



*Hidden Gems*

# IN THE NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCE OF ZAMBIA

[ WRITER : Kerry Macfarlane ]

[ PHOTO: Ntanda Ventures Zambia ]



The best part of the job as a tour operator is getting to go to amazing places. This time a girls' adventure road trip to the north-western province of Zambia was the plan. I thankfully managed to convince some great friends to join us, and they also just happened to be great in the kitchen, using whatever is available, so a real added bonus as we were going for self-catering accommodations.



For Ntanda Ventures it is important for us to see the places we offer, and to have experienced all the details ourselves when putting itineraries together for clients. The drive to the source of the Zambezi was not dangerous, though the road is known as a rather bad road to the furthest North-Western point in Zambia. The part from Chingola to Solwezi went pretty smooth on a good road. We spent the night at Georgies on the Mutanda Falls. An amazing place but, you do have to talk quite loudly to hear yourself over the noise of these falls.

**Mutanda Falls**

The 200 km drive from Georgies to Wina Wa Nzambi took us six and half hours! A long drive on a very straight road with a few bridge crossings, lots of potholes and dust. The drive will also take you through the important bird area (IBA) called the Chitunta Plain. The Chitunta Plain is very important for many bird species, including the Angola lark, Grimwood's longclaw, the dambo (black-tailed) cisticola, the black and rufous swallows and short-tailed pipits. The deeper you get into this tiny corner of Zambia the better the birding gets. Sadly, there had been a fire through this area a few weeks before, so we didn't see much birdlife.

**Wina Wa Nzambia – Mwinilunga**

Wina is breathtaking and an unbelievable jewel in the middle of nowhere. Situated on the edge of the Wina Crater, you find stunning sunsets. Wina is set on the Rea family farm and home to approx. 60 antelope (sitatunga, wildebeest, hartebeest, puku,

reedbuck, bushbuck, and duiker), civet cats, jackal, pangolins, bush babies, orchids, riverine vegetation, and birds.

**Must Do Tips around Wina Wa Nzambia**

Walk around the top and bottom of Wina crater which is a beautiful walk at any time of day, but especially during sunrise or sunset. Look for the resident bushbabies in the thick bush at the bottom, or maybe you'll see the pangolin family and the monitor lizards, as well birds.

Canoe, and fish on West Lunga River or fish in the Wina pool. Go on guided wildlife walks, bird walks and game drives (be sure to ask for a guide).

We only managed a short game drive before sunset to see the wildebeest and some great village life. They had prepared the cassava which was out drying after being pounded in the traditional wooden drum like buckets, it looked like back breaking work for a staple food which I'm told has no nutritional value.

None of us had any problem sleeping and we had an early start for the Source which was only 60km from Wina but we were not sure what to expect. We were much relieved to find this road (although not tarred) in much better shape and the journey took us just over an hour.

**Pineapple Market**

Buying a load of these is great way to support the local communities along the road. The little red potatoes are also a big hit. If you are self-catering, there is plenty of fruit and vegetables

to buy along the way. We came home with a stash of the best - over 150 pineapples!

**Source of the Zambezi River Zambia (Ikelenge)**

The source of the mighty Zambezi River lies at about 1500m above sea level in the Mwinilunga District, very close to the border where Zambia, Angola, and the Congo (DRC) meet.

The vegetation is mainly swamp/riparian forest and disguises the actual source of the Zambezi River. This forest, with its trees towering to about 24 metres in height of dense canopy and a more or less continuous shrub layer of between 2-3 metres high, is rich in biodiversity with diverse birdlife and numerous special mammals. This first part of this great river, from its source up to the Victoria Falls is called the Upper Zambezi, after which the river continues to as the Middle Zambezi.

It is very difficult to imagine that this river flows from a trickle in a forest into a mighty river that in some places becomes eight kilometres wide and thunders down the Victoria Falls.

From a little bubble to little waterfalls in the forest, to the awe-inspiring Victoria Falls. The source of the Zambezi River is maybe a little under whelming when you have been to Victoria Falls, but this forest is a true hidden gem and certainly worth the drive. Don't think you will be happy with a quick walk to the Zambezi source through the forest. Definitely do allow yourself as much time as possible. The birdsongs, butterflies and fauna in the forest are all amazing.

Our mission was accomplished, all the travel times and distances were safely recorded in order to package this destination into an adventure travel bucket list tour, it was time to head home.

Depending on how much time you have there is a lot more to explore in the north-western province of Zambia.

