



LESOTHO TOURISM

News

May 2016



EXPLORE

**the Kingdom
in the sky**



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Adventure awaits you in the Mountain Kingdom with a range of activities on land, on the snow and in the water. Lesotho is famous for its spectacular scenic beauty branded by breathtaking mountain ranges, towering peaks, a rich variety of flora and fauna, crystal clear streams, surging waterfalls, diverse culture and a snow blanket seen high in the mountains across the country in winter. While travelling around the country, visitors will come across the various forms of crafts that are handmade by Basotho. The mountains, landscape and high altitude lure bikers, 4X4 riders and hikers to explore them in search for adrenaline teasing challenges and adventure. In the southern part of the country, the Sehlabathebe National Park - Lesotho's flagship park, forms part of the itinerary for any visitor to Lesotho offering majestic scenery. The park is also home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, some of which have never been found elsewhere in the world. Whether it is for relaxing, adventure or sporting activities that tourists may visit Lesotho, they will always be amazed by extreme sporting activities, beautiful rock formations and rock paintings, ancient creatures' footprints like the dinosaurs and bird watching. Those who wish to explore routes on foot and experience the Basotho culture will find what they are looking for. The waters of Lesotho allow for canoeing, boating and fishing among a hive of other water-based activities.

Lesotho: Basic Facts

Size:	30355km ²
Altitude:	Lowest 1 388m; highest 3 482m
Capital City:	Maseru
Population (2007):	2.1 million; Maseru 436 000
Languages:	Sesotho and English
Monetary Unit:	Loti (plural: Maloti)
Standard Power:	220/240 volt AC 50Hz
International Telephone Code:	+266
From within Lesotho for International access:	00 (country code)

CONTENT

- 4 From the CEO's Desk
- 4 Quality Star Grading Programme footprints in Thaba-Tseka are significant
- 6 LTDC on Awareness Campaigns to enhance tourists' safety, Lesotho's attractiveness and reputation
- 8 "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it"; LTDC disseminated tourism research results
- 9 Annual King's birthday Horse-racing at Semonkong – a potential tourism attraction in the area
- 11 Lesotho tourism develops a new brand identity to lure more visitors and enhance domestic travel
- 14 2015 Afriski Mountain Resort pulls off a SnowKidz event.
- 15 Roof of Africa Rally adds speed to Lesotho tourism industry
- 17 Inter-tourism games:
 - 17 A symbol of unity for tourism administrators in the SADC region
- 18 Media Familiarisation tours set to boost publicity of Lesotho's tourism attractions
- 19 The Historical Moshoeshoe Walk-a fulfilling experience
- 21 Africa Beer Festival a catalyst for tourist arrivals and cultural experience
- 22 LTDC on development and promotion of quality tourism products and services through Kome Rural Home-stays Project
- 24 LTDC's CEO promotes Lesotho on German radio station
- 25 Identifying the best: Lesotho Tourism holds the 2nd Industry Awards
- 26 LTDC on a move to ensure quality standards
- 27 Top Gear films the first episode of the new season in Lesotho and South Africa

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From the CEO's Desk



Tourism is important to Lesotho, in terms of revenue from visitors and the jobs that it creates, as well as the contribution that it makes to the lives of people living in this country. However, in my view, Lesotho is underperforming against its potential; although the last 2-3 years have recorded meaningful strides towards the realisation of the much talked about tourism potential. Awareness of Lesotho and what it offers the visitor is not well-known in our main potential markets.

Lesotho is about discovering a different Africa. Travelling up into the Maluti mountains you will discover an Africa far removed from the pace and commercialization around it. One where you will stand in awe of the majestic African mountains and vistas, be welcomed by age-old African mountain traditions including horsemanship, breath the freshest air and drink the cleanest water, challenge your body and soul to exciting adventures and let your spirit and imagination float high. When you return to the everyday world, you come back recharged and with a visible bounce in your step.

Under the new chapter, of the newly developed Lesotho Tourism brand identity, we are now moving away from the use of multiple slogans. We will be aligning ourselves to international's best practices through the use of a single tagline or the slogan *"The kingdom in the sky"*, which we believe is a corner stone for growing Lesotho's tourism in the years ahead, driven by an ambition to catch up with and exceed the growth levels of its competitors. My wish for 2016 and beyond is for Lesotho tourism to be differentiated amongst its competitors as an adventure and eco-tourism country in Africa encored on a theme of escapism.

Quality Star Grading Programme footprints in Thaba-Tseka are significant

LTDC is committed to playing a pro-active and cooperative role in the equitable development of tourism in Lesotho. We are currently in an age where a new generation of responsible travellers has power over our markets and dictates what products and experiences it wants to buy.

These travellers are seeking real, meaningful and authentic experiences while they are also engaging in responsible lifestyle practices such as buying fair-trade products and experiences and support for community tourism. Quality Star Grading Programme (QualStar programme), which was launched in 2013 by LTDC, encourages and supports responsible tourism which, by definition is tourism that promotes responsibility to the environment through its sustainable use; responsibility to involve local communities in the tourism industry; responsibility to the safety and security of visitors and responsible government, employees, employers and local communities.

Many communities in Lesotho may be aware of the power of responsible tourism in economic development, thus often consider setting up community based tourism enterprises, usually in partnerships. The question however is whether the projects can actually be profitable enough to create sustainable lifestyles while also improving the economy of Lesotho. One common challenge with these types of often remote community tourism ventures is marketing. They are often so small that no one ever

knows of their existence – this means that sales levels become so low that at times they are forced to close down.

Motherland Guest House as one of the graded facilities in Thaba-Tseka district has adopted the responsible tourism principles in its business. The facility buys the organic, fresh vegetable produce from the local community at affordable prices, resulting in lowered operational costs while it also empowers the locals.

“Seeing such strong growth in the number of visitors is absolutely fantastic and proof that Star Grading is important for one’s business”

In an interview with the Motherland’s Executive Chef who is also the Manger of the establishment, Mrs. Sekamotho Moteane indicated that since the establishment was graded, it has been inundated by requests of visitors who wish to lodge at Motherland Guest House due to the quality of services and products it offers as a result of the adoption of responsible tourism principles. Seeing such strong growth in the number of visitors is absolutely fantastic and proof that Star Grading is important for one’s business, she added.

