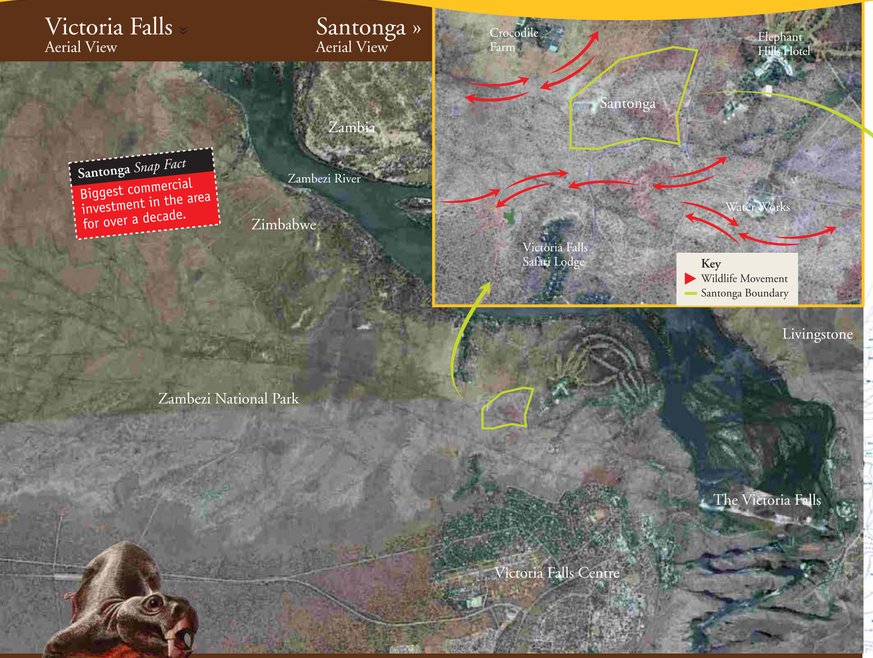
The SANTONGA News Volume #1

Victoria Falls
Aerial View

Santonga »
Aerial View



Santonga *Snap Fact*
Biggest commercial investment in the area for over a decade.



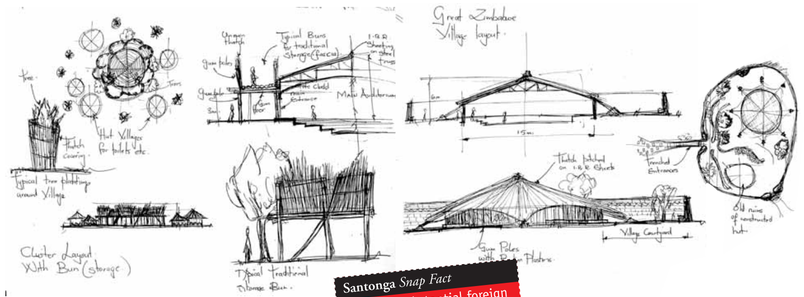
The New Victoria Falls Airport - Game Changer

The new Victoria Falls Airport is set to have a significant impact on the town, on Livingstone and the whole surrounding area. With the landing strip due for completion in 2014 and the new airport building operational from mid 2015, arrivals are set to see a dramatic increase post opening. Technical specifications are at a very high level which will deliver category 2 landing facilities equivalent to Dubai airport. The airport building will have 3 skywalks enabling 3 wide bodied aircraft to offload at any one time, and 12 immigration desks. Given the geographical location of Victoria falls in the centre of the sub continent it is anticipated that Victoria Falls will rapidly become a regional hub.

Santonga *Snap Fact*
80 Acres that tells the story of Victoria Falls -its history, culture & wildlife.

Santonga »
Victoria Falls





Santonga *Snap Fact*
Will be a substantial foreign exchange earner and contributor of taxes and rates.

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The SANTONGA News
Volume #1

Go-Ahead *for* Santonga

SANTONGA, an $18 million education and entertainment park, is set to be a must-see for visitors and locals alike at Victoria Falls.

The project, by Africa Albida Tourism (AAT), is expected to bring major benefits to the Victoria Falls community, with spin offs to include the creation of more than 1500 jobs. AAT chairman Dave Glynn said: "Santonga will tell the story of Victoria Falls, in all its aspects - the history, the culture and the flora and fauna". There will be shows throughout the day, and lots of interaction with wildlife and hi-tech elements. Due to open in mid 2016, on 80 acres adjacent to the Victoria Falls Safari Lodge, it would be the biggest commercial investment in Victoria Falls in more than a decade, Mr Glynn said.

