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LIFE ON THE EDGE

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OUTLET	Edgar Middle East	FREQUENCY	Monthly
SECTION	Travel	CIRCULATION	8,352 Monthly
COUNTRY	United Arab Emirates	IMPRESSIONS	549
LANGUAGE	English	AVE	\$27,600
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[Travel]

Besides the occasional grunt of a hippopotamus or the purring engine of a distant boat, the Zambezi River is surprisingly still. But this picture of riverside calm is just an illusion. A couple of hundred metres away, beneath a sheet of mist that atmospherically ascends above the water, are the thundering flumes of Victoria Falls.

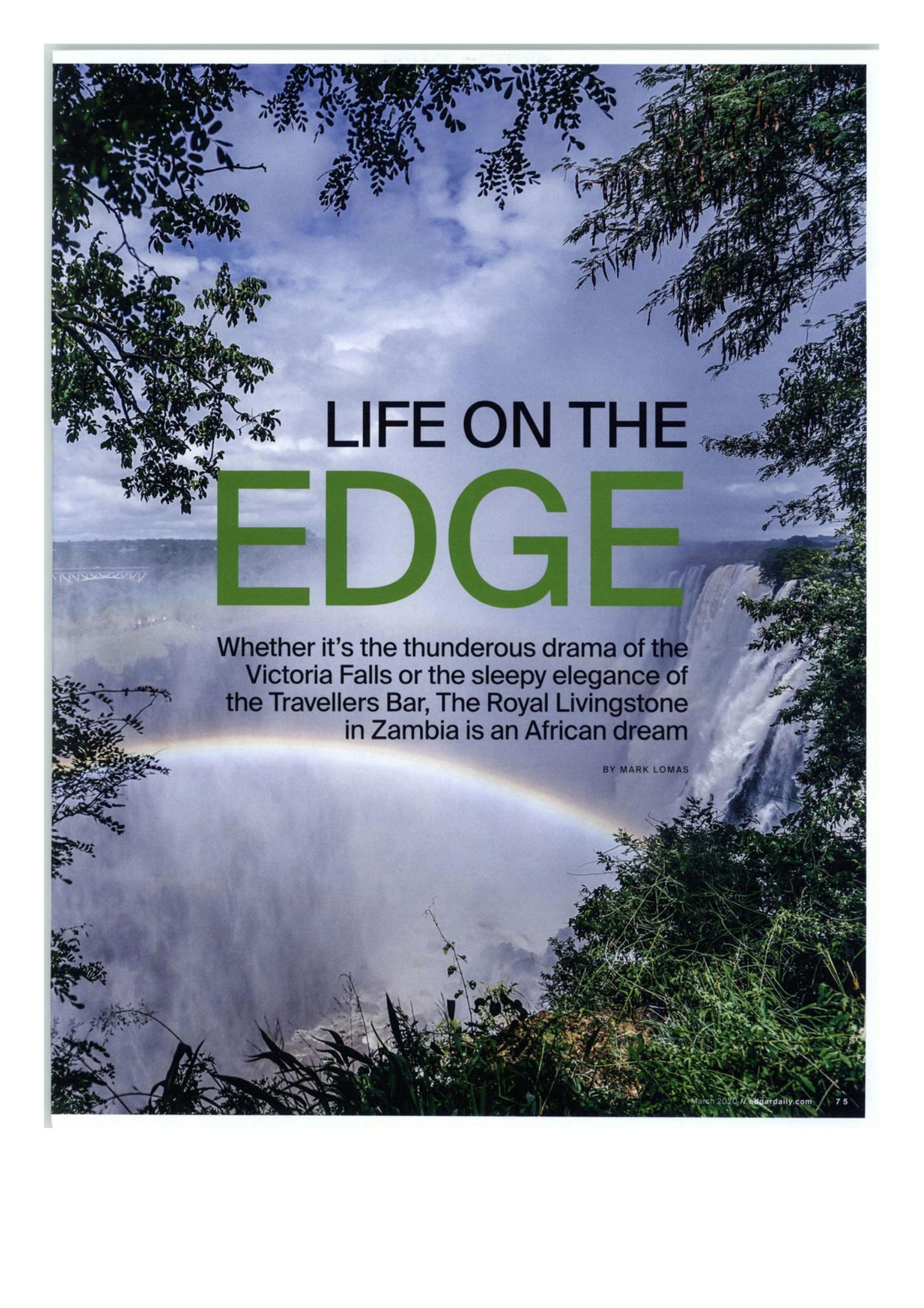
Perched on the banks of the Zambezi, the Royal Livingstone Hotel by Anantara is just about the closest you can stay to Victoria Falls in Zambia. Such proximity makes it an ideal base for exploring Mosioa-Tunya ('the smoke that thunders'), as the falls are reverentially known in the local Lozi language. The Royal Livingstone is a property steeped in history, having hosted Hollywood glitterati, world leaders and intrepid travellers seeking a close encounter with one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World.

