



A view from Victoria Falls Safari Club waterhole.

# VICTORIA FALLS SAFARI CLUB

*African elegance at its best.*

**T**he Victoria Falls Safari Club opened in August 2012 and has set a new standard for luxurious style and quality service in Victoria Falls. Situated between the award-winning Victoria Falls Safari Lodge and the Lokuthula Lodges, this exclusive club has recently undergone a \$600,000 redevelopment, which included the addition of a swimming pool precinct and an expansion of the central building and existing deck to include a new restaurant and extended lounge area.

To make the most of our time away from home FastJet was the ideal choice, now offering affordable, frequent and reliable flights. My short 1 hour flight from Harare was pleasant and coming in to land in Victoria Falls I could easily spot the spray from the Falls in the distance.

Steve, our friendly shuttle driver, was ready and waiting for us in the airport and escorted us to our air-conditioned mini van. As we exited the airport everyone was welcomed by a group of traditional singers; already giving the sense that we were somewhere new and exciting. Once we were all comfortably seated in our shuttle, Lynne offered us refreshments and we began our 20-minute drive to the Safari Club.

On arrival a team of staff welcomed us with refreshing towelettes and assisted with our luggage. One of the exclusive features of the Safari Club is private check-in and check-out. Entering the Safari Club I was immediately impressed with how they had perfectly combined an African aesthetic with a sophisticated contemporary design to create its own unique safari atmosphere. The classic A frame shape of the thatched roof drew me in and led me all the way to the end of the deck to take in the astounding panoramic view of the bush and further into Zambezi National Park.

We made our way to the deck to find a seat for lunch. Mark Rimmer, Consulting Chef at the Safari Club, served us a delectably light meal of two platter-style dishes, one being a deli and cheeseboard made up of a

selection of ham, salami, prosciutto, crackers, cheese, grapes and marmalade, and the other a colourful butternut and beetroot salad with walnuts and creamy chunks of blue cheese. All served with your choice of drink; with most at my table choosing a bright, chilled glass of white wine. While enjoying my lunch I noticed an increasingly large number of birds in the sky, which I discovered to be vultures arriving for their daily lunch at the Victoria Falls Safari Lodge. From where I sat on the deck I had a clear view of a group perched in a nearby tree.

After lunch I decided to relax then explore! The club offers 4 exclusive suite rooms, and 16 club rooms; which are twice the size of the current Victoria Falls Safari Lodge rooms. Each room boasts an en suite, Wi-Fi, complimentary mini bar and beverage station (including a Nespresso machine), digital safe, air-conditioning, ceiling fan, private balcony and butler service. My room had a contemporary open-plan design, decorated in a warm palette and African detailing using ethnic patterns, shapes, textures and wall paintings. Above all, the entire room was designed in a way that accentuated its most precious aspect, the view. The luxuriously large bed faced towards glass sliding doors leading out onto the balcony overlooking the bush.

Feeling rested and refreshed I headed out to explore the Safari Club, with my first stop being the newly added pool area. Reaching the first level there was a plunge pool and seating area with a bar, TV and change facilities on my left and to my right the pool cascaded down a rock feature to the lap pool on the lower deck. The pool deck overlooked a small waterhole which is said to be home to a crocodile from time to time, although never fear, the only crocodile you'll find at the pool is the beautifully hand crafted wooden sculpture sitting on the edge of the lap pool.

While relaxing on one of the sun loungers I spotted a band of mongeese making their way down to the waterhole. As soon as I got up they all came to a prompt halt to investigate me, which gave me the perfect moment to snap a photo! My new friends carried on their way and I headed back up to the Safari Club for a better look at the new lounge and dining deck area.

The décor was immaculately furnished by Belinda Jones. Every piece of furniture, cushion, or decorative element helped create a look that blended harmoniously together with the surroundings. Walking onto the lower level I had a choice between a pair of grand leather armchairs or comfortable sofas with plump cushions; with both options facing westward towards the waterhole.



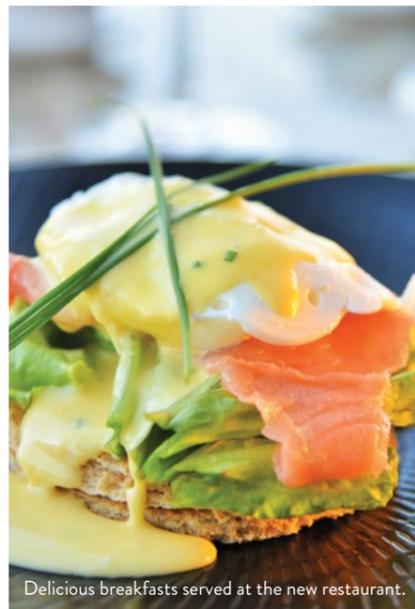
Warthogs in front of Victoria Falls Safari Club.