- Zengamina - Zambia's pioneering rural mini-hydroelectric power scheme that has since 2007 provided renewable electricity to the Ikelenge district, transforming public services and economic activity. Located at the beautiful Zambezi rapids - with two further beautiful waterfalls upstream.
- Historic Kalene Hill Mission Hospital - Climb Kalene hill, inspect the original hospital foundation ruins, and gaze over Angola and DRC and imagine the pioneering missionary doctors that established this outpost.
- Lake Chibesha - A heart shaped lake with a white sandy beach and beautiful mopani forest. Swim, cycle and walk, and there is a stunning place to overnight camp under the stars.
- Numerous local waterfalls as the river drops down towards Victoria Falls - to north: Lwakela, Zambezi triple (Zengamina, Chiyesu, Nyadibeya) and to the east: Kanyama (Mujila upper and lower falls).
- Stand on the Angolan border at Jimbe Bridge, very few people get to this most remote corner of Zambia - stand on a 70yr old bridge, walk across to Angola and chat with the guards, who may sell you an Angolan beer.

**Important Bird Areas North-West Province**

West Lunga National Park and Lukwakwa Game Management Area were designated an Important Bird Area in 2005 by Birdlife International. Some of these important bird species include: gorgeous bush shrike (Perrin's), crested guineafowls, purple throated cuckoo-shrike, Margaret's batis, rufous-bellied tit,

square-tailed drongo, African finfoot, Pel's fishing owl, Böhms bee-eater, half-collared kingfisher, western bronze-naped pigeon, Lady Ross' turaco, Schallow's turaco, Cassin's flycatcher, evergreen forest warbler, Laura's woodland warbler, grey apalis, and blue-mantled crested flycatcher.

When visiting these bird areas, you can stay in Kafunfula Community Camp which is a community social enterprise. All proceeds go towards operating the camp, promoting conservation, and improving livelihoods in the Ifumba and Wamafwaha communities of Musele Chiefdom.

**Drive to Solwezi - Visit Nsanhi Art - 2000 years copper crafts**

After leaving Mwinilunga we head back towards Solwezi. This route is the mining heart of Zambia so not the most exciting, but I cannot fail to mention the ladies from Nsanhi Art and the Kifubwa rock shelter. Nsanhi Art supports vulnerable women and girls in the community and the ladies make stunning pieces of copper jewellery. This is a women-run jewellery workshop in the Zambian mining town of Solwezi, adding value to local minerals and providing employment. Do not miss out on a stop!

It is supported by First Quantum Minerals and its Kansanshi Foundation. At Kansanshi Hill 2,000 years ago, women worked an empowering craft where they mined and smelted copper, crafted it into jewelry and Katanga Crosses, also known as Nsanhi and traded it with travellers. Nsanhi Art sits at the junction where history, economics, and social welfare collide. They welcome tourists and can give a talk about the 2000-year history of Kansanshi and how before money you could use a Nsanhi (Katanga cross) to buy yourself out of slavery.

**Kifubwa Stream Rock Shelter – Solwezi**

Rare, pigmented engravings cover the walls of this Stone Age shelter which is a prehistoric secret. The most stunning feature of the rock

shelters are the engravings underneath the rock overhangs. These consist of geometric line markings and "U" motifs, and unusual for Zambia, these engravings were combined with painting, as red pigment was used to color in the engravings. The Kifubwa Stream Rock Shelters were first discovered in 1928. Excavations of the floor revealed evidence of Late Stone Age hunter-gather occupation, carbon tests dated the site to between 6,000 and 6,500 years ago.

**Busanga Floodplain**

A week after this trip (we had to get back to the office to catch up!) we drove to the Busanga floodplain driving in from the north via the Kabanga gate and spent a night a Mozhi Camp, an absolute gem in the middle of nowhere, and only an hour and a half from the Busanga floodplain. The second night we stayed at Kasonso – Busanga a charming little bush camp in the plains. This area in Zambia is way undersold – it is mind blowing. We drove out via the Masozhi Gate definitely the nicer road trip back to Solwezi and make a note we will have the Ntanda-Busanga fly camp here next year. Make sure this is on your bucket list, and if you like a driving adventure, then it is the perfect add on to the source of the Zambezi.

Join us for more adventures in the North-West Province of Zambia where our head office is based, and of course our other trips around Zambia, as we test the roads for you!

**Go on an adventure - Travel Zambia**

Join us on amazing, off the beaten track safari adventures in Zambia. As an award winning local, women owned, sustainable tour operator we show you the real Zambia with surprisingly authentic encounters with animals and people, whilst staying in the best available lodges.

Visit the Ntanda Ventures website or send us an e-mail to [info@ntandaventures.com](mailto:info@ntandaventures.com) and let us customize your dream adventure to Zambia.

