

Italians upbeat about Zim

Business Reporter

A DELEGATION representing Italian tourism operators who visited the country for the just ended Sanganai/Hlanganani World Travel and Tourism Africa Fair expressed enthusiasm at the business opportunities that the Zimbabwean tourism industry has to offer.

The delegation that included buyers Elisa Lavizzari of Il Viaggio Journeys & Voyages and Malaguti GianMarco of South Discovery Travel as well as tourism journalists Lucio Rossi of Latitudes Travel Magazine and Federico Formignani of Mondo in Tasca was in the country at the invitation of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority. Besides attending the fair, they also visited Bulawayo, Victoria Falls, Matopos and Hwange.

Commenting on their visit, journalist Lucio Rossi said: "We have a good impression of Zimbabwe, it is a country that is worth marketing in Italy and across the world as it is a rare natural beauty whose neat, clean and safe environment is complemented by friendly people with a high hospitality ethic."

"The country offers a really unique and uplifting experience; it allows the visitor to feel emotions, see many wonders and experience exotic tastes."

During their visit, the delegation also met local tourism operators including African Bush Camps, Victoria Falls Safari

Lodge, The Amalinda Collection and Africa Albida, African Sun Limited and the Rainbow Tourism Group.

"There is vast potential for high-end in-bound tourist flows from Italy to Zimbabwe; our clients are interested in wildlife safaris that offer luxurious experiences. Zimbabwe needs to be promoted as at the moment it is realising only about 10 percent of its tourism potential, with the rest remaining unexploited," said tourism buyer Malaguti GianMarco of South Discovery Travel.

According to Elisa Lavizzari, a buyer with Il Viaggio Journeys & Voyages, whose company has been doing business with Zimbabwe for the past two years, the tourism spend on Zimbabwe from the Italian market is growing. She said that a lot more needs to be done in terms of marketing as only four Italian tour operators work with Zimbabwe in comparison with 62 operators that do business with South Africa; a destination that offers comparable flora, fauna, resorts and facilities.

In an interview, Federico Formignani, the director of media house Mondo in Tasca, who was also part of the delegation, said: "The environment is great and there is a lot of wildlife. Apart from the well managed national parks, the cities are beautiful; with wide streets in Bulawayo and green city parks in Harare. The people of Zimbabwe have shown us great hospitality and friendliness."