flood peak between February and March is 500 million litres of water per minute on average. In the dry season it is 10 million litres. The waterfall is 3848 feet above sea level. One of the interesting things I didn't know is that the waterfall position has been changing and over the last few centuries has moved back over time.

I shall include more photos in my close out report next week as the wifi is not working well enough for us to send many photos! I can only but encourage you to make the trip. Kenya Airways flies every day and prices range from R6000 to R8000 return to Cape Town. I have decided to go back on Friday morning to marvel again at this magnificent natural beauty on our continent.

We then proceeded to stop at a Steers that we saw along the way. Everyone bought burgers and chips and then went their separate ways. Former world chess champion Gary Kasparov often speaks about chess tourists so Kenny and I decided to pay a visit to The Livingstone Museum in town. We flagged down a passing taxi and then paid the requisite thirty kwacha. One of the interesting things about Livingstone is of course the fact that everything is on one road so you just say the name of the place and boom same road there you are. (Chief Arbiter Gunther has wanted to go to Hungry Lion since day one but I have avoided this conversation and instead we are going to Ocean Basket tonight!)

Once we were inside the Livingstone museum Kenny and I explored the museum. It was nice seeing references to South Africa and other parts of Southern Africa as well. We saw how important fauna and flora are to Zambians and that they should be respected. In the olden days it was believed that an elephant is composed of different meats (snake, dog, lion, chameleon, owl, baboon, mouse, etc.) and therefore was not eaten by all for the fear that one may end up eating one of the above animals.

In this way elephants were protected but once in a while the chief gave permission to kill an elephant for special ceremonies or rituals and only the elders could eat such meat.

We then found the David Livingstone segment of the museum. He was an explorer, missionary, doctor, and an anti-slavery advocate. He was born on 19 March 1813 and died on 1 May 1873 in Zambia. He succeeded in opening up Central Africa to many explorers who came after him and used his maps to pioneer the works Livingstone started. He was also the first European to explore Zambezi and to see Lake Malawi.

He spoke several African languages and also suggested that there is a link between malaria and mosquitoes. He was outspoken against slavery and his letters, journals and books stirred up public support for the abolition of slavery. Livingstone lost contact with the outside world for six years and when journalist Henry Stanley located him in late 1871 he uttered the famous words "Dr Livingstone, I presume?" According to Google the phrase may actually be a fabrication because neither Stanley nor Livingstone confirmed it. The words are famous because of their tongue-in-cheek humour: Dr Livingstone was the only white person for hundreds of miles! His heart is buried in Africa but his remains are buried at Westminster Abbey.

The Livingstone room shows his journeys throughout South and Central Africa. It shows Port Elizabeth and Cape Town with both leading to Kuruman. He had three journeys: the first the missionary and Transafrica journey from 1841 to 1856 and then the Zambezi expedition from 1858 to 1864 and then the search for the Nile from 1866 to 1873. After visiting the museum I now understand the role that Livingstone played throughout the missionary and exploratory period.

I was glad to see that he was an anti-slavery advocate and the museum does a good job showing this stance. It also shows him as a real person of religion. It has his hymn book that was captured during one of the Anglo Boer Wars. So now I have come to appreciate Dr David Livingstone. I was actually born in David Livingstone hospital in Port Elizabeth. There are of course many schools named after him both in Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. The Cape Town one is known as one of the most progressive schools in South Africa with a very rich history and many outstanding leaders in our society.

I am now off to Ocean Basket with the team. Enjoy the evening and we play at three pm tomorrow. Last four rounds now. GM Kenny is leading by a point and he is on full score. Today there will be no interesting facts as my entire article hopefully would have been crammed with new facts!

Regards

Reporting live from Victoria Falls, Zambia
Dr Lyndon Bouah