

AFRICA · MOUNTAINS · HIKING · ADVENTURE · ROAD TRIPS · OFF THE BEATEN PATH



Lesotho

Lesotho is a mountain kingdom entirely surrounded by South Africa, and its lowest point sits at about 1,400 metres — higher than any other country's. Drive the hairpins of Sani Pass, ride Basotho ponies between villages, watch Maletsunyane Falls plunge 192 metres at Semonkong and climb Thaba-Bosiu, where the nation was founded. Nights are cold, even in summer.



Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Lesotho and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 10 December 2025.

 CAPITAL Maseru	 CURRENCY Lesotho loti (LSL) £1 ≈ LSL 21.93	 LANGUAGE Sesotho, English	 BEST TIME Apr–May, Sep–Oct
 DAILY BUDGET £30–£160 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type M 220V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 11h direct to JNB ~£650–£1,200 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+2 standard time

Lesotho is all highland: the Maloti and Drakensberg ranges cover most of the country, rising to Thabana Ntlenyana (3,482 m), the highest peak in southern Africa. Maseru and most towns sit in the western lowlands along the Caledon River border, so trips usually start there and climb east. A classic loop heads south to Malealea for pony trekking and Semonkong for the falls; another route runs through the northern highlands past Katse Dam and Afriski to Mokhotlong, then drops down Sani Pass into KwaZulu-Natal's Drakensberg. Distances look short on a map, but mountain roads keep average speeds low.

Lesotho is cheap by regional standards and refreshingly uncrowded: you may share a pass with herders in Basotho blankets and conical mokorotlo hats rather than other tourists. Accommodation runs from community lodges and old trading-post guesthouses to a handful of comfortable mountain lodges. It suits self-drivers, hikers, mountain bikers and anyone happy with simple comforts and changeable weather. Surprises include winter snow, which can close high passes, Afriski's ski slopes and the warmth of village hospitality. Summer brings green hills and afternoon thunderstorms, winter clear skies and hard frosts; spring and autumn are the best compromise.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

ADVENTURE

Sani Pass

A dramatic run of hairpins climbs from KwaZulu-Natal to the Lesotho border post at about 2,876 metres. Take in the views from the lodge pub at the top, then continue across the empty high plateau towards Mokhotlong.
- 2

NATURE

Maletsunyane Falls

Near Semonkong, the Maletsunyane River drops 192 metres in a single plunge into a sheer-sided gorge. Walk or ride a pony to the viewpoints from Semonkong, ideally after summer rains when the flow peaks.

3

HISTORY

Thaba-Bosiu

The flat-topped mountain where Moshoeshoe I founded the Basotho nation in 1824 and held out against attack, including Boer sieges. Climb with a local guide to the royal graves on the summit; a cultural village stands at the foot.

4

NATURE

Sehlabathebe National Park

Lesotho's remote first national park, on the south-eastern escarpment, is part of the Maloti-Drakensberg World Heritage Site: sandstone arches, tarns, wildflowers and San rock-art shelters, with few visitors and fewer facilities.

5

ARCHITECTURE

Katse Dam

A 185-metre curved concrete dam in the central highlands, centrepiece of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, which sends water to South Africa's Gauteng province. Tour the wall, then drive the high Mafika-Lisiu Pass back towards the lowlands.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Maseru

≈ 330,000 people

The capital is a low-rise, practical city on the Caledon River; stock up, browse crafts at the Basotho Hat shop and head for the mountains — Thaba-Bosiu is under an hour away.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Teyateyaneng

≈ 75,000 people

Known as 'TY', this Berea district town is Lesotho's craft centre, where weaving workshops turn mohair and wool into tapestries and rugs you can buy from the makers.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Maputsoe

≈ 55,000 people

A border town opposite Ficksburg in South Africa, built on textile factories and cross-border trade; most travellers simply pass through en route to Leribe, Katse Dam or the northern highlands.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Lesotho

Best time: **Apr–May, Sep–Oct.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