Mrs. ‘Manthabiseng Ramone, a member of the Thaba-Tseka community farming cooperative project also acknowledged that, a larger share of their potatoes produce from a 24 hectares field is sold to Motherland Guest House. She mentioned that, the observed progress follows efforts by the Motherland Guest House management to incorporate community in their business, supplemented by significant work by the community. They are also anticipating to acquire more land to increase their supply.

Still on adoption of responsible tourism principles, Mrs. Moteane also indicated that, she has employed and trained the locals on how to prepare and cook delicious cuisines from the vegetables supplied by the community. In addition she also supports the community by renting out the community’s horses for recreational activities for the establishment’s visitors.

According to Mrs. ‘Makatleho Noosi (Quality Star Grading Officer), Motherland Guest House is an epitome of facility which practices responsible tourism by ensuring that the community benefits from tourists’ visits to Motherland Guest House. She further appealed to the ungraded facilities to consider participating in the Grading programme. For detailed information on Quality Star Grading please visit: www.lesothoqualitystargrading.travel or visit LTDC Headquarters.



LTDC on Awareness Campaigns to enhance tourists' safety, Lesotho's attractiveness and reputation

Tourism encompasses different categories of travellers ranging from business, leisure, medical travellers etc. While business and to some extent medical travellers may have to go to places that they would prefer to avoid, the leisure travellers can choose to go somewhere else or simply stay at home. In an effort to create awareness of the importance of tourists' safety and security in Lesotho, LTDC initiated awareness campaigns aimed at promoting hospitable behaviour towards tourists. The Police, Primary School children and Herders are the main targets for the said campaigns. As part of the awareness campaigns, a workshop aimed at sensitising the police on the importance and their relevance in tourism development in Lesotho was held at Mokhotlong in July 2015. 29 Police Officers attended the workshop whereby discussions on the following topics were covered:

- Tourism's best practices
- Importance of tourism in Lesotho,
- The relevance of police in tourism development,
- Suggestion for improvement of the Sector, and challenges experienced during interaction with tourists.

A similar educational session in a form of a meeting was held with Sani Pass police officers following a reported case of visitors' assault by unknown men at Masoba-soba pass around Sani area.

In the two forums, while the police emphasised that they cannot in anyway condone inhospitable behaviour towards tourists, it is equally important for the tourists to also play their part by ensuring that they respect the laws of Lesotho. This was due to the fact that, according to the police report, the concerned tourists in the Masoba-soba pass incidence did not report at the Sani Pass border but entered Lesotho through unauthorised entry points. They emphasised the importance of reporting entry to Lesotho and intentions to visit certain areas. The Police also emphasised the importance of acquiring legitimate documents as required by the Aliens Control Act of Lesotho, especially at Sani because the area is very isolated.

Still on awareness campaigns, LTDC in collaboration with Mokhotlong police also visited the primary schools in the areas between Thaba-Tseka and Mokhotlong districts.

The main aim was to educate the children about the importance of tourism and good hospitality. Moreover, the campaigns were intended to curb the incidences of stone throwing and begging experienced and reported by tourists. Students were also taught how to engage with visitors on a positive level, which will encourage them to keep returning to our country because of the warm hospitality that they receive.

Speaking at the same gatherings, LTDC's Officials emphasised that, we cannot control how the visitors see us as Basotho but we can control



how we interact with them to change their perceptions about us; learn about their culture and teach them our culture so that our encounter with them is more about cultural experience, exchange and fun. During the campaigns, Khomo Li-ileng, Nkokoana and Khohlo Ntšo, Matjota and Linakana Primary schools were visited.



Fact: “Never forget that no one ever needs to take a vacation, it only takes one incident to destroy the sense of security that visitors demand”.

Still on a bid to arrest the challenge of this unbecoming behaviour towards tourists and to enhance the attractiveness of Lesotho as a tourism destination, workshops in collaboration with the Lesotho Red Cross and Sentebale were held for herd-boys at Marakabei and Thaba-Bosiu to sensitise and educate the herd-boys in those areas. In addition to education on best practices in tourism, herd-boys were also strongly advised to guard against encroachment of road signs and were also encouraged to consider forming associations where in they can share ideas on how they make a better use of their time by attracting more tourists’ visits to their respective areas through production and sale of crafts, presentation of traditional performances to tourists and others. In closing, the herd-boys were asked questions on the topics covered during the workshops to evaluate whether the messages were well received. Those who answered correctly were awarded with blankets bearing the old Lesotho Haeso logo to instil a sense of pride to the herders about their beautiful country as well as to encourage responsibility in tourism promotion.



Marakabei herdboys, after being awarded with blankets bearing the old logo

“If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it”; LTDC disseminated tourism research results

Whether designing new tourism products, evaluating current strategies and developing new ones or even formulating policies, neither can these be effectively done without the dissemination and proper use of statistics. Tourism statistics provide managers and planners with more confidence in dealing with uncertainty, enabling them to make smarter decisions and provide a more stable leadership to tourism-related businesses. LTDC thus regularly undertakes industry surveys with a view to evaluate and inform the tourism stakeholders on the current trends and outlook, to substantiate positions and provide level of certainty on directions to adopt for the industry to realise the envisaged



Manager Research and Development presenting survey results

growth. In August 2015, a dissemination workshop was held at AVANI Lesotho to share with the tourism businesses and stakeholders, the latest trends in tourism, challenges based on the findings as well as to discuss the challenges and possible mitigations in the collection of tourism statistics. Statistical findings on employment in the industry, domestic travel, International visitors and performance of the accommodation sector in Lesotho were presented.



As part of dissemination of information as a way of creating awareness, a presentation on Quality Star Grading Programme was also done. The presentation covered the progress made in the QualStar programme; benefits of one's accommodation facility being graded as well as the challenges faced by the programme and best practices for the programmes to be successful.

Fact: Statistical analysis of a representative group of consumers can provide a reasonably accurate, cost-effective and faster snapshot of the market, enabling managers to avoid building strategies based on uncorroborated presuppositions

Did you know?

