

**AFRICA MIDDLE EAST**

# Zimbabwe introduces green tourism initiative

By [Dorine Reinstein](#) / March 25, 2016



Livingstone Island on Victoria Falls.

Zimbabwe has started implementing “green concepts” in the tourism sector in a bid to attract more international tourists.

The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority has announced it has entered into a partnership with the U.K.-based Green Tourism Programme and Environment Africa to offer green tourism grading throughout the country. Sugar Chagonda of the tourism authority said the government is currently engaging members of the country’s tourism industry to explain the concept of green tourism.

A pilot program was undertaken in February this year for the green tourism certification of 14 operators in Victoria Falls and Hwange. Green Tourism managing director Andrea Nicholas said the organization had looked at everything from bedrooms and bathrooms to the type of food served in the hotels and lodges considering what chemicals are being used and whether the products are being sourced locally to promote local communities.

Nicholas was quoted in Zimbabwe's News Day as saying: "From the time we have spent here, it is evident that tourism businesses in Zimbabwe are committed to going green and doing changes to how they have been conducting business."

However, Diane Lobel of African Portfolio pointed out that although clients may indicate that green tourism is important and something they value, it doesn't play out in their selection of properties and experiences when it comes to booking their safari. She says: "So while there is general support for the concept of green and sustainable tourism, it really does not feature as decision criteria in trip planning."

Marcia Gordon, president and co-founder of Extraordinary Journeys, explained that even though U.S. travelers are not actively asking for green establishment, it is important to Extraordinary Journeys as a company. She said: "It is important to us to know we can do well by doing good."

Gordon adds that once clients are at a destination and see that they are in places that are giving back, they are extremely grateful. "Seeing how we give back to communities have made them more willing to recommend us to their friends and family," she said.

Emily Baldwin of Micato adds that clients don't necessarily ask about sustainability when booking, but they do expect Micato to select only like-minded lodging partners. She says: "We are very explicit in our marketing materials that we value sustainability and stewardship of Africa's natural treasures."

Sherwin Banda, president of African Travel, said that travelers who are mindful of the environment will choose to stay with accommodations providers who focus on reducing their organization's carbon footprint.

"Customer are looking to see real innovation to ensuring environment awareness and not just token gestures," Banda said.