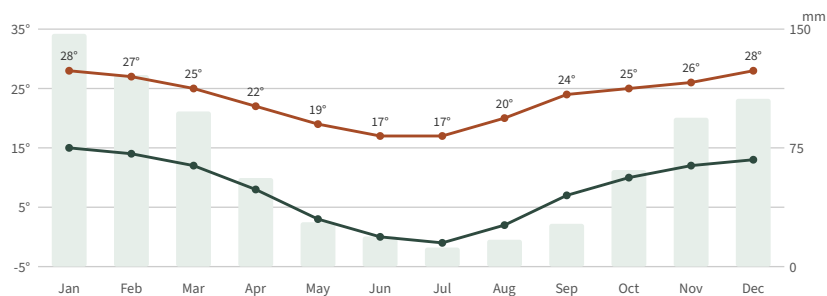
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Maseru

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Mar	Moshoeshoe Day A national holiday on 11 March honouring the founder king, marked by official ceremonies, music and plenty of Basotho blankets and mokorotlo hats in Maseru and district towns.
Nov–Dec	Roof of Africa One of the world's toughest hard-enduro motorbike races, held in Lesotho's mountains in late November or early December; spectators gather at the steepest climbs and rockiest gullies to watch riders struggle through.

How much does Lesotho cost?

SHOESTRING £30 per person / day ≈ LSL 658 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £75 per person / day ≈ LSL 1,644 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £160 per person / day ≈ LSL 3,508 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Papa le moroho Stiff maize-meal porridge (papa) served with moroho, a relish of leafy greens such as spinach or cabbage — the everyday meal in homes across the country.	Motoho A thin, slightly sour fermented sorghum porridge, often eaten for breakfast and made at home in rural villages.	Joala Home-brewed sorghum beer, cloudy and tangy; a white flag on a pole outside a rural home traditionally signals that it is for sale.
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Getting around

There are no passenger trains or scheduled domestic flights, so most visitors self-drive, usually in a car hired in South Africa with a cross-border letter. Main roads are tarred but steep and winding; a high-clearance vehicle helps on gravel, and Sani Pass needs a 4x4. Minibus taxis and buses run from Maseru's ranks to district towns, and pony trekking reaches villages beyond the roads.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  M 220V — bring a UK-to-M adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 112 (ambulance, fire, police) Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +266	TIME ZONE UTC+2 (standard time)
TAP WATER Varies — bottled or filtered is safer	DRIVING On the left
TIPPING Around 10% in restaurants is appreciated; tip pony guides and lodge staff directly, and give car guards in Maseru a few maloti or rand.	

ETIQUETTE

Greet everyone with 'Lumela' and a handshake before asking anything; ask permission before photographing people, herders or villages, and dress modestly away from lodges.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Moshoeshoe I International Airport (MSU), Maseru; O. R. Tambo International Airport (JNB), Johannesburg — across the border; Bram Fischer International Airport (BFN), Bloemfontein — across the border

Visas & entry for Lesotho

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit Lesotho for up to 90 days without a visa.

You can extend your stay by completing a 90-day temporary permit extension form and taking it to the Visa Application Centre in the Manthabiseng Convention Centre, Maseru. Your passport will need to be valid for the extension period.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

 See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

- Hepatitis A
- Tetanus
- Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

- Cholera
- Hepatitis B
- Measles
- Rabies
- Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Lesotho

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Boxing Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Thu 11 Mar 2027	Moshoeshoe's Day
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday

Sat 1 May 2027	Workers' Day
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Tue 25 May 2027	Africa/Heroes Day
Sat 17 Jul 2027	King's Birthday
Mon 4 Oct 2027	Independence Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Sesotho

ENGLISH	SESOTHO	SAY IT
Hello	Lumela	loo-MEH-lah
Thank you	Kea leboha	keh-ah leh-BOH-hah
Please	Ka kopo	kah KOH-poh
Excuse me	Ntšoarele	n-tswah-REH-leh
How much is this?	Ke bokae?	keh boh-KAI

Know before you go

- The rand is accepted everywhere at par with the loti, but maloti are not accepted in South Africa, so spend them before leaving; ATMs are scarce away from towns.
- Border posts, including Sani Pass, keep fixed opening hours, and the upper pass requires a 4x4; check the hours and get the rental firm's written permission before setting off.
- Pack warm layers whatever the season: nights at altitude drop below freezing in winter, snow can close passes, and summer thunderstorms build fast in the afternoons.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.