"Four postgraduate palaeontology students have researched the entire recorded history of Victoria Falls and its surrounds," Mr Glynn said. "We have the greatest historical collection of information on the area probably ever compiled," he said. "From there we selected snap shots in time which we will turn into film sets to immerse visitors in a highly interactive and visually powerful way." Visitors to Santonga will be taken on a journey from the formation of Earth, and the geology of the region, through the dinosaur periods to post dinosaur mammals, Falls formation and to the hominids known to have been in the area. They will learn about the lives of the San, the Bantu migrations, the vast Great Zimbabwe trading zones and the arrival of the white explorers. Culture will be brought to life, with the stories of local tribes from both sides of the Zambezi River being told, and illustrated by live walk through villages. "And you can't tell the story of Victoria Falls without telling the story of its flora and fauna," Mr Glynn said.

"Apart from a perimeter fence, for the wildlife we are starting with the principle of no visible fences, cages or glass boxes, with wherever and however possible, animals roaming free." Water barriers would be used to separate the public from the bigger game, Mr Glynn said. "Some game and bird life will be needed for shows and for close encounter interactions, but we will use captive bred or injured animals for these", he said. "There will be shows throughout the day, animal, reptile, bird and fossil shows, a daily vulture lunch, a big Lion King type extravaganza every evening, and a night animals show. "All through the day there will be close encounters with a range of species – a guide with an eagle on his arm, python around his neck or a scorpion in his hand.

It was hoped Santonga, at least a six-hour experience, would boost the average 2.3 night stay for tourists in Victoria Falls by an extra night. "If we get people to stay just one day longer, occupancies in the town will go up by over 40 per cent. 20 per cent, if half a day longer," Mr Glynn said. "The accommodation providers will do very well from the extended stays so it is a big win for them," he said. "The transport providers not only get transfer business to and from Santonga, but also get to cart the same visitors 20 to 40 percent longer. Food providers, curio sellers, and even adrenalin activity providers, who had people around longer to sell to, would all benefit, he said. "There are a lot of adrenalin activities in Vic Falls, but not that much to hold those who do not enjoy that sort of thing. "We believe the area is badly in need of a major attraction that will hold people longer," Mr Glynn said. "Santonga will appeal to everybody aged 2 to 100, and will provide an attraction for the older arrivals, families, and those not keen on adrenalin activities." Santonga would add more than 150 direct jobs to the town, but it is well researched that one tourism job creates ten other downstream jobs," he said. "It will be a big foreign exchange earner, as well as tax and local rates contributor."

"We also believe strongly that the Zambian operators will get the same uplift of longer stays, particularly once the UNIVISA is in place." The project, which was approved by the Victoria Falls Town Council some time ago, was recently given the green light by the AAT board. It would follow on from the new $150 million international airport at Victoria Falls, to open next July, with more than triple the capacity, he said. It was hoped Santonga would become an essential part of the visitor programme to Victoria Falls, as it would enable them to fully understand their surroundings. Santonga was expected to attract 120,000 visitors each year, Mr Glynn said.

"Santonga, hopefully, is a win-win for everyone in the area."



Santonga *Snap Fact*
Will employ 150 people and create 1500 down stream jobs.

Santonga *Snap Fact*
Expects to handle 120,000 visitors in its first year.

Santonga *is a* major development *for* Victoria Falls *and the* region.

Santonga News conducts a searching interview with Africa Albida Tourism Chairman Dave Glynn.

ED: Can you describe for us what Santonga is all about and what the public can expect?

Glynn: We are attempting to tell the story of Victoria Falls and its surrounds including all of the aspects. It is a half to full day experience that delves into the amazing history, culture, and flora and fauna of the area – but in a way that is really first world, pacey, interactive. We want you to walk away saying "Wow, that was amazing and incredibly entertaining and insightful".

ED: What are the component parts? How will it work?

Glynn: Well, it breaks down into three parts – history, culture and nature. We want to tell the whole story. The history part is really cool. We want to immerse you back in time in a highly interactive and visually powerful way, plenty of sound effects and so on. We want to make you feel that you are really back there.

ED: But where is there? When you think of history you think of museums. You think of rocks and glass boxes, static displays.

