Zimbabwe

Location

Zimbabwe, (officially the Republic of Zimbabwe and formerly Southern Rhodesia, the Republic of Rhodesia and Zimbabwe Rhodesia) is a landlocked country located in the southern part of the continent of Africa, between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers. Zimbabwe covers 390,757 km$^2$ (150,871sq mi), with a length of 852 km (529 mi) WNW–ESE and a width of 710 km (441 mi) NNE–SSW. It lies between 20° South and 30° East. It is bordered by South Africa to the south, Botswana to the southwest, Zambia to the northwest and Mozambique to the east. Zimbabwe's capital city, Harare, is located in the northeast part of the country.

Geography

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in southern Africa lying wholly within the tropics. It straddles an extensive high inland plateau that drops northwards to the Zambezi valley where it borders Zambia and similarly drops southwards to the Limpopo valley and borders with South Africa. The Zambezi forms a natural river boundary with Zambia.

Much of the country is high plateau with higher central plateau forming a blockade between the Zambezi and Limpopo river systems. The Limpopo and the lower Zambezi valleys are broad and relatively flat plains. The eastern end of the watershed terminates in a north-south mountain spine, called the Eastern Highlands. The Eastern or 'East African Highlands' is one of 4 distinct physiographic divisions on the African continent. The range forms the eastern border with Mozambique. The Eastern Highlands comprise three main mountain groups - Nyanga (to
the north), Bvumba (centrally situated near the city of Mutare) and Chimanimani (to the south). These regions are all sparsely populated, highland country with a cooler and wetter climate than other parts of Africa.

The lowest point in Zimbabwe is the junction of the Runde and Save rivers, which is 162 m and the highest point is Mount Nyangani 2,592 m high.

In full flood (February-April) on the Zambezi River between the countries of Zambia and Zimbabwe is form the massive Victoria Falls; the falls are, by some measures, the most enormous waterfall in the world, as well as being among the most unusual in form.

Climate

The climate is tropical, although markedly moderated due to altitude. There is a dry season, including a short cold season. The rainy season is the warmest part of the year, which is between November and March. In the Eastern Highlands rain falls all year round. The whole country is influenced by the Inter-tropical Convergence Zone during January.

The summer in Zimbabwe is from October to April. Days and is hot and generally sunny in the morning with possible afternoon thunder storms. Day temperatures average 25° C – 35° C (77°F-95°F) and night temperatures drop to 14° C – 20° C (57° F-68° F). Low-lying areas such as Lake Kariba, Victoria Falls, Zambezi River, Mana Pools National Park, Hwange National park, Gonarezhou National Park, Limpopo Valley and the Zambezi Valley can also be considerably warmer all year round (35° C – 50° C/95° F-122° F). The sun can be very harsh and it is advisable to wear a hat and sunblock.
The winter is from May to September. Days are dry, sunny and cool to warm (20° C/68° F) while evening temperatures drop sharply to 5° C – 10° C (40° F-50° F). Exceptionally cold spells can occur (-5° C – 5° C/23° F-41° F).

**History**

There have been many civilisations in Zimbabwe as is shown by the ancient stone structures at Khami, Great Zimbabwe and Dhlo-Dhlo. By the mid 1440's, King Mutota's empire included almost all of the Rhodesian plateau and extensive parts of what is now Mozambique. The regular inhabitants of the empire's trading towns were the Arab and Swahili merchants with whom trade was conducted. In the early 16th century the Portuguese arrived and destroyed this trade and began a series of wars which left the empire so weakened that when it entered the 17th century in serious decline.

Late in the XIX century, the British directed by Cecil Rhodes started the region colonization, having as a target the mines exploitation. In 1921. It became an independent colony of South Rhodesia. In 1953, the UK afraid of the black majority created the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Federation composed by the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland now Malawi. In 1964. UK concedes Northern Rhodesia independence and one year later is was also given to Southern Rhodesia by the Prime Minister, Ian Smith, and it adopted the name of Republic of Rhodesia.

In 1969 a white minority voted for a referendum to declared itself as a republic and the next year it is declared as a Republic, but it is not recognized by the UK or by the UN. After this the country started a civil war which lasted more than a decade. In 1979 an internal settlement is signed (Lancaster House agreement) and, after a year, black majority got to vote for the first time
in an election. Abel Muzorewa, became the country's prime minister and the country's name was changed to Zimbabwe Rhodesia. The internal settlement left control of the country's police, security forces, civil service and judiciary in white hands. It assured whites of about one-third of the seats in parliament.

