

Lesotho



Join a community in motion - The Mountain Kingdom

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1. Background

If you study a map of the world you could be forgiven for not noticing the small mountain Kingdom of Lesotho, which is dwarfed by the country that envelops it, South Africa.

Despite its size the Kingdom of Lesotho is special. It is home to the incredibly friendly Basotho people, it boasts the highest low point of any country in the world, the spectacular Drakensburg & Maluti Mountains and is the source of the life giving Orange River.

Known as the Mountain Kingdom, Lesotho is situated in the southern region of Africa. It is a small mountainous country covering a land area of approximately 30,000 sq. km. Landlocked and completely encircled by South Africa, Lesotho is one of the smallest countries in the world, but the challenges its people are facing are enormous. The major factors contributing to the currently very difficult situation is high levels of both HIV, poverty and malnutrition in combination with seriously decreasing revenues to the Government budget due to the global economic downturn.

The country is one of the 49 Least Developed Countries (LDC) in the world and due to low human development and the increasingly difficult development situation, is it unlikely to graduate this category in the near future.

In the 2009 Human Development Index, Lesotho is ranked 156 out of 177 countries. According to the Gini index, it is one of the most unequal countries in the world. With a value of 52.5 (where 0 is complete equality and 100 reflects complete inequality), it is placed together with countries such as Guatemala and Liberia in terms of inequality. Persistence of inequalities in growth would have a direct impact on achievement of the MDGs, especially poverty, hunger and health related issues.

2. Food security

Currently, Lesotho cannot produce enough food to meet the domestic demand. Almost 70 per cent of the annual cereal requirement is imported, mainly from South Africa. The majority of the people, especially in the rural areas, rely heavily on subsistence farming. But arable land is limited and less than 10 percent of the country is presently under cultivation. A large proportion of the rural population is caught in a poverty trap, with limited crop yields and little or no resources to buy imported food. As a result of this, over 40 per cent of the population are malnourished.



3. Mhale's Hoek

Regarded as the centre for the southern region, which includes the districts of Mhale's Hoek, Mafeteng and Quthing. The town takes its name from King Moshoeshoe's younger brother, Mhale. During the 1830's Moshoeshoe's kingdom expanded into southern Lesotho. Mhale was sent to administer the area and preserve the fragile peace agreement between the Baphuthi who had lived there since about 1795, and the Basotho. Mhale founded a villiage, known today as Ha Ts'epo, a few kilometers north of the present town, which was establish as the district headquarters after Lesotho became a British protectorate in 1868.

4. Outreach location

Maphutseng village is situated about 5km from Mohale's hoek. It lies in the middle of cultivated lands, a beautiful river site, monstrous mountains covered with snow in the winter season and numerous little villages where the Basotho people lives.

In the early morning you will see the smoke from the surrounding villages. You will see cattle and goats grazing everywhere. You will see the deep dongas caused by erosion. Children, women and men walking covered in their traditional blankets...and then you will realized that you are unmistakable in Lesotho, the Mountain Kingdom.



5. The purpose of the outreach

The purpose of the outreach will be:

- Construction and Maintenance
 - The team will do some construction and maintenance work, e.g. making furniture, participate in building projects, doing paint jobs, etc.
- Agricultural
 - Due to the fact that Lesotho's main income and food security depends on agriculture, the team will help the local people work their fields and gardens. October until December is mainly the planting season. From January until March the local people will do weeding, mainly by hand. Harvest season is from May until July.
- Training
 - The local people need to be trained in Agriculture and Transformational Development. The team will help to facilitate the training, first by learning the skills themselves.
- Youth
 - Teams will work together with youth in the various locations they will be serving. The team will have the chance to serve these people, love them, minister to them and fellowship with them. They will also have the opportunity to do some fun stuff together, e.g. playing games, sports, etc.
- Visit the surrounding villages
 - The team will also have the opportunity to visit villages surrounding Maphutseng. They will experience the local way of life and have the opportunity to immerse somewhat in the local culture.
- Sunday services

- The team will attend Sunday services in the local villages.
- Expertise
 - Expertise needed in the area of agriculture, business, training, youth ministry, etc.

6. Additional Information

- a) Visiting teams will do outreaches mainly in the Mohale's hoek/ Maphutseng area.
- b) Mohale' Hoek is about six hours by car from OR Tambo International Airport near Johannesburg.
- c) Visiting teams will stay at Maphutseng at the site of Growing Nations. The site is a Missionary church facility with dormitory style accommodation. The site can accommodate a maximum amount of 20 people. There are 4 showers and 4 toilets for ladies and 4 showers and 4 toilets for men.
- d) Visits to Lesotho will cost approximately \$100-140 per day per person. (The cost will depend on size of the group and the Rand/dollar currency). The amount includes:
 - Accommodation (dormitory style)
 - 3 x meals per day
 - Bottled water
 - Cutlery
 - Transport
 - Bedding
 - Outreaches to communities
 - Attending Sunday services in local congregations
 - Sightseeing to the Malealea lodge

Malealea Lodge

Lesotho is a world without fences. Breathtaking scenery abounds and every season has unique attractions. Malealea is situated in a remote part of Western Lesotho that is breathtaking in its beauty. This is a chance to experience traditional Basotho life.

Malealea Lodge is run by the owners, the Jones family. They are credited with more local knowledge than anyone. Various Basotho children's choirs and a local Basotho music band using their local homemade instruments entertain the guests in the evenings around a campfire.



7. What to bring:

- Clothing
- Toiletries
- Towels

- Umbrella / Raincoat
- Spending money
- Cameras, cell phone etc. (Note: No internet facilities on the site)
- Medicine (Including something for diarrhea, nausea, headaches, cold and flu
- medicines, plasters, plastic gloves and antiseptic cream)
- Mosquito repellent
- all other extras

8. Hosts

Hein & Helene van Wyk will be the local hosts and will accompany the team the whole time.