Glynn: Oh no. This is really lively. We will be creating film sets around 10 snapshots in time and we have some great stuff to tell. Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana have some really important moments in their history near the Falls. For example, Zimbabwe has two dinosaur finds that are extremely significant globally. Zimbabwe was the second continent to be formed, called a craton. Zambia has a significant homonid discovery not far from the Falls. There is some great stuff in there. The 10 historical moments we have selected are all significant for Vic Falls and its surrounding area and the way we will do it will keep you occupied for some hours. And there are plenty of interesting facts and exhibits scattered around as you make your way through the various time zones.

ED: You mention culture?

Glynn: Yes. Here too there is a lot to tell. Within the Victoria Falls zone there are a number of tribal groupings with significantly varied stories. How and when did they get there? What are their differences in cultures, tradition, dress and village life? You will have several walk through live in villages and be able to immerse yourself in the cultures of the area.





ED: How prominently does wildlife feature?

Glynn: Very. You can't tell the story of Victoria Falls without telling the story of its wildlife, its flora and fauna. In there we have so much to tell. Wildlife is a complex area, and we know and understand that. The wildlife diversity in the area is extraordinary. Captive animals raise lots of concerns and we still have a lot of work to do to get the formula right and acceptable. We are consulting and will consult widely with wildlife experts, no cages and boxes, with game roaming free as on Elephant Hills Golf Course. We will manipulate the vegetation with only indigenous plant material to feed the various species and to bring in a wide range of wild bird life, and use water barriers where necessary. We want it to appear to the visitor that there are no fences at all and the perimeter fence will be almost invisible. We believe though that we have a really golden opportunity to spread very important conservation and awareness messages in so many ways and hopefully raise quite a lot of funding for wildlife too.

ED: You mention shows and interactions. Tell us more.

Glynn: You can't spend a whole day on your feet and shows and close encounters allow you to tell and demonstrate so much more. So there will be shows throughout the day and all through the day you will have close encounters with a range of species. By the end of the day we will have shown you so much and you will have heard so many conservation messages, as well as having learnt the history and cultures.

ED: But still, some of the wildlife purists may have some discomfort?

Glynn: Hopefully we can bring them round. Vic Falls has some really top quality wildlife specialists and enthusiasts. It is a huge opportunity for them also to help us get messages across to an annual audience of over 120,000 people – the plight of the rhino, elephant, lion, cheetah, wild dog, etc., even if those are not part of the programme. So much of wildlife is in trouble and look, AAT has a very strong conservation reputation as you know. We were awarded a Green Globe award for all of our conservation measures when we built Victoria Falls Safari Lodge. We co-founded the Vic Falls Anti Poaching Unit with Charles Brightman 14 years ago and remain heavily involved in supporting that. We are strongly supportive of the vulture awareness programme. The vulture is more threatened than the rhino. Its beak is now sought after as having the same qualities as rhino horn. Vultures draw attention to poached animals so they are the poacher's enemy. Last year something like 269 vultures were poisoned on a single carcass. Santonga will be an outstanding opportunity to spread conservation and education messages to wide ranging audiences, including the next generations.

ED: Has an EIA been done on that site?

Glynn: Yes we did all the approvals process some while ago and the approved Environmental Impact Assessment study was done by Allan Sparrow, a thorough and highly respected ecologist.

ED: Isn't a lot of that site damaged from gravel extraction?

Glynn: We will be doing a huge amount of rehabilitation work on that site. Over 30 acres of the Santonga site was devastated by gravel extraction for the laying of the Elephant Hills road in the early 1990's. We will be moving a mountain of top soil back in there, at very substantial costs, and in addition will bring back a huge amount of indigenous plant material to rehabilitate it. In the end it will be a botanical garden as well and we have employed paleo botanic advice to have, as far as possible, even plants around the historic exhibits that are appropriate to the time period.

ED: You mention paleo botanists. Have you used other high level specialists on this?

Glynn: We learnt some time ago to use the best resources you can find. The overall Santonga plan was crafted by a team of 22 specialists, each one of very high quality. Professor Lee Burger, a globally renowned paleoanthropologist, led the historical research and time snapshot selections, and content compilation. We used a team of four Singaporean based experts to assist with the park design, David Harrison and Friends, who are pretty much regarded as the top park designers globally, and then we had a full set of architects, engineers, landscape designers, and wildlife specialists contributing to what should be shown and how we can do it.

