Rovos Rail Malawi Meander: Pretoria to Lilongwe

https://www.irtsociety.com/journey/rovos-rail-malawi-meander/



Overview

The Highlights

- Fourteen nights on board one of world’s top luxury trains, with all meals and drinks included

- One-night at Lake Malawi's Makokola Retreat and one-night at Mvuu Lodge

- Game drives in Kruger National Park, Antelope Park, and Lake Malawi

- Tour a working coal mine

- Visit to the Great Zimbabwe Monument, a UNESCO-listed ancient city

- Enjoy sundowner drinks while cruising along the Zambezi River

- Expertly guided city tours of Beira, Maputo, Tete and Harare

- Fabulous meals and service on board Rovos Rail

The Tour

This 17-day voyage explores five captivating countries: South Africa, Eswatini, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi. The journey is also available in the reverse direction.

From the wild majesty of Kruger National Park to the ancient splendor of Great Zimbabwe and the tranquil shores of Lake Malawi, each day promises discovery, beauty and wonder.

Throughout, guests will enjoy the hallmarks of Rovos Rail: gracious service, fine dining and timeless comfort aboard *Rovos Rail.*

Itinerary

Day 1: Pretoria

Depart Rovos Rail's private station in Pretoria aboard *Rovos Rail* this morning (scheduled for 10 am).

Lunch is served in the dining car as the train on the eastern line towards the coal-mining area of eMalahleni (Witbank) — where Rovos Rail was founded — and Middelburg, known as the "stainless steel capital of Africa".

Dinner and overnight on board.

Day 2: On board

Enjoy breakfast in the dining cars as you travel through the rolling hills of eMakhazeni (Belfast), eNtokozweni (Machadodorp) and Emnothweni (Dullstroom).

The day is spent at your leisure on board. Relax in the comfort of your private cabin, or join the lectures taking place in the lounge car.

Lunch is served as the train descends the spectacular Drakensberg Mountain escarpment.

Dinner and overnight on the train.

Day 3: Kruger National Park

Enjoy an early-morning game drive in the Kruger National Park, followed by lunch and an

opportunity for curio shopping.

The famous Kruger Park has 2 million hectares of an unrivalled diversity of life forms. It is a world leader in advanced environmental management techniques and home to an impressive number of species - including the Big Five.

Rejoin the train for tea in the lounge and observation cars before dinner in the dining cars. The train travels to Komatipoort and Mpaka, where border formalities take place.

Day 4: Eswatini

South Africa/eSwatini border formalities take place as breakfast is served on board.

Disembark for a visit to Swazi Candles and Mantenga Cultural Village with lunch at Mantenga.

At Swazi Candles, guests are invited to interact with the artisans as they make a variety of candles. Woodcarvings, colorful textiles and superb basketwork are also on display. Mantenga is nestled in the mountains overlooking 'Execution Rock'. The village is a living museum of old traditions that represents the classic Swazi lifestyle of the 1850s.

Rejoin the train for tea, followed by dinner. eSwatini and Mozambique border formalities will take place.

Overnight on board.

Day 5: Maputo, Mozambique

Morning arrival in Maputo, Mozambique's capital city. Disembark for a city tour and lunch at the Polana Hotel.

Maputo is a city of contrasts, offering an exciting mix of cultures. Its architecture is a blend of African, Portuguese and early colonial traditions with old Catholic churches side-by-side with mosques, fortresses, Victorian mansions and other buildings from a bygone era.

Rejoin the train for dinner and overnight on board.

Day 6: On board

Spend the day at your leisure on board as the train travels to Chicualacuala. Enjoy a special Africa themed dinner tonight in the dining cars.

Overnight on board.

Day 7: On board

Mozambique and Zimbabwe border formalities take place.

Traverse Gonarezhou National Park during lunch before crossing the granite hill country to Oreti.

Gonarezhou National Park, the Place of Elephants, is situated in a remote part of the country. It forms part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, a peace park that links Gonarezhou with the Kruger National Park in South Africa and the Limpopo National Park in Mozambique. Animals move freely between the three sanctuaries.

Dinner and overnight on board.

Day 8: Great Zimbabwe Monument

After breakfast, transfer to the Great Zimbabwe Monument for a visit, followed by lunch.

The Great Zimbabwe Monument is the largest precolonial monument south of the Egyptian pyramids. It is celebrated achievement of the African people and a place where magical fables such as the story of King Solomon’s Mines find their origins. The area is also home to forests of precious timber such as teak, mahogany and mukwa.

Rejoin the train for tea as the train travels to Gweru, nicknamed the "City of Progress". Dinner and overnight on board.

Day 9: Antelope Park

Morning transfer to Antelope Park for various activities (options include canoeing, game drives, elephant interaction, bird watching and more).