If graded, it takes a single peek for a visitor to recognise the quality and service excellence your facility offers. Why? - Because wearing a uniquely designed star, with a touch of spiral aloe works better. So why not grade your facility.



Annual King's birthday Horse-racing at Semonkong – a potential tourism attraction in the area

As part of the initiatives to promote domestic tourism in Lesotho, “#visityourcountryfirst”, the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation supports the annual horse-racing event as organised by the Semonkong community in collaboration with the Management of Semonkong lodge. This is an annual event whose main aim is to commemorate the Kings birthday in July. There are two categories of the race being the 800m for the foals and the 1600m for the mature horses.

In order to make the event even more interesting, betting has also been incorporated as a side-game whereby jockeys and spectators bet among themselves. According to them, individual choice for a horse depends on its “cool” name, and the horse's colour. Some bettors are very analytical and consider the horses' racing history before placing their bets.

Their system of betting is a simple one which involves just three categories being; a win, a place and a show. In a win, your horse has to be in the 1st position and you win, in a place, if your horse finishes 1st or 2nd you win and in a show, your horse has to be in 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place for you to win. Horseracing is more than a sport competition. For the tourism sector, it promotes tourism as it attracts visitors as competitors and spectators – independent of age, origin and class; it generates revenue - through



betting and prize money, contributes to environmental preservation and conservation and promotes social cohesion and integration – through betting.

The Kingdom in the Sky (Lesotho) always has very pleasant surprises up its sleeves, Semonkong is one of the many unexpected high spots in Lesotho; popular for activities such as fly-fishing, bird-watching, abseiling, hiking, Maluti-beer drinking and definitely photo-taking, hence in 2015, the event was graced by more than 70 international visitors who had visited the area during the time of the event as well as locals from Semonkong and other places.

Fact:

Semonkong is home for the epic Maletsunyane water fall; the highest single drop water fall (192m) in the world. The landmark in the area is also the highest (204m) commercial abseiling in the world as recorded in the Guinness book of world records.

Did you know?

When it comes to social integration, a horse is a strong animal often used to support psychologically and recreate an exhausted mind.



Horses dressed in their colourful blankets



Lesotho tourism develops a new brand identity to lure more visitors and enhance domestic travel

A brand should be considered as a person doing something, say walking into a restaurant; what she looks like? What would she be wearing? What personality would she have? And so on. Based on these, we often reach a point in life where believe or think our image needs some “revamp”, perhaps to draw other people’s attention or to highlight our personality or create awareness of who we are. In the sale of a particular product, it would perhaps be to highlight the key ingredient or introduce a new flavour.

The tourism industry has had its ups and downs recently, courtesy of fluctuating economies and fewer people travelling. In many African regions, these and others factors have tightened the markets, increased competition and forced the national tourism authorities to step up their marketing efforts so as to stand out from the crowd of competitors. Lesotho tourism is not an exception to this hence, the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation found it imperative to engage in a yearlong brand development process in order to lure more visitors to Lesotho by enhancing its visibility and awareness as a tourism destination.

While Lesotho is known for its natural beauty, the world still does not know much about our breathtaking scenery and an endless variety of Lesotho’s adventurous experiences at the highest points on earth, hence it is anticipated that, with the new brand, which is meant to differentiate Lesotho from its competitors, more visitors will be attracted to the kingdom in the sky through a variety of marketing strategies together with the brand.

The Objectives

The objective of Lesotho’s tourism brand is to provide a consistent, positive voice for Lesotho. The LTDC’s goal is to encourage immediate action by potential visitors to learn more about the destination and plan a visit. With the help of further research, coupled with our planned marketing strategies and partnerships with relevant and key stakeholders together with the new brand, we believe all the pieces will come together to create a strong image for Lesotho so that it stands out from the crowd of regional and international competitors. We are therefore inviting and encouraging the media and business operators to embrace the brand, feel proud about it and use it in their tourism marketing and promotional materials.

Specifically the main objectives for the development of Lesotho tourism brand are:

- To attract tourism investment
- To attract more foreign arrivals to Lesotho and stimulate domestic tourism in Lesotho



- To raise awareness and recognition of Lesotho in space

the global market

The new brand aims to change the way the world sees Lesotho by enhancing its image and its visibility as well as to inspire Basotho to travel locally and invest in tourism.

The Process

The starting point was to take stock of valuable research work on tourism in Lesotho. Thereafter a supplementary research in a form of focus group discussions and one-on-one consultative meetings was done. The two pieces of information were then merged and analysed, to put in place the perceived and vital foundation stones. The foundation stones encompasses a thorough understanding of the motivations for travel in Lesotho as well as the needs of key segments of potential visitors, an insight of how Lesotho is perceived as a tourism destination as well as a thorough understanding of the competitor landscape.

“What we have here in Lesotho is unique” said one tourism business operator. “There is no point in being kept as the Africa’s best kept secret, and we very much welcome this new brand to reposition our country and ensure that, its unique appeal cuts across the international market place because tourists are not aware of what Lesotho has to offer and what makes it distinct compared to other African states.

Lesotho is seen as a small country landlocked by South Africa, so we believe this new image will reposition Lesotho and encapsulate its dynamic and bustling personality”, he added.

This knowledge in turn enabled the crafting of a fresh articulation of Lesotho as a destination a proposition that is highly appealing, distinctive and inherently true. Because

altitude, size, terrain, authenticity (untouched nature) and location (being landlocked by South Africa) of Lesotho were the main unique features highlighted by the research participants. These elements were then refined and sharpened without losing the essence, thus “The Unexpected High” was derived as the positioning statement in preparation for the development of the real brand. “Unexpected because Lesotho is such a small country, with beautiful scenery, friendly people, real culture, untouched nature, one that is not known by many travellers. The extraordinary altitude makes Lesotho a unique land of abundant water and endless sky, a feature no one can ever expect from a landlocked state.

Putting the visitor at the heart of the strategy

The main question at this point was “what are the core assets that Lesotho can sell to all categories of visitors/travellers?” To arrive at the answer to this question, the inventory was then classified into different themes such as history, culture, adventure and snow. This inventory, together with an inspiring brand positioning statement “The Unexpected High” were then further captured in a slogan or tagline that evokes emotions, making everyone, without exception, smile when they see it and feel uplifted when they say it loud, “The Kingdom in the Sky”.