ED: There must be significant benefits from a development like this?

Glynn: Absolutely. The average stay in Vic Falls is only 2.3 nights. There are a lot of adrenalin activities in Vic Falls but not that much to hold those who do not enjoy these. We believe the area is badly in need of a major attraction that will hold people longer. The hope is that Santonga will help to create an extended day stay. If we achieve that occupancies in the area will go up by over 40%, even without adding more visitors. And there is surplus room stock in the area for the foreseeable future. That is very significant uplift. Santonga will add a lot of direct and downstream jobs, foreign exchange earnings, taxes, rates, and so on.





ED: Will Zambia be worried about this development?

Glynn: They ought not to be. In fact we are hoping that they will embrace it. We are assuming that the UNIVISA which was used during the UNWTO congress last year will be in place soon between Zambia and Zimbabwe. With that in operation it is 10 minutes from the Royal Livingstone Hotel on the Zambian side to the Elephant Hills Hotel on the Zimbabwe side. This will make Santonga very accessible to the Zambian side. But Santonga is not and cannot be solely a Zimbabwean story. There is a lot of Zambian content historically, culturally, and in many other ways that will be included. And the Zambian side will benefit from the extended stays as much as the Zimbabwean side will. Santonga will be extremely relevant to Zambian and Zimbabwean visitors alike. The same also applies to day trippers from Chobe in Botswana as well.

ED: And the other activity providers in the area? Won't this take business away from them?

Glynn: Again, the activity providers need to examine what 20-40% more occupancy in town will do for them. Santonga will be fully commissionable to all of them. Also, we have tried to make Santonga neutral to all existing product in the area so that we are not competing directly with anyone. Santonga, hopefully, is a win-win for everyone.

ED: There was a lot of noise about Santonga a while ago, and then it all went quiet. Why is it back on the drawing board now?

Glynn: Over the last three years AAT as a group has concentrated on refurbishing, upgrading and adding to our hospitality products. The last project was completed in July so this allows Santonga to come onto the drawing board. Local funding conditions are now favourable. But the biggest thing that has kicked us into gear is the new airport at Victoria Falls. This is a massive development for the whole region.

ED: Why is the new airport a big deal?

Glynn: Some people are still sceptical about it for some reason. I don't understand why. I have been out there twice now. This is the real deal. The Zimbabwe Government has committed US$150 million to it. The runway, which will take any currently made wide bodied aircraft, is over 4km long, rated Category 2 in terms of technical specs which is equivalent to Dubai Airport runway, and will be operational in 2014. The new airport building will be capable of off-loading 3 wide bodied aircraft at a time and will be operational in 2015. If you look at where Vic Falls sits on a map of Africa it is slap bang centre of the whole southern and central continent, right there at one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World and one of the great rivers of Africa. If you look at a 500km radius of Vic Falls you have one of the finest, if not THE finest, tourism and wildlife zones on the planet, with almost no conurbation. Vic Falls will become a meaningful hub firstly for tourism, and then for business travel and cargo for the region. This airport development is a complete game changer for the region, not instantly, as the direct flight long haul airlines need to sign up. But they will. The rules are changing and Vic Falls and Livingstone need to prepare for increasing volumes of arrivals and all that that brings with it.

ED: There is a helicopter pad at Elephant Hills. Will this not affect the Santonga project?

Glynn: We have consistently been told by the Victoria Falls Falls Town Council that that helicopter site is temporary and even most recently has been on a monthly rolling lease and that the helicopters will be moving to the designated helicopter site at Chamabonda Vlei. We certainly have proceeded for some years and spent a great deal of money on the Santonga project on the strength of these assurances from Council. Our project has also been fully approved by Council for some time. One assumes Council will protect and honour the rights that they have given us. However, the helicopter company that is there stands to gain a great deal also from Santonga's presence, even once it moves. To start with 20-40% more market from longer stays, plus sizable commissions from ticket sales to Santonga, as well as all the transport and food and beverage off take from their associated business's due to the longer stays that Santonga will create. Santonga brings benefit to so much of the area – 150 jobs, 1500 indirect jobs, forex, taxes, longer stays. Hopefully even the helicopter company will do the sums. Council must honour what they have committed to.

ED: There are some religions that have different views on timelines to the scientific world. How will you deal with this?