Having passed through several different owners over the years, the Royal Livingstone has now found an extremely capable custodian in Anantara. Since taking the reins in 2015, the main Old Drift restaurant has been renovated and is now an elegant eatery with timber panelling and teak touches inside and a refined terrace outside. The menu offers a fusion of international and indigenous cuisine with hearty Zambian oxtail stew and a monster plate of piri piri chicken among the standout dishes.

The Royal Livingstone's iconic Travellers Bar has also been spruced up recently. Marvellously comfortable bar stools - more closely resembling armchairs - sit underneath vaulted ceilings, shelves of leather trunks and, on one wall, an enormous elephant print. It is certainly a place to connect with one's inner explorer.

The bedrooms offer a similar Victorian charm, with magnificently patterned mosquito nets among several tasteful African accents found in the Deluxe and Deluxe Corner options. The Livingstone Suite and Presidential Suite may be

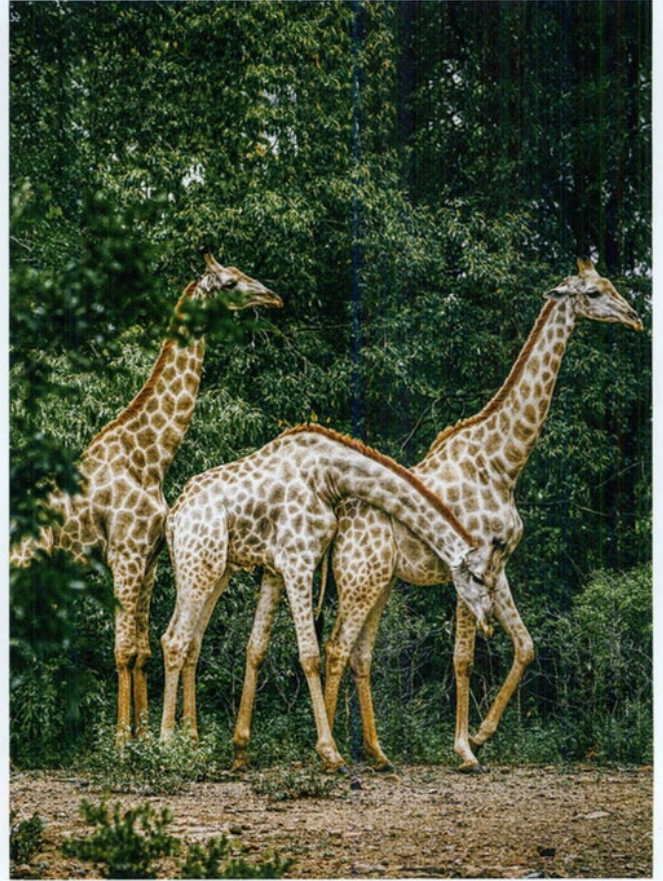




LIFE ON THE EDGE

Whether it's the thunderous drama of the Victoria Falls or the sleepy elegance of the Travellers Bar, The Royal Livingstone in Zambia is an African dream

BY MARK LOMAS



The country's rich **history** is brought to life aboard the train by local hotelier Peter Jones, a raconteur to rival Ernest Hemingway



Admiring the jaw-dropping Victoria Falls is the focal point of any stay at the luxurious Royal Livingstone hotel

► tempting for those seeking a more expansive sanctuary but every room includes both butler service and a veranda from which to watch the property's free-roaming zebra, giraffe and impala grazing on the lawns.

While the luxurious environs are welcome, it is the unfettered access to the Zambian side of Victoria Falls that is the Royal Livingstone's greatest asset. One flash of the keycard is enough for free entry to the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visibility varies significantly from month to month; drier periods are perfect for admiring the gnarled individuality of the falls' rocky crevices, while wetter months bring roaring torrents of water and the need for a substantial raincoat to protect you from the spray.

Anantara has built a reputation for experiential excellence and it is at the heart of the Royal Livingstone's offering, with close links to local activity providers meaning visitors can view Victoria Falls from every angle.

A helicopter or microlight flight enables guests to appreciate the vastness of the falls from a bird's eye view, while the power of the falls is best demonstrated by a hair-raising whitewater rafting trip. Starting at the foot of the 108m cascades, the route snakes around the Grade 5 rapids and

crocodile-filled waters of the lower Zambezi. A trip to the storied Devil's Pool is equally thrilling, taking those who dare on a swim through the raging currents of the falls' edge to an anomalous patch of still water. The meeting with mother nature's precipice provides Instagram fodder for some and for others a pinch-yourself moment of introspection.

The Royal Livingstone Express offers a safer vantage point from a steam engine parked on the Victoria Falls Bridge at the precise demarcation line between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Dinner and drinks on the train is a real slice of colonial grandeur, though use the 'c' word at your peril – Zambia was a British protectorate, not a colony. The country's rich and complex history is brought to life aboard the train by local hotelier Peter Jones, a proud Zambian and a raconteur to rival Ernest Hemingway.

The Royal Livingstone and the town in which it lies is named after another famed storyteller, British adventurer David Livingstone. On his first visit to the water's edge, Livingstone wrote of being left awestruck by the "most wonderful sight in Africa". Whether witnessing them from air, water, land or train, it is impossible not to be similarly captivated by the Victoria Falls. ■