A brand represents who your company is, what it stands for and how it is perceived in the market place. Brand development and management encompasses defining, positioning and delivering on values and maintaining and managing these elements constantly. The new brand is designed in a creative manner that incorporates the key themes within the tourism industry, including culture, adventure and skiing as demonstrated in the pictures. This means activities from the three themes will be promoted with their colour codes accordingly. Other than the three colours representing the three themes, there is a primary logo symbolised by the kingdom-green colour of the blanket of the man on the horse and the writing of the words, either on the highland-white or royal-blue background. The new brand also comes in two different shapes, making it truly sophisticated and user friendly while it does not diminish the aesthetic appeal of users’ products or clash with the shape of your collateral material in any way.

To all visitors, domestic and inbound, we invite you to discover Lesotho and experience the «unexpected high» in the beautiful «kingdom in the sky»

Did you know?

Just as humans evoke emotions, so do the brands we manage and interact with.

Fact:

The new Lesotho’s brand identity is built upon the four signature attributes of Basotho and Lesotho being:

- Welcoming:** The attitude and personalities of people are of great importance to travellers; some nations have the reputation of being hostile, and others welcoming, Basotho pride them with a welcoming attitude.
- Energetic:** While definitions of what constitutes energetic vary, the terrain and landscape of Lesotho encourages the visitors to engage to some degree of activity. The variety of activities available in Lesotho on land, water and snow enables freedom and spontaneity, leaving one energised.
- Majestic:** The scenic, breathtaking beauty of Lesotho and the fact that it is a kingdom makes it very big in its small size, with a quality of grandeur.
- Authentic:** Travellers desire to experience the real natural products, not the ones manufactured solely for tourists, they want to experience Lesotho from the perspective of local people, Basotho.



2015 Afriski Mountain Resort pulls off a SnowKidz event.

Apart from the imperial mountains situated over 1300m above sea level with stunning views of a pristine landscape marked by powerful rivers, surging waterfalls and sparkling streams, the high altitude enables this beautiful kingdom in the sky, to see the snow most of the months of any given year. The Kingdom in the Sky therefore is home to the Afriski Ski Mountain Resort situated at Mahlasela pass at 3 222m meters. Snowing peaks during the winter months of June, July and sometimes in August. This forms a centrepiece of the resort's management to organise a skiing competition in honour of the King's birthday in July every year.

At this event, skiers compete for different prizes and in 2015, other than visitors only competing; the programme also included young children from Mokhotlong and Maseru Districts. The children were trained on how to ski and competed for prizes thereafter.

The main aim of including the young minds in this competition was to change the general perception of Basotho about the snow. When congratulating the winners, the Minister of Tourism Environment and Culture; Mrs. Likeleli Tampane pointed out that; snow should not just be seen as life-threatening because it also entails a sense of adventure and fun.

Mr. Wessel Bosman - the Lesotho Winter Sports Association President said It was such a pleasure to see young blood from the nearby communities have fun from the snow while they appreciate the thrill of skiing. Seeing the smiles on their faces was priceless, he added.

Speaking at the same occasion, the Minister of Youth, Sports and Recreation; Mr Mathibeli Mokhothu expressed his appreciation to Afriski Resort for making skiing accessible for the young generation. He added that, it is in competitions like this one where critical issues facing the youth can be addressed. In his speech the Minister further urged the youth in Lesotho to consider using snow to create the positive social impact while they also combat health problems like childhood obesity and high stress levels.



Did you know?

Skiing, now a sport; was a mode of transport 4000 years ago.

Facts:

Afriski slope is the highest in the world (3222m). While skiing with moderate effort, you can burn around 350-400 calories per hour!!

Roof of Africa Rally adds speed to Lesotho tourism industry

Every year Lesotho welcomes motorbike enthusiasts from around the country and the world as they head to the country to participate in or support the Roof of Africa Rally.

According to the race's officials, more than 300 entries were registered for Gold, Silver and Bronze categories all combined. The 2015 routes were a bit shorter but with more extreme sections for all categories to maintain its status as the "Mother of Hard Enduro". This was done by adding sections such as the Moleko's Pass, Thabang's Road to Hell and DowntownX2 as part of the routes. The start and finish point was at Ha Patrick to allow more visitors the opportunity to get more spectacular sights of what the race has to offer.

Did you know?

Events such as this create a buoyant economic environment; generate jobs in the tourism industry and other peripheral industries while they also contribute to sustainability in businesses.



Daring maneuver by the winner at a precipitous ditch along the route.

The event, as the world's toughest off-road endurance event attracts the best Enduro competitors. In 2015 it was graced by the likes of; Kenny Gilbert, Altus De Wet, Hanco Botha, Jade Gudzeit, Travis Teasdale, Graham Jarvis to mention few from United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany, Australia, Estonia, Italy, Scotland, Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. Local riders were also represented by young riders like Basia Maseatile.

The winner of the 2015 Roof of Africa is Graham Jarvis who ended the three-day event 20 minutes ahead of Wade Young (2nd) and Brett Swanepoel (3rd). Jarvis made a conservative start on day one at the round the houses time trial by appearing in 6th position.

Rumour has it that, he knew that, two long tough days of the competition still lay ahead so he was still getting ready and warming up. When asked about his opinion about the race and his participation, one local participant; Mr Basia Maseatile said, "I consider this as one of the toughest contests. It was the first time competing in this race; I couldn't finish the 3rd lap of the race because the bike broke down but I am very proud to have participated and represented Lesotho in this renowned competition."



The winner shortly after finishing

The Roof of Africa is seen from the tourism perspective as the gateway to Lesotho, so those international and local visitors also got to experience and explore attractions around the routes as well as other parts of Lesotho.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT ROOF OF AFRICA aka 'MOTHER OF HARD ENDURO'

- It is unusual in that, spectator assistance is a reality, and is encouraged as long as it is not premeditated. The truth is the course is tough and few finish it without the help from bystanders.
- The Roof is an extreme endurance, gruelling all times and takes massive a physical toll on you, but you don't have to be the greatest rider in the world to get around. You just need to be really fit to do it at any pace.
- The Mother of Hard Enduro is regarded by Basotho as the draught-breaker; thanks to its habit of bringing the summer rains.

