



Stanley & Livingstone Boutique Hotel – a 5-
star colonial gem at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

The first thing you'll notice is the silence. Then slowly, as your eyes and ears become attuned to the surroundings, the orchestra of Africa's bush comes alive.

Sitting on the upstairs terrace of the Stanley & Livingstone Boutique Hotel, I look down on a lush garden filled with an assortment of tall Fever and Mopani trees, bedded with agapanthus, peace lilies, elephant ears, and white hibiscus. I'm speaking with Head Gardener Thomas Muleya, who has just escorted me around his life's work, introducing me to each plant. I'm deservedly sipping a glass of Amarula — a cream liqueur made from the fruit of the Marula tree.

About 50 metres from the main lodge, the landscaped garden ends abruptly and is given over to Mother Nature, who grows wild and free. In the towering Sweetgum trees adjacent to the waterhole, a troop of baboons are taunting a herd of zebra standing underneath. A dozen or so impala drift into view, and to one side stands a solitary giraffe, surveying it all from up high. Something startled the birds, who all fled in a flurry of hysteria. The kudu heard it too and plunged darkly into the bush.

Other than incessant birdsong, the Stanley & Livingstone is whisper quiet. Unlike other lodges, it's set further away from Victoria Falls — a massive plus, as you don't have the constant whirring of helicopter tours overhead. But it's still close enough for a quick visit, a short 20-minute drive to the Falls.

The main building houses the 1871 restaurant, bar, and lounge, lit by a roaring fire every night. The interior design is that of a gentrified colonial home filled with artefacts harking back to that era — Victorian antiques, first-edition book-lined nooks, historical paintings, sketches, prints, and newspaper clippings detailing the early exploration of Africa, combined with bold bespoke wallpaper, crystal chandeliers, wood panelling, and touchable textures. It's all utterly inviting.

It's Victorian in spirit and decor, but up-to-the-minute in Wi-Fi facilities and amenities, which include a kidney-shaped pool in the garden, an inventive array of in-room spa treatments using organic Africology products, and twice-daily game drives around the reserve — home to the Big Five, including the critically endangered black rhino.

There are 16 suites comprising low-hanging thatched rondavels arranged in a half-moon around the show garden. Rooms are bright and light, with a canopied king-size bed, an en-suite bathroom with walk-in shower, roll-top bath, robes, and Africology products. Each has a lounge with a complimentary tea and coffee station, a pay-for minibar, and a private terrace. For the best view of the waterhole, ask for rooms eight to 12. One of the luxury suites has wide doorways and ample space for guests using wheelchairs.

The world's most indulgent hotels all have one quality that sets them apart. Sometimes it's the faultlessly attentive staff, sublime comfort, or a distinctive atmosphere — the Stanley & Livingstone has it all, including a chef who has put them on the culinary map.

A temple of great food and ambience awaits in the 1871 restaurant. Here, Sous Chef Victoria Nekatambe produces a seduction of courses using colour, emotion, and history — each one telling a story and playing tricks on the palate. There is magic in this process, a sense of theatre, as every course has its own special production. Rock-star service delivers gourmet fusion food that arrives in degrees of excellence.

Chef Victoria prepares dishes full of honesty and freshness. Her ingredients have been given time to grow and express themselves, and in the kitchen they get to know one another — sourced from soil that hasn't been tampered with.

I asked Chef Victoria to prepare her favourite main course — a flavoursome beef oxtail stew, cooked just long enough until the meat fell off the bone. After a moment of startled delight, I began to emit a series of involuntary rapturous noises of an intensity sufficient to draw stares from fellow diners.

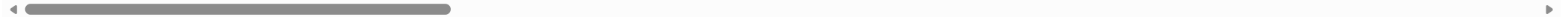
The restaurant was full, and not all were hotel guests. People come here and leave feeling they've connected with nature. The role of Chef Victoria's menu is to put the pieces back together with what the land provides. That's the gift of nature — treat it well and it gives you the gift of great food.

Then I wrapped my mouth around the Viagra of all pastries — a lemon meringue pie. The exquisitely flavoured and fragrant cream cheese oozed out of its delicate casing and coated every one of my taste buds, forcing me to savour every morsel by chewing as slowly as possible. It was an emotional and religious experience, and where my fragile love affair with pastries began.

Later, with a coffee on the verandah, I contemplated the night sky filled with the sparkling stars of the Milky Way. I can't speak for anyone else about what makes a hotel extraordinary. Often it's the barman, the doorman, the concierge — the keepers of secrets. But for me it's always emotional. Often it's funny, occasionally seductive, but sometimes, just sometimes, sweetly melancholic. Tonight, I decided, it would be melancholic — because, like David Livingstone, the great African explorer, my spirit will remain in Zimbabwe. It is, after all, the land that grew my ancestors.

W: [Stanley & Livingstone Hotel](#)

Written by Cindy-Lou Dale for Luxuria Lifestyle International

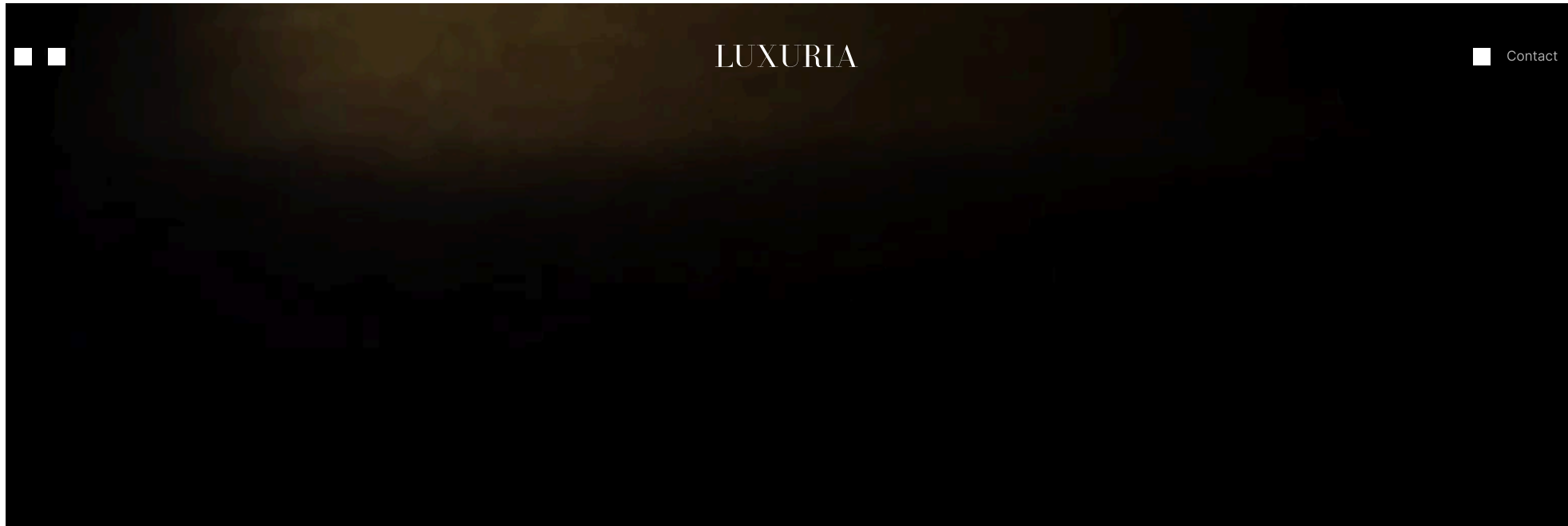




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