This was the perfect spot for either daytime game viewing or watching a glorious African sunset. I decided to take a seat on the sofa to enjoy my afternoon tea – the Club offers complimentary afternoon tea daily. With a pair of binoculars in hand I was treated to what must have been a well-planned play at the waterhole. There was a group of impala placidly grazing along the water's edge, when one decided it was time to play and chased them all off to the right. I lost sight of them as they went behind a small bushy tree for a moment, before they all came running back closely followed by what I would consider a 'teenage' elephant trundling after them.

As the sun was setting we enjoyed pre-dinner snacks and sundowners. I was filled with excitement reading through the new dinner menu on offer at the Safari Club; which had a wonderful array of tantalising dishes such as the salmon starter served with apple, dill emulsion and smoked apricot purée; roast eland loin served with cauliflower purée, and homemade honeycomb ice cream served with tuile de pain and salted caramel sauce. I opted for the gnocchi starter and roast eland main, but when it came time for dessert - I simply couldn't choose. Luckily for me the chef was happy to accommodate and prepared a tasting dish with a little bit of all three desserts, and I must say they did not disappoint!

The next morning I was up early, sitting on my balcony sipping a cup of freshly brewed Nespresso with a chorus of bird song filling the air; what a blissful start to the day. Breakfast was served on the deck with a selection of cold

meats, fresh pastries, fruit salad, cereal, homemade muesli and yoghurt. There was also the option of ordering a hot breakfast. Following our hearty breakfast we set out for the Victoria Falls with our guide Zulu. Being high



Delicious breakfasts served at the new restaurant.

season, the thundering waters were nearly at their peak, which resulted in a lot of spray! On arrival, Zulu gave us a brief overview of the falls at the hand-painted map near the entrance. Walking up the path I could hear the roar of the water cascading over the basalt plateau, building excitement with every nearing step. Having never seen the falls before, I was awestruck as I caught my first glimpse through the trees and mist. What a powerful sight! Our tour started at the Devil's Cataract and we made our way to each of the 15 viewpoints on the Zimbabwean side, ending with Danger Point and a quick stop at the bridge, where we were treated to a gorgeous



Sunset over the swimming pool.

rainbow sighting. All the while we received a host of interesting and knowledgeable facts from Zulu – whose late father had helped work on the paving of the viewpoints' walkway.

We made it back to the Safari Club with time for a quick change before going across to the Victoria Falls Safari Lodge for the Vulture Culture Experience, which takes place daily at 1p.m. Moses, our guide and the vultures' personal waiter, started with an outline of what was entailed before leading us down to the open area where he fed the vultures. These clever birds arrive en masse filling the sky and wait patiently for their lunch. Moses explained the concept and reason the Safari Lodge does the Vulture Culture Experience before venturing out into the clearing to lay out the meat and bone scraps. As soon as his back was turned the vultures all swooped in to grab what they could in a bustle of dust and feathers.

After all the excitement it was time for us to have lunch! We sat upstairs at their à la carte restaurant, the MaKuwa-Kuwa. We chose a table at

the edge of the balcony overlooking the waterhole. The menu included a range of scrumptious salads, light meals and sweet delights; with the legendary lappet's burger being the house favourite. There were a number of dishes that had a vulture icon next to their names, which meant that for every dish ordered the Safari Lodge donated \$1 towards vulture conservation. I tried the waterhole steak roll, (inspired by my surroundings!), and received an open-face roll with beautifully tender slices of beef fillet, served with crisp salad and a generous portion of French fries.

Later that afternoon we were scheduled for an 'Art of Africa'

painting session back at the Safari Club pool deck. I wasn't sure what to expect as I made my way down to the pool and spotted the easels set up and ready. Kim and Tich greeted me with enthusiasm and told me a bit more about this new sensation – painting safaris. This relatively new concept is an ideal way to capture your adventure in a new fun way. Art of Africa cater for all skill levels and offer a personal tutor to guide you through a creative workshop.

My day just seemed to get better and better, to top it all off was a festive evening spent at The Boma – Dinner & Drum Show. What an experience, a must try for anyone visiting Victoria

Falls. It is open to the public, not just Lodge residents.

At the entrance we received a 'chitenges' (traditional robe) before entering the main enclosure. The food is traditional Zimbabwean cuisine, with a range of starters, soup from the campfire and a large grilled buffet on cast iron plates. There is also a salad bar and desserts buffet station. Our night was ended with the interactive drum show and dancing. What a festive way to end my trip!

The Victoria Falls Safari Club is part of the Zimbabwean hospitality group Africa Albida Tourism. The AAT team is always striving to enhance and elevate not only their own product but tourism as a whole in Victoria Falls. The entire team at the Victoria Falls Safari Club is eager to please and will settle for nothing less than ensuring each guest leaves having had a supreme safari experience in style! I cannot wait to see the many new and exciting developments still to come.

Website: [www.africaalbidatourism.com](http://www.africaalbidatourism.com)

Article by Maya Wentworth-Browne



New restaurant at Victoria Falls Safari Club.



Luxury and style at the Safari Club.