Inter-tourism games: A symbol of unity for tourism administrators in the SADC region

Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC) together with the Ministry of Tourism Environment and Culture took part in the 2016 Southern-African Inter-Tourism Games. The games were initiated in 2013 by Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation, which hosted Botswana Tourism Organisation. The main purpose of the games is to create a platform for the employees in the tourism industry to meet-up on a social setting and network while they also improve their relations and share idea and exchange best practices. In 2014 Botswana Tourism Organisation hosted the games whereat Swaziland and Department of Tourism and North West tourism Board also joined the games. Swaziland took their turn to host in 2015 while the 2016 games were hosted by North West.

The games are normally held during the Easter Weekends and this year's games were held from the 25th to 27th March at Olympia Stadium in Rustenburg. The sporting codes involved were; Soccer, Netball, aerobics, and Volley ball. The Lesotho team won gold medals and trophies in Netball and Volleyball and in Soccer they were runner's up and rewarded a Silver medal. Lesotho was honoured an overall winner for inter tourism games for winning most trophies.

During the Awards ceremony, Adv. Neo Sephoti said she was delighted that the Department of Tourism was able to successfully host the games. She added that in their view it is vital to ensure that, sustainable growth of tourism in the SADC region is realised. "We are over the moon for successfully hosting these games and most of our jubilation derives from the fact that we believe we will give our visitors the best that North West Province can offer for tourism"

When speaking at the same occasion, the Botswana Tourism Organisation (BTO) CEO, Mr. Thabo Dithebe congratulated Northwest Province for hosting the games. He emphasised the importance of networking, exchanging ideas and building and maintaining relationships. "if you want to go far, take someone with you but if you want to go fast, go alone", Dithebe said. For us as BTO, attending these games means a lot because it is a very good opportunity for tourism administrators in the region to get together and network, he added. Mr Dithebe also congratulated the host for successfully organising the games.

The CEO of LTDC Mr. Mpaiphele Maqutu in his speech also congratulated North West for hosting the games. He further said the games are a symbol of unity amongst the tourism administrators in the region. We are working together towards improving the manner in which we relate so that in the future we are able to complement each other within the broader scale of the tourism industry at large. When we sell our respective destinations we will then be able to advise our clients to consider trying other products found in other states", he said.

Apart from sports, the programme for the event included a number of side-activities such a visit to Moruleng village where participants were treated to a heritage and cultural excursion at Mphebotho Cultural Museum. In this place participants were able to experience the ancient way of living and the history of Bakgatla. Activities at the Museum also included cultural performances by Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho and North West, drumming and indigenous games such as morabaraba.



Media Familiarisation tours set to boost publicity of Lesotho's tourism attractions

As part of the efforts to create publicity for Lesotho's tourism attractions, LTDC regularly engages the local media on familiarization tours to different attractions in Lesotho for them to write stories about their experiences and what Lesotho has to offer for tourism. In 2015, the tour was undertaken to the northern districts of Lesotho namely: Berea, Leribe, Botha Bothe and Mokhotlong.

Day one started at Berea district; Helang Basali Handicrafts centre, a cooperative centre initiated by 11 women operating at the St. Agnes Mission in Teya-teyaneng. The media crew was given a presentation on the process of weaving the raw mohair through to the production of the tapestries ready for sale.

The team then headed to Leribe Craft Centre which operates under the aumpit of the Anglican Church and was established in 1911. Since then, the Sisters of the Holy Name trained young Basotho women to spin and weave the local Lesotho mohair from the mountains of Lesotho and also taught them cookery and needlework. What is also peculiar about the centre is that fact that it trains and employs physically challenged and deaf women for spinning, weaving, knitting and crocheting. About forty Basotho women are employed by the facility from which half are physically handicapped.

Still on day one, the team proceeded to Tšehlanyane National Park in the district of Leribe, the park comprises of 5600 hectares of tremendously rugged mountain terrain and bestows flora and fauna and is located deep in the front range of the Maluti Mountains in the Holomo Pass. For nature lovers, the park is an ideal place to visit, within the park, there are three waterfalls; Holomonyane, Matebele and Matša a Mararo. The park is also endowed with various birding species and indigenous mammals.

The Lesotho Times reporter with a tour guide on top of Thabana-Ntlenyane



Day two began with a visit to Muela Hydro Electric Power in the district of Botha Bothe. It is the underground power house cavern of 60m x 1.30m x 15m 3 turbine generators rated at 24 MW each. Cavern accommodates 3 transformers. Access is through a vertical lift shaft from the surface. Operation Building houses the control room to monitor and operate the 'Muela Hydropower Station and the LHWP. For generation of power, water passes through the hydraulic turbines as the prime mover for the generators. Water is then discharged through the draft

tubes and concrete lined connection tunnels into a 40m high downstream surge chamber and through 1.7km long tailrace tunnel into 'Muela Reservoir. Water is conveyed by delivery tunnels via 'Muela Intake Structure to the tunnel out-let at Ash River in South Africa. Finally water lands to the Vaal Dam. The day was ended with a travel to Mokhotlong where we put up and got ready for the next day.

On the third day, we embarked on nine-hour (return) hiking trip to Thabana Ntlenyane, the highest point in Southern Africa at 3482 metres above sea level. The peak is situated on the edge of the Drakensberg Mountains close to Sani pass.

The unpopular and enthralling Soloane hot springs were visited on the last day on horse-berg. The hot springs are situated in the remote area of Soloane, close to the Khubelu River and Letšeng Diamond mine. The hot water springs from a small area surrounded by grass, then plunge down the rocks to form a small waterfall just higher than height of an average human being.

People from the neighbouring villages call the hot spings the "Natural Shower", said the tour guide Mr. Renang Konese. He further mentioned that, the community benefits greatly from the hot springs because tourists hire their horses to travel to see the hot springs.