Set in over 3,000 acres of open savannah grassland, Antelope Park is a haven of tranquility welcoming guests and volunteer eco-tourists. It is home to the world-famous African Lion and Environmental Research Trust (ALERT) lion rehabilitation program, which is Africa’s first program working to ethically reintroduce the offspring of captive-bred African lions back into the wild.

Rejoin the train for lunch as you continue to Harare. Dinner and overnight on board.

Day 10: Harare

Disembark this morning for a tour of Harare, with visits to local galleries and a street market.

Harare is the capital city of Zimbabwe, once a vibrant and prosperous nation that has been detrimentally affected by the political and economic crisis. However, Zimbabweans are renowned for their artistic abilities so, in an economy that is now over 85% informal trade (street trading), you can visit the flea markets and experience how gifted and talented the people are at producing much out of very little.

Rejoin the train for lunch in the dining cars. Enjoy dinner with your fellow guests. Overnight on the train.

Day 11: Mutare

After breakfast, disembark for a visit to the Mutare Museum, which covers a range of themes such as archaeology, ethnography, natural history and transport, with a collection of vintage

vehicles.

Rejoin the train for lunch. Dinner is served as Zimbabwe and Mozambique border formalities are completed. Overnight on board as the train travels to Beira.

Day 12: Beira

Following breakfast, enjoy a morning tour of Beira, where the Portuguese influence is evident in the architecture. Visit the the Macuti Lighthouse, built in 1904, and the Macuti tugboat which was intentionally run aground to serve as a breakwater in 1985.

Rejoin the train and continue to Inhamitanga. Lunch, dinner and overnight on board.

Day 13: On board

Spend the day at your leisure on board, enjoying the views of Mozambique's interior, as the train continues towards Moatize. Overnight onboard.

Day 14: Moatize & Tete

Disembark for a tour of a coal mine - a significant industry in the region. Rejoin the train for lunch.

Enjoy a driving tour of Tete, a riverside city known as a transport and mining hub linking the country with neighboring Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Later, sip sundowners on the banks of the Zambezi River.

Mozambique and Malawi border formalities. Dinner and overnight on board.

Day 15: Lake Malawi

After breakfast in the dining cars, transfer to Chingozi Airport in Tete for a flight to Makokola Retreat. Siutated on the palm-fringed southern shore of the renowned Lake Malawi, Makokola Retreat is home to many birds, fish, and reptiles. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure and explore the various activities offered, such as watersports, swimming, and tennis.

Dinner and overnight at Makokola Retreat.

Day 16: Liwonde National Park

Transfer by road to Mvuu Lodge, nestled under the large fever trees on the banks of the Shire River.

After lunch, enjoy a late afternoon boat safari with sundowners followed by dinner and overnight at the Lodge.

Day 17: Lilongwe

Enjoy a morning game drive and breakfast before checking out of the lodge. You will then take a short flight to Kamuzu International Airport in Lilongwe, where your journey ends.

Reverse itinerary

Day 1: Lilongwe & Liwonde National Park

Commence this grand journey with a welcome reception at Latitude 13 hotel in Lilongwe with your fellow guests.

Join a group transfer to the Kamuzu International Airport, where you will take a short flight to Mvuu Lodge for a one-night stay.

After lunch, enjoy a late afternoon boat safari with sundowners followed by dinner and overnight at the lodge.

Day 2: Lake Malawi

Enjoy a morning game drive and breakfast before checking out of your lodge to transfer to Makokola Retreat for a one-night stay.

Siutated on the palm-fringed southern shore of the renowned Lake Malawi, this retreat is home to many birds, fish, and reptiles. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure and explore the various activities offered, such as watersports, swimming, and tennis.

Dinner and overnight at Makokola Retreat.

Day 3: Lake Malawi & Moatize

Relax this morning at your leisure before boarding a short flight to Chingozi Airport in Tete.

Here, border formalities take place, followed by a transfer to Moatize Station where you will board the train.

Enjoy a driving tour of Tete followed by sundowners on the banks of the Zambezi River. Dinner and overnight on board.

Day 4: Moatize

Disembark for a tour of a working open-pit coal mine. Rejoin the train for lunch as you travel towards Sena.

Dinner and overnight onboard.

Day 5: On board

Spend the day at your leisure on board, enjoying the views of Mozambique’s interior, as the train

continues towards Beira. Overnight onboard.

Day 6: Beira

Following breakfast, enjoy a morning tour of Beira, including the Macuti Lighthouse and Shipwreck.

Rejoin the train for lunch and continue towards Machipanda.

Dinner is served as Zimbabwe and Mozambique border formalities are completed.

Day 7: Mutare

Disembark for a visit to the Mutare Museum, which covers a range of themes such as archaeology, ethnography, transport and natural history with a collection of vintage vehicles.

Rejoin the train for lunch.

Overnight on board as the train travels to Harare.

Day 8: Harare

This morning, enjoy a tour of Harare where you will visit local galleries and street markets.