In 1980 the country achieved its Independence and it was given the name of Republic of Zimababwe and in the elections of February 1980, Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZANU) won by a landslide.

On August 12th, 1984, ZANU tryed to establish a Social State with a single-party system and two years later Mugabe announced measures to remove the whites from the seats in parliament. On December 2nd, 1987 Robert Mugabe is named executive Prime President and he was reelected in 1990. Election observers estimated voter turnout at only 54% and found the campaign neither free nor fair. In 1991, ZANU abandon its social ideal, but promote a land reform which allowed the state to take land properties from the whites. Robert Mugabe is still Zimbabwe’s president since 1981. His government has to affront the increasing opposition, because of the economic crisis that the country is going through. The government believes that the occidental pressure against Mugabe is because of the economic relation with China and because of the conflict within China and United States to gain entry to Zimbabwe’s enormous subsoil richness.
Important Dates

Population

The estimated population of Zimbabwe in 2008 was 13,349,000 people. Black ethnic groups make up 98% of the population. The majority people, the Shona, comprise 80 to 84%. The Ndebele are the second most populous with 10 to 15% of the population. The Ndebele are descended from Zulu (largest South African ethnic group) migrated in the 19th century and the other tribes with which they intermarried. Support for the opposition is particularly strong both from the Ndebele and the Shona majority. Up to one million Ndebele may have left the country over the last five years, mainly for South Africa. Bantus of other races are the third largest with 2 to 5%.

Other less populous Zimbabwean ethnic groups include white Zimbabweans, mostly of British origin, but some are of Afrikaner, Portuguese and Dutch origin as well, who make up less than 1.0%. The white population dropped from a peak of around 296,000 in 1975 to possibly 120,000 in 1999 and was estimated at no more than 50,000 in 2002, possibly much less. Most emigration has been to the UK, South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Mixed race citizens are 0.5% and various Asian ethnic groups, mostly of Indian and Chinese origin, are also 0.5%. Asian immigrants are influential in the economic sector.
The population density is 85 persons per square mile. The death rate in Zimbabwe are under 22 per 1000 (estimate for 2007) and the birth rate is around 27 per 1000. The high death rate is due to the impact of AIDS, which is by far the main cause of death. This leads to a small natural increase of around 0.5%. However, outward migration rates of around 1.5% or more have been experienced for over a decade, therefore actual population changes are uncertain. According to the United Nations World Health Organization, the life expectancy for men is 37 years and the life expectancy for women is 34 years of age, the lowest in the world in 2006. The HIV infection rate in Zimbabwe was estimated to be 20.1% for people aged 15–49 in 2006.
Currency

The official currency of Zimbabwe is the Zimbabwe Dollar. 1 Zimbabwe Dollar is subdivided in 100 cents. Zimbabwe Dollar notes are in denominations of Z$ 500, 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, and 1. Coins are in denominations of Z$ 1 and 2, along with 50, 25, 20, 10, 5, and 1 cents. The current (’09) exchange rate is $1.00 = Z$ 37,456,777.

Education

Zimbabwe has an adult literacy rate of approximately 90% which is amongst the highest in Africa.

The wealthier portion of the population usually sends their children to independent schools as opposed to the government-run schools which are attended by the majority as these are subsidized by the government. School education was made free in 1980, but since 1988, the government has steadily increased the charges attached to school enrollment until they now greatly exceed the real value of fees in 1980. The Ministry of Education of Zimbabwe maintains and operates the government schools but the fees charged by independent schools are regulated by the cabinet of Zimbabwe.
Zimbabwe’s education system consists of 7 years of primary and 6 years of secondary schooling before students can enter university in the country or abroad. The academic year in Zimbabwe runs from January to December, with three month terms, broken up by one month holidays, with a total of 40 weeks of school per year.

There are seven public universities as well as four church-related universities in Zimbabwe that are fully internationally accredited.

Language

The official language of Argentina is Spanish, but it is a distinctive Argentine Spanish. It is characterized by expressions and pronunciations that have evolved for more than 350 years. The dialect called Spanish Lunfardo has many words that are borrowed from Italian and Portuguese. There are also many native languages spoken.