The Historical Moshoeshoe Walk-a fulfilling experience

The 10th Annual Historical Moshoeshoe Walk was held on the 10th to 12th March 2016. According to the walk's Official, slightly more than 600 hundred participants from Lesotho, South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe took part in this historical undertaking in honour of the late Moshoeshoe I, the founder of Basotho nation. Before leaving Menkhoaneng, the walk was officiated by the Minister of Tourism, Environment and Culture; Mrs Likeleli Tampane whom while officiating the walk at Menkhoaneng indicated that, plans are underway for the walk to start at Botha Bothe, the place where Moshoeshoe I lived.

On day 1 the 31.9km walk began at the relics (Lithakong) of Moshoeshoe I in Menkhoaneng village where the visitors were welcomed by the villagers and the walk officially started. The day ended with traditional performances at Outward bound where participants had a night rest in preparation for the 54km journey on day two to Malimong village.

Malimong is home to Morena Moshoeshoe's grandfather, Peete, where his collar bones were found. Peete was preyed upon by the cannibals at this place. According to the participants, this is the most challenging day as the walk traverses through the valleys and the rough terrain in the mountains. To complete this day, one needs to be prepared mentally and physically.

The 31km lap on day three marks the end of the whole walk, and ends at the final destination Thaba-Bosiu. Upon arrival at Thaba-Bosiu participants were welcomed by Government officials and representatives from the supporting agencies, after which participants departed to their respective homes.



The 117 kilometres expedition signifies and commemorates the exodus King Moshoeshoe I took with his followers in 1824 when he left Menkhoaneng, where he was born and travelled to Thaba Bosiu fortress where he took refuge and established Basotho Nation. King Moshoeshoe I was born in Menkhoaneng and at 34; he formed his own clan and became a chief. He was a cunning and powerful leader who also united the Basotho, in Lesotho. He established his village at Butha-Buthe, where his settlement and reign coincided with the growth in power of the well-known Zulu King.

The historical walk has been successfully organized since 2007 and is organized by T-Connexion under the leadership of Mr. Thabo Maretlane. According to Mr. Maretlane, the primary objective of the walk is to revive the spirit of unity amongst Basotho as it is embodied in the legacy left by its founder by Moshoeshoe I. The walk is organized in such a way that it has both the rudiments of adventure and education. During the walk, narrations on history behind places passed are given.

In an interview with the participants in this trip, Mr. Selimo Mona indicated that, although it was very tough, it was a "excellent experience". "It was really beautiful and yet challenging especially the second day where one feels like giving up, traversing deep in the dongas and the rivers was such a fulfilling experience". The colourful flags of different countries as waved with elation and pride by the participants from the respective countries was true testimony to the fact that tourism links cultures and nations.

The 2016 edition of the Annual Moshoeshoe Walk was graced by the participation of Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate Bereng Seeiso. Her Majesty's participation was two-fold. Firstly, this year marks the 40th birthday of Her Majesty and to celebrate this milestone she decided to take part in this 117km walk. Secondly, her participation was part of her efforts to raise funds for her charity programmes – particularly the Queen's National Trust Fund.



Africa Beer Festival a catalyst for tourist arrivals and cultural experience



Hundreds of Basotho and international visitors were thrilled, ecstatic and captivated by celebration of one of its own kind African Beer festival as organized by Black Star Productions. This event was held Durham Link adjacent to the Maqalika dam in May 2015. A variety of 50 African beers were presented and tasted.

According to the festival organizer, Mr Kaizer Matsumunyane, the festival was a platform whereby visitors and locals can interact and share cultural experiences while it also creates a platform for local artisans to exhibit and sell their products. It should thus be seen a fun-filled pastime for both locals and visitors. "It is my vision to have many African countries participating in this event to exhibit their culture" he added. He further expressed his heartfelt appreciation to LTDC for support for making the event a success.

For tourism industry the event is perceived as a catalyst in promoting both domestic travel and international arrivals to Lesotho.

LTDC on development and promotion of quality tourism products and services through Kome Rural Home-stays Project

Training of rural home-stay owners

In its endeavour to enhance the quality of service in the tourism industry, thereby promote tourism in Lesotho, LTDC in collaboration with UNWTO through the ST-EP Foundation Project is on the drive to develop and promote rural tourism businesses. The project covers the areas; Ha Baroana, Malimong, Kome and Thaba-Bosiu on the east of Maseru. The project is co-funded by both LTDC and UNWTO ST-EP Foundation.

Among other plans for the project, is the training of excursion providers, rural home-stays operators, tour guides and crafts. 11 excursion providers were trained to capacitate them on development of excursions and marketing of their enterprises. Detailed guidance on the use of their cultural heritage to promote their businesses was also given during the training, including how to establish business linkages with foreign tour operators.

A Home stay is an informal accommodation facility offered to visitors who wish to experience the way of living of Basotho. As part quality assurance measures LTDC engaged Marketing Soluxn Company to conduct a two-weeks training for this category of accommodation providers.



Rural home stay owner receiving his certificate after training

Trainees were equipped with skills on hospitality, etiquette and housekeeping and upon completion of the training, the facilitator Mrs Maleshoane Moea, urged the participants to practice what they have learnt so as to add value to their establishments and promote tourism in their respective areas, which will later translate to increased tourist arrivals to their area.

After warding the certificates to trainees, the LTDC's Chief Executive Officer Mr. Mpaiphele Maqutu emphasized that tourism is one of the sector identified

to create employment and alleviate poverty. He illustrated no 10 Home stay as an epitome of a home stay which has dramatically changed the lives of the host community. Speaking on behalf of the participants Mr. Jubere Molete said the training was an eye opener and promised that they are going to apply the skills they have acquired. He further emphasised the importance of passion for what one is doing supplemented by patience. "Rome was not built in one day" he added.

Training of Excursion Providers



The LTDC's CEO, Mr. Mpaiphele Maqutu while opening the training of Excursion Providers voiced his concern that, the tourism value chain in the tourism industry is the weakest link; hence, Lesotho is regarded as destination of free for all whereby it becomes easier for anybody to run their tourism business without leaving any income for Lesotho.

It is against this background that, a specialist in tour operation business from The United Kingdom; Ms Carole Favre was engaged to train excursion providers in the tour operation businesses with a view to equip them with skills to develop packages and market their businesses effectively.

