



Victoria Falls and climate change

Victoria Falls is one of the most striking waterfalls in the world. More than a mile across, and over 350ft (107 meters) high, enormous cascades of water plummet over a ledge of volcanic rock. It's one of the main tourist attractions in southern Africa, bringing about 1 million visitors a year to the area.

But increasingly severe droughts caused by the climate crisis – and visitor concerns about climate impacts – have seen those numbers dwindle, leaving the local tourism sector worried about the future. The drought is reducing fruit and vegetable production and hotels and restaurants are experiencing food shortages.

For local tourism businesses, their fear of drought is twofold: the drought itself and the way the drought is reported in the media, further discouraging tourists from visiting and depriving the region of tourism dollars precisely when they need them most.

In 2019, a reporter from Sky News filmed a segment at Victoria Falls showing only a trickle of water, talking about the impacts of climate change. This report has had a huge impact on the local tourism industry, even months later, when the waterfall was filled with water again, as a mass of tourist reservations were canceled.

In countries like Zimbabwe, home to endangered animals such as cheetahs, rhinos and elephants, impacts on the tourism industry can profoundly derail conservation efforts. The reason is that conservation organizations rely on tourists to raise the necessary money to fund conservation and community development programs, and if tourism dries up, to a large extent so does the funding for this. On the other side of the coin, when the food sources of the local population disappear, it results in an increase of poaching incidents as the population struggles to find food and survive.

Based on an article in The Guardian newspaper

