



# The Smoke That Thunders

Africa is a place filled with many countries and many wonders. For a very long time, the only people who knew about these wonders were the African people. Many people from other places, like Europe and America, often heard about Africa's special wonders. But they never saw them. Some Europeans and Americans were not sure that what they had heard about Africa was even true.

In the 1800s, more and more Europeans began to go to Africa to learn about its many countries and to see its many wonders. One of these Europeans was David Livingstone of Scotland. Scotland is a country in Europe that was at that time led by Queen Victoria of England.

David Livingstone's family was large. He was one of seven children. His family was poor, so David had to go to work when he was very young. But David loved to learn,

so he would work many hours in the day and then read books until late into the night. He learned many things from reading books.

David Livingstone first came to Africa in 1840. And over the next 40 years, he worked hard to learn all he could about the people, the countries, and the wonders of Africa. From the start, David had great respect for the African people. The many African people David met had great respect for him too.

David wanted to see many places in Africa. Some were in African rain forests. Some were in other parts of Africa. When David began to explore Africa, he could never be sure where he would go in the end. He could never be sure what dangers he would face. He could never be sure he would live to tell others about the things he had seen in Africa.

In some parts of Africa, the dangers were great. Wild animals walked and hunted in the same spots David wanted to

see. But David was a brave man. Dangers did not stop him.

In 1843 a lion jumped on David and hurt him. After that day, David could not use his left arm very well. But that did not stop him from staying in Africa and learning all he could. David stayed in Africa, and that made the African people respect him even more.

Europeans like David faced other dangers in Africa. Many Europeans got very sick when they were in Africa. They got sick from bug bites. These bugs spread malaria. Malaria made many people sick until a special medicine was found to help. The Africans seemed to be used to the bug bites, so they did not get as sick as the Europeans. Many people from Europe were afraid to go to Africa because they did not want to get malaria.

In his first 12 years in Africa, David made many trips to places no European had ever been. In 1853 he got ready to start a new trip. On this trip, David was looking

for a path. He wanted to find a path people could use to walk or ride horses across Africa. He thought such a path would help the African people.

But on this trip, David wanted to see special places too. He had heard about a waterfall on the Zambezi River. The waterfall was in the rain forest lands of the Kalolo-Lozi people. The Kalolo-Lozi people's name for the waterfall was Mosi-oa-Tunya. In English it is called "the smoke that thunders."

David wanted to see the waterfall with his own eyes. He knew any waterfall that thundered must be very large. He wondered how large the waterfall would be.

On November 11, 1853, David began the long trip to find a path across Africa. Many African friends went with him. They did not carry much on the trip. They knew they would get food along the way. David did not know how long they would be gone, but he thought they would be gone a long time.

The first thing David did was to try to reach the Atlantic Ocean. If he could reach the ocean, he could begin to find a path across Africa. The trip from the middle of Africa west to the Atlantic Ocean was very tough. It took David and his African friends a long time, but they reached the Atlantic Ocean in May 1854.

David was very sick by the time the trip to the ocean was over. Before he could go on, he had to rest and get better. While he rested, he wrote about what he had seen on the first part of the trip.

It was not until September 1854 that the trip to find a path across Africa began again. Even then, David was sometimes still sick. Not many other people would have been strong enough to keep going. But David kept going, and along the way, he wrote about the things he saw and did.

It took another year before David and his African friends got back to where their long trip had started. But David did not stop there. He was still in the middle

of Africa! He had only explored half of Africa. He showed how people could get to the Atlantic Ocean and back. But now he needed to show how people could get to the Indian Ocean.

To cross the other half of Africa, David would have to reach the Indian Ocean. And to reach the Indian Ocean, David and his friends would have to follow the Zambezi River. This was the river where David might see the great waterfall, “the smoke that thunders.”

The trip along the Zambezi started on November 3, 1855. At first David and many of his friends were on horses. But on November 13, David and several others got into canoes.

On the first day, it was not hard for the canoes to move down the river. But the next day the wind was strong, and the water of the Zambezi River was tough. David and his friends had to wait for the wind to die down before they could use the canoes again. Of the many dangers David had to face, waiting for the wind to

die down was only a small one. When they could, David and his friends began to go down the river again.

On the night of November 16, 1855, David and his group camped on an island called Kalai. It was in the middle of the Zambezi river. On both sides of the island, the river ran deep and fast. David knew they were close to the waterfall.

The next day the group climbed into the canoes and headed down the river. It was not too long before David and his friends first heard and saw signs of how close they were to the waterfall. The first sign was the sound. It was like thunder. Even from where the group was, the thunder sound was loud, and it did not stop.

Then far in front of the group David saw a heavy mist over the river. The mist was a cloud made of drops of water above the waterfall. The mist was the smoke in the name “the smoke that thunders.” David and his friends could hear the thunder and see the mist, but they were still miles from the great waterfall.



After a while, as the canoes went down the river, David saw five towers of mist in front of them. The towers of mist would turn one way and then the other in the wind. They looked like towers of smoke.

David wrote that as the group neared the waterfall, they saw a small island. They took the canoes there. Fast, rushing water hit the sides of the island. David could see that the river seemed to just drop away in front of the island.

The towers of mist reached far above him, and the sound of the falling water was almost too loud. But David still had not seen just how strong the waterfall was.

David was very careful on the island. He walked to the end of the island by the waterfall. He was careful as he looked over the end of the island into the deep, deep drop of the waterfall. He could not believe what he saw!

The rushing water of the Zambezi River fell hundreds of feet down the waterfall. At the bottom of the falls, angry dark clouds

of water turned and turned. David could tell the dark angry water would break up a canoe in seconds. He also saw that the waterfall reached from one side of the river to the other. That was 5,500 feet across!

The sound of the falling, rushing water was too loud. But David did not cover his ears. He was afraid he might fall if he did. It may have even seemed to him that the rushing water might knock the island right over the side of the waterfall. David called the great waterfall Victoria Falls after Victoria, the queen of England.

David Livingstone found a way across Africa. He reached the Indian Ocean in May 1856. And in the many more years David would stay in Africa, he would never see anything like the great waterfall again. For there is no waterfall in Africa, or in any other place on Earth, that is as big or as high as Victoria Falls, “the smoke that thunders.”