Mr. Maqutu urged the Excursion Providers to have a comprehensive knowledge and narrative of attractions, supported by well researched repository of information. In that way, the information disseminated to tourists would be accurate, concise and be consistent. He further added that, in this manner the training will to close the observed loop.

During the training, Ms. Favre emphasised the importance of social media and internet in the tour operation business. She further highlighted the importance of doing business in a professional manner.



LTDC's CEO promotes Lesotho on German radio station

Key indicators that have been derived from our research have shown that Lesotho is already closely connected with the UK, Netherlands, South Africa and Germany hence our marketing efforts in this countries must continue to be strong. According to the latest statistics, it is also evident that, Lesotho must also explore the opportunities that are arising from the emerging markets such as the US and China. Exhibitions are among the remarkable opportunities for marketers to meet with new clients for showcasing and marketing of products and services. They have lately developed into marketing instruments whereby technological, social and communicative innovations with important target groups and clients are to be worked out.

In an effort to embrace this important marketing tool, the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation's marketing Officers thus descended on Germany grounds on 8th to 13th March 2016, to attend a World Trade Show, ITB 2016 and exhibit Lesotho tourism products' offerings. ITB is the World's Travel Trade Show where decision-makers, experts, buyers and young professionals from around the globe in the area of touristic value-added chain meet to get information about important issues and trends in the tourism arena and also establish business contacts and deals.

Accompanying the LTDC's crew were members of the tourism business private sector, whose main aim was to go and exhibit their products together with what Lesotho offers for tourism.

During the exhibition days in Germany, the LTDC's CEO Mr. Maqutu had an interview with one of the German Radio Stations where he discussed issues around what Lesotho has to offer for tourism. In the interview, he highlighted and explained that Lesotho is a very beautiful country and though small, it is very big in terms of the variety of tourism products and activities that can be done on land, in water and on the snow. He further, brought it to the attention of the Germans that, Lesotho is an independent state and not part of South Africa as it is actually landlocked by South Africa. "Lesotho is actually at the highest peak in Africa and home to the highest, lowest point in the world". He further urged all visitors to South Africa to consider including Lesotho in their travel packages while visiting South Africa.



Identifying the best: Lesotho Tourism holds the 2nd Industry Awards

Lesotho Tourism Industry Awards running for the second year awards tourism businesses that demonstrate sustained responsible practice in their operations. The Annual Tourism Awards aim to motivate and cultivate budding talent and innovation while also raising the bar in service and product standards. It is an initiative to celebrate the best companies and individuals in the industry and a chance to get together to network and also commemorate the World Tourism Month, which is celebrated every year in September.

The 2015 industry awards took place on the 25th September 2015 at the AVANI Lesotho hotel with the industry players positively glittering in their traditional outfits, which was the theme for the night because it coincided with the National Cultural Week as organised by the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture in collaboration with the Local Government and Communication, Science and Technology ministries.



Mr Maqutu-the LTDC's CEO delivered the opening remarks and highlighted that, the 2015 Tourism month is special because LTDC is just about to complete a yearlong exercise of developing the new Lesotho tourism brand. "For the first time Lesotho tourism will have a tourism identity and a new image that will distinguish Lesotho tourism from the rest of the world while showcasing the unique tourism propositions that this amazing country has to offer" he said.

He further indicated that the 2015's World Tourism Day theme talks directly to the Corporation's mandate to create awareness of Lesotho as a tourism destination of choice; to educate the regional and the international tourism players and to encourage them to include Lesotho in their tour packages. In conclusion, Mr. Maqutu challenged all present at the occasion and the Basotho peoples at large to turn all the unique features of Lesotho into the tourism opportunities that are actualised so as they do not just remain as the much talked potential. "We are tired of referring to Lesotho's tourism potential; it is about time that we actualise it".

Present at the occasion was the Minister of Tourism, Environment and Culture; Mrs Likeleli Tampane. In her remarks she encouraged Basotho to travel locally and explore their unique and beautiful country. She emphasised the importance of domestic tourism; which she said it is crucial to the long term growth and sustainability of Lesotho's tourism industry. Still on domestic tourism, she expressed appreciation for the reaction of Basotho the domestic tourism campaign initiated by LTDC. "We will continue to educate and encourage Basotho to travel with the country and become ambassadors of Lesotho's tourism offerings" said the Minister.

Also present at the occasion were representatives of the industry's Associations, key stakeholders, Senior Government Officials and Chief Executive Officers of other related organisations such as BEDCO, LNDC and others.

The Categories

Awards were set to unearth the best performers in 6 main categories: Culture; Accommodation; Tour-guiding; Travel Agency; Tour Operation and Crafts. Rural home stays were included as a sub-category under Accommodation while under Crafts there were also 5 sub-categories being; Grasswork; Wool and mohair; Leatherwork; Beadwork and Pottery.

The winners in the 2015 Lesotho tourism Awards were:

Grasswork- Mr Tlai Tlai, Thaba-Bosiu; Wool and mohair- Setsoto Tapestry, Berea; Cultural activities- Mafube Cultural Group, Maseru; Leatherwork- Mopeli, Quthing; Beadwork- Positively Empowered Artisans, Leribe; Pottery- 'Matumisang Mokoai, Qacha's Nek; Accommodation- Bed Heaven, Maseru; Tour-guiding- Moipone Lechesa, Maseru; Travel Agency- Uniglobe Cosmo Travel and tours; Tour Operation- Mokhotlong Expeditions and Rural home stays- Mamohase, Botha Bothe.

LTDC on a move to ensure quality standards

In an effort to promote tourism in Lesotho and improve the standards and image of this beautiful Kingdom in the Sky, the Lesotho tourism Development Corporation established the Lesotho Quality Star Grading System in 2013.

The initiative is aimed at improving the overall quality of infrastructure and services to the tourism lodging facilities throughout the kingdom. For the programme to realise its intended benefits, there has to be thorough understanding by the business operators, of the system and how it works.

Clear quality management principles also have to be in place together with thorough monitoring and evaluation for proper application of the grading system.