Shona, Ndebele and English are the official languages of Zimbabwe. Less than 2.5%, mainly the white and Coloured (mixed race) minorities, consider English their native language. The rest of the population speaks Shona (76%) and Ndebele (18%). English is spoken primarily in the cities, but less so in rural areas. Radio and television news is now broadcast in Shona, Ndebele and English.
Religion

Sixty two percent of Zimbabweans attend Christian religious services. The largest Christian churches are Anglican, Roman Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist and Methodist. However like most former European colonies, Christianity is often mixed with enduring traditional beliefs. Besides Christianity, ancestral worship is the most practiced non-Christian religion which involves ancestor worship and spiritual intercession; the Mbira Dza Vadzimu, which means "Voice of the Ancestors", an instrument related to many lamellophones ubiquitous throughout Africa, is central to many ceremonial proceedings. Mwari simply means "God the Creator" (musika vanhu in Shona). Around 1% of the population is Muslim.

Agriculture

In 1998, Zimbabwe had 3.2 million hectares (7.9 million acres) of arable land, covering 8% of the country's total land area. Most of what is now central Zimbabwe was sparsely populated when Europeans first settled into the region, gradually transforming the bush into fertile farmland. About 4,500 whites own and operate farms that cover one-third of Zimbabwe's most productive farmland.

The downward spiral of the economy has been attributed mainly to mismanagement and corruption of the Mugabe regime and the eviction of more than 4,000 white farmers in the controversial land redistribution of 2000. This has also resulted in Zimbabwe, previously an exporter of maize, becoming a net importer. Tobacco exports have also declined sharply.
Major export commodities are tobacco and horticulture. Smaller crops like sugar, tea, coffee, cotton, seeds, maize, small grains and oilseeds are also exported. Zimbabwe is the second most important producer of flue-cured tobacco in the world. Almost 99 percent of the crop is exported to 69 different countries.

Cattle rearing is one of the country’s foremost economic activities. Zimbabwean livestock is, however, under constant threat from the tsetse fly, and foot and mouth disease. Beef production declined by 9 percent, from 99,000 tonnes in 2003 to 90,000 tonnes in 2004. Over the past few years, there has been considerable destocking, which has had an impacted on beef production. Dairy output also declined by 12 percent in 2004.

Ostrich and game farming have become increasingly important over the last few years. Ostrich meat now complements the export of top quality beef to the European market.

Trade

Most of the trade volume is carried out with South Africa, UK, Germany, Japan, US and China. The largest export commodity in Zimbabwe is tobacco, followed by gold. Other important exports include cotton (9.2%), iron and steel (9.2%), sugar (4.7%), and nickel (4.4%).

Zimbabwe imports are mainly focused on consumer goods (6.8%), food (4.5%), fuels (11.3%)m industrial supplies (39.1%), machinery (26.4%) and transportation (11.3%). The countries that Zimbabwe imports from are South Africa, UK, Germany, and US.
Food

The majority of Zimbabweans depend on a few staple foods. Meat, beef and to a lesser extent chicken are especially popular, though consumption has declined under the Mugabe regime due to falling incomes. "Mealie meal" (cornmeal) is used to prepare sadza or isitshwala and bota or ilambazi. Sadza is a porridge made by mixing the cornmeal with water to produce a thick paste. After the paste has been cooking for several minutes, more cornmeal is added to thicken the paste. This is eaten as lunch and dinner, usually with greens, (spinach, chomoliacollard greens), beans and meat that has been stewed, grilled, or roasted. Sadza is also commonly eaten with curdled milk, commonly known as lacto (mukaka wakakora), or dried Tanganyike sardine, known locally as kapenta or matemba. Bota is a thinner porridge, cooked without the additional cornmeal and usually flavoured with peanut butter, milk, butter, or, sometimes, jam. Bota is usually eaten for breakfast.

Landmarks

Zimbabwe boasts several major tourist attractions. Victoria Falls on the Zambezi River, which are shared with Zambia, are located in the north west of Zimbabwe. The Victoria Falls National Park is also in this area and is one of the eight main national parks in Zimbabwe, largest of which is Hwange National Park.

The Eastern Highlands are a series of mountainous areas near the border with Mozambique. The highest peak in Zimbabwe, Mount Nyangani at 2,593 m (8,507 ft) is located here as well as the Bvumba Mountains and the Nyanga National Park. World's View is in these
mountains and it is from here that places as far away as 60–70 km (37–43 mi) are visible and, on clear days, the town of Rusape can be seen.

Zimbabwe is unusual in Africa in that there are a number of ancient ruined cities built in a unique dry stone style. The most famous of these are the Great Zimbabwe ruins in Masvingo.

The Matobo Hills are an area of granite koppies and wooded valleys commencing some 22 miles (35 km) south of Bulawayo in southern Zimbabwe. The Hills were formed over 2,000 million years ago with granite being forced to the surface, then being eroded to produce smooth "whaleback dwalas" and broken koppies, strewn with boulders and interspersed with thickets of vegetation.

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