

Zimbabwe (Bradt Travel Guide)

By Paul Murray

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‘The lion, Africa’s apex predator and one of the “Big Five” can be something of a contradictory creature,’ writes Paul Murray in Bradt’s *Zimbabwe*. The country itself might be said to be equally contradictory in character. With some of the finest national parks in Africa, Zimbabwe draws curious tourists and wildlife enthusiasts, yet many only know the country from news reports. The mighty Zambezi River offers adventure holidays; Victoria Falls will leave visitors breathless, while the range of birdlife excites ornithologists. The tourist infrastructure is being rebuilt; this guide offers up-to-date information on the facilities, advice on itinerary planning, as well as how to select a safari. In addition, the book provides accommodation options for all budgets – from luxury safari camps to budget stays for younger travellers.

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Editorial Review

Review

'Paul Murray has shown real dedication to the country and its people by carrying out research for this guide whilst the political situation was still fragile, and I praise Bradt its continuing commitment to covering destinations that have suffered, and for which tourist revenue is a vital means of recovery. It is my sincere wish that this book will assist in Zimbabwe's regeneration.' From the foreword by Sir Ranulph Fiennes OBE, Explorer 'Paul Murray has done the hard miles on the road to make sure that this guide is the most comprehensive and up-to-date'. SA 4x4 Magazine 'Zimbabwe by Paul Murray is the best guidebook.' The Daily Telegraph

About the Author

Paul Murray fell in love with Zimbabwe 20 years ago. He spends most of the year touring the country and also works as a manager at a safari camp.

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Great Zimbabwe, 25km southeast of Masvingo

This magnificent ruined city, the largest stone structure to be built south of the Sahara, was the base for a succession of kings and rulers spanning four centuries and has subsequently had the whole country named after it. The name Zimbabwe is derived from the Shona words *dzimba dza mabwe* translated as 'houses of stone', referring not just to this prime site but also to the hundreds, if not thousands of similar but much smaller *dzimbawwes* or *zimbabwes* to be found in this area and further afield. The rather strange carved soapstone birds found here have provided the country with its national symbol.

Although this region had almost certainly been already settled for a number of centuries it is believed the first stone structures were erected around 1100 AD and there followed continual building development probably into the 15th century. Despite what we now know, the provenance of Great Zimbabwe has up until relatively recently been the subject of heated, often bitter debate stemming from the early European belief that Africans could not possibly have built a structure of such complexity. Indeed, since its discovery by the Portuguese it had been popularly believed that this was the lost kingdom of Ophir with all its fabled treasures and was linked with biblical figures such as Sheba and King Solomon. Much later, others, including Cecil Rhodes continued to attribute the ruins to the Phoenicians. Instead, this was clearly a massively important religious and political centre, not a military fort but a continually developing tribute to a long succession of rulers who had wide reaching influence. It is believed that in its heyday the city complex housed a society of up to 20,000 people. Today it is one of Zimbabwe's two UNESCO World Heritage Sites

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