Rejoin the train for lunch in the dining cars. Enjoy a special Africa themed dinner tonight in the dining cars. Overnight on the train.

Day 9: Antelope Park

Morning transfer to Antelope Park for various activities.

Set in over 3000 acres of open savannah grassland, Antelope Park is a haven of tranquility welcoming guests and volunteer eco-tourists. It is home to the world-famous African Lion and Environmental Research Trust (ALERT) lion rehabilitation program, which is Africa’s first program working to ethically reintroduce the offspring of captive-bred African lions back into the wild.

Rejoin the train for lunch as you continue to Oreti. Dinner and overnight on board.

Day 10: Great Zimbabwe Monument

After breakfast, transfer to the Great Zimbabwe Monument for a visit, followed by lunch.

The Great Zimbabwe Monument is situated on the southeastern edge of the central plateau and the largest precolonial monument south of the Egyptian pyramids. A celebrated achievement of the African people and a place where magical fables such as the story of King Solomon’s Mines find their origins. The area is also home to forests of precious timber such as teak, mahogany and mukwa.

Dinner and overnight on board as the train travels to Sango Halt.

Day 11: On board

Border formalities take place.

The train traverses the humid and swampy interior of Mozambique, crossing the Limpopo River.

Dinner and overnight on board as you continue to Chokwé.

Day 12: Maputo, Mozambique

Enjoy breakfast and lunch in the dining cars before an afternoon arrival in Maputo, Mozambique's capital city. Disembark for a city tour.

Capital of Mozambique, Maputo is a city of contrasts offering an exciting mix of cultures. Its architecture is a blend of African, Portuguese and early colonial traditions with old Catholic churches side-by-side with mosques, fortresses, Victorian mansions and other buildings from a bygone era.

Rejoin the train for dinner and overnight on board. Border formalities take place.

Day 13: Eswatini

Disembark the train for a visit to Swazi Candles and Mantenga Cultural Village with lunch at Mantenga.

At Swazi Candles, guests are invited to interact with the artisans as they make a variety of candles. Woodcarvings, colorful textiles and superb basketwork are also on display. Mantenga is nestled in the mountains overlooking 'Execution Rock'. The village is a living museum of old traditions that represents the classic Swazi lifestyle of the 1850s.

Rejoin the train for tea, followed by dinner. Border formalities will take place.

Overnight on board.

Day 14: Kruger National Park

This morning, enjoy a game drive in the Kruger National Park with lunch and an opportunity for shopping.

The famous Kruger Park has 2-million hectares of an unrivalled diversity of life forms. It is a world leader in advanced environmental management techniques and home to an impressive number of species.

Rejoin the train for tea in the lounge and observation cars before dinner in the dining cars.

Day 15: Panorama Route

Disembark the train for a tour of Pilgrim's Rest, Bourke's Luck Potholes, and Graskop with lunch.

Pilgrim’s Rest is a living museum and declared a National Monument. Today many of the restored miner’s houses serve as shops and restaurants. Bourke’s Luck Potholes are strange deep cylindrical cavities formed by river erosion and floodwater. Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve has the most spectacular viewpoints overlooking South Africa’s Lowveld, so named because it is much lower than the high escarpment along which the Panorama Route runs.

Return to the train for dinner as the train travels towards Emgwenya (Waterval Boven).

Day 16: On board

Enjoy breakfast in the dining cars this morning as you travel the rolling hills of eMakhazeni (Belfast), eNtokozweni (Machadodorp) and Emnothweni (Dullstroom).

The day is spent at your leisure on board the train.

Dinner and overnight on the train.

Day 17: Pretoria

Arrive to Rovos Rail Station in Pretoria around 12 pm noon, where your journey ends.

Dates & Prices

2027 Dates

April 29 - May 15
May 18 - June 3

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Pullman Gold	$18,200	$26,400	25%
Deluxe	$24,000	$34,700	25%
Royal Suite	$31,500	$63,000	25%

Tour priced in US Dollar (USD). View approximate exchange rates.
All prices are per person.

2028 Dates

April 26 - May 12
May 15 - May 31

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit

Pullman Gold	$20,020	$29,029	25%
Deluxe	$26,400	$38,280	25%
Royal Suite	$34,650	$69,300	25%

Tour priced in US Dollar (USD). View approximate exchange rates.
All prices are per person.

More

Please note that this trip is not for everybody; this is an adventure experience.
The track is very rough. This contributes to delays and can mean missed or truncated outings off the train.

Medical/evacuation insurance is required for this journey. Several visas, yellow fever inoculation, and malaria prevention may be required and/or recommended. Note: entry into South Africa requires passport with two blank passport visa pages facing each other. Passport should have seven months' validity beyond travel dates.

We work with the best hotels, lodges, tour and safari operators in the region. Contact us for more information about adding on to your Rovos Rail journey.