It is against this background that, Star Grading Assessors become the most critical link between the Grading Council and the Accommodation establishments. It is thus important for the Grading assessors to have a full understanding of the dynamics



Mr Rametse handing over a certificate to one of the assessors

of this highly demanding programme.

LTDC thus realised this need and facilitated training of Assessors for Lesotho Quality Star Grading in 2015 to ensure that these individuals are capable to serve the accommodation sector professionally and assist in achieving the goal of offering quality. Moreover, it had also come to the attention of LTDC that, the services offered by the industry have to be aligned with the international standards in



Lesotho QUALStar Grading Assessors after receiving their certificates



order for Lesotho to be competitive in the regional market.

A total of 29 people underwent training in June 2015 at an international Hospitality School in South Africa. The trained Assessors will be working as Quality Star Grading consultants for accommodation sector in Lesotho.

The Lesotho Grading Awards Committee; Mr. Motlatsi Rametse said the committee is confident that, the Graduates are well equipped with necessary skills to improve the quality of the accommodation sector in Lesotho. "The Assessor have undergone training from a renowned institution, hence we are confident that, they will deliver up to the expectation or even beyond for the benefit of the sector", said the Mr. Rametse.

One of the Graduates, Ms. Tebello Mothabeng said apart from the skills they have acquired, the training has in a way boosted their confidence for achieving the much needed quality for Lesotho accommodation facilities. "I have never thought of being a trainer, but subsequent to this, training, I am looking forward to training other people because I am confident that I will be able to impart the skills I have acquired, especially now that we are credible since we have been accredited", Ms. Mothabeng commended.

Top Gear films the first episode of the new season in Lesotho and South Africa.

Yes it is true, the world's best and hugely car show Top Gear crew was at Sani Pass – the famously stunning but challenging pass, Lesotho for filming the kick-off episode of its new season scheduled to begin in mid 2016. The new Top Gear team following the departure of Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May will feature the British radio DJ Chris Evans and "Friends" star, Matt LeBlanc.

Top Gear is the biggest motoring television show in history. It is watched by an estimated 350 million people in the world from around 212 countries. As part of plans to create publicity for the new Lesotho tourism brand, LTDC tapped into this very big opportunity to publicise the new brand through display of the brand during the said filming activity. Mercedes Benz, Porsche and Jaguar were tested during the filming.

The Top Gear team also featured special guests, Sharleen Spiteri, Seasick Steve and Tinie Tempah from the group "Texas". They travelled the majestic Southern Africa's most remote areas including the beautiful Bokong Nature reserve.

Mercedes Benz, Jaguar and Porsche just before the test



Pictured below are the LTDC's Head Marketing, Sani Mountain Lodge Owner, and the Top Gear Stars.



LTDC Media Conference



LTDC's CEO, Mr Maqutu while addressing the media about the new brand

In sharing information and updating all the relevant stakeholders and the general public at large on the concerted efforts LTDC is embarking on to promote and marketing Lesotho, Mr. Mpaiphele Maqutu (CEO) said among the marketing activities undertaken by the Corporation, LTDC's marketing Officers attend regional and international trade fairs and exhibitions to attract international visitors to visit and invest in Lesotho. When asked about strides being made towards promotion of domestic tourism, Mr. Maqutu said an aggressive domestic marketing strategy employed by LTDC has aroused interest of the local citizens as seen by organised groups of friends, families and colleagues visiting different places and attractions around the country during the holidays.

He further cited that "Charity begins at home" and the Basotho should start by visiting places of interest in their own country to consequently become ambassadors of tourism.

He added that, Basotho have positively embraced the domestic tourism drive whereby financial institutions send members of the staff on familiarization tour to visit the tourists attractions whereby they experienced activities like horse riding, hiking, traditional dances and were really thrilled. Moreover Schools were also given a chance to experience the fun and excitement of skiing at Mahlasela Afri ski resort.

The corporation is endeavouring to provide as much touristic information as possible to international visitors and

the host population, currently tourist information offices at Maseru Bridge, Pioneer mall, Moshoeshoe I Airport are now functioning and plans are underway to open a new tourist Information office at Botha Bothe. The offices serve as a hub for tourism promotional effort and disseminating information for places of attraction to be visited by both domestic and international tourists.

On challenges, Mr. Maqutu articulated that, the delay in collection of timely statistics of visitors to Lesotho at border gates is one of the handicaps; thus the data is imperative because it informs decision making and is used by investors to gauge the feasibility of an investment, moreover they show the number of tourists' visits to Lesotho and can assist in acquisition to finance tourism enterprises.

The tourism industry is fraught with a daunting challenge of stone throwing and begging of money from international tourist by kids and herders, sadly this defeats the promotional efforts of the corporation to attract travellers to visit the mountain kingdom. In addressing this issue LTDC conducted sensitization workshops on tourist hospitality for herd boys and school kids and this behaviour has hitherto subsided. CEO emphasized that tourism is identified by the government of Lesotho as a sector with a potential for creating employment and reducing poverty and needs to be fully exploited.

The issuing of visa to Lesotho poses two challenges; firstly it is interpreted as expensive by tourists who wish to visit Lesotho and secondly the fact that, it is not available at the entry points to Lesotho, especially those that are used mostly by the tourists like the Sani Pass border. As result this adversely reduces the number of tourists who desire to visit the mountain Kingdom of Lesotho.

Future outlook

On the achievements and future outlook, Mr. Maqutu commented on the need to revitalize domestic tourism strategy "visit your country first" to encourage Basotho to visit the places of interest/attractions.

Mr. Maqutu boldly and confidently announced that, the new tourism identity for Lesotho has been developed and he believes with the new eye-catching image, that showcases what a Mosotho and Lesotho is, it will be easier to market the country locally and internationally.

He also emphasised the need for LTDC to build rapport and maintain relationship with police for protection of tourists in the interest of safety and comfort for our visitors.

In conclusion, he invited the media and the tourism business operators to embrace the brand, feel proud about it and use it responsibly in their marketing and promotional materials. To the visitors, domestic and inbound, he extended the invitation for them to discover Lesotho and experience the beautiful "Kingdom in the Sky".





THE KINGDOM IN THE SKY

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