Glynn: We will be representing the scientific view and timelines, that is true. Our view is that even science has not worked out how life was formed. For the scientific view I guess you could call that first life form the God given moment. In science it even has a name – LUCA (Ancestral self-replicating cell). We have not found other religious views disagreeing about the historical content other than evolutionary theory, but they do accept that dinosaurs did exist, as an example. There is only one hall that strongly expresses evolutionary theory so we will alert visitors to that. But overall, other than timelines as to when everything happened we feel that what we will be showcasing will be acceptable and appealing to all.

ED: Finally, what will you charge and when will it be ready?

Glynn: We are targeting an opening rate around $110 per adult and $25 per child as the entry fee, fully commissionable on normal tourism trade structures. The layout, infrastructure, design and content plans are very well advanced, enough to start on site very soon with landscaping. We aim to start construction by June 2015 and to open the doors by July 2016.

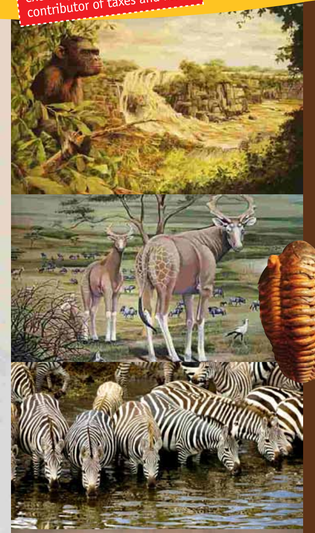
ED: Good luck. It really sounds fantastic and an amazing project.

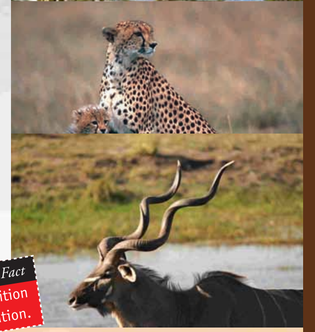
Glynn: Thanks very much.

Santonga *Snap Fact*
Major new addition to the destination.



Santonga *Snap Fact*
Will be a substantial foreign exchange earner and contributor of taxes and rates.





SANTONGA VICTORIA FALLS

10 Historical Snapshot Film Sets

1. Orientation Movie
   - » What makes Earth any different to other planets?
   - » How did the continents form?
   - » Where did the oxygen that feeds all life come from?
   - » Find out at the orientation movie that sets the scene for what goes ahead.



2. 210 m.y.a. Dinosaurs Scene
   - » From which Zimbabwe dinosaur did all great dinosaurs evolve?
   - » How did they survive on so little vegetation?
   - » Walk into the desert world of dinosaurs so long ago.



3. 182. m.y.a. Dinosaur Scene
   - » Which Zimbabwe dinosaur neatly covers the gap to the big Sauropods?
   - » What happened to create the greatest extinction of all time?
   - » How did the basalt over which the mighty Zambezi flows get formed?
   - » Join the great extinction and feel the volcanic process.



4. 67 m.y.a.
   - » Wide ranging dinosaurs roamed the area in a Jurassic park type environment.
   - » Learn what they are and who ate who!



5 Post Dinosaur Mammals
   - » Multiple species came and went after the last great extinction.
   - » Learn about Buffalo with 3m long horns, African Mammoth elephant, short necked giraffe with antlers, sabre tooth cats, giant zebra, giant hyena and much more.



6. The Hominids
   - » Early, middle and late stone tools abound in the area.
   - » What species made these tools? How did capturing fire change the world?
   - » Learn more about our own species Homo Sapiens Sapiens - Wise Wise Man.



7. The San
   - » Learn about how much The San Bushman contributed.
   - » The first to make refined tools, to create art and bodily adornments and to bury their dead.
   - » Learn about their lives.



8. The Bantu Migration
   - » Where did pastoralism come from?
   - » Who tamed the Nguni cattle?
   - » When did the iron age start and what impact did it have?
   - » Find out how these things impacted the hunter gatherer.



9. The Great Zimbabwe Trading Zone
   - » How did the Bembezi Stone structures in Hwange link with the Great Zimbabwe structure?
   - » How did they trade as far afield as China, Arabia and Europe?
   - » And what did they trade?
   - » Learn about one of the important trading zones of its time.



10. The Explorers
   - » Which white explorers came to the area and why did they come?
   - » What impact did they have and what is their legacy?

