

Ts'ehlanyane National Park is a National Park in Lesotho. It is located in the Maloti Mountains in Leribe District, and is part of the larger Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation Area. This Lesotho northern park protects a high-altitude, 2,600-metre (8,500 ft) patch of rugged wilderness, including one of Lesotho's only stands of indigenous forest with a number of rare undergrowth plants that are unique to this woodland habitat. The name "Ts'ehlanyane" is the local common name for the berg bamboo (*Thamnocalamus tessellatus*), from which the river and park take their name. It is fitting that the park should bear the name of this Drakensberg endemic plant, as it may be the most important refuge for this plant in the entire Maloti-Drakensberg mountain range.

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#### History[edit]

This proclaimed protected pristine area lies at the junction of the Ts'ehlanyane and the Holomo rivers. It owes its origin to the access road to the "Mamohale tunnel" (May 1991), which was the first adit drive for the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. This adit covers 22 km (14 mi) from the source at Katse Dam to the As River outfall near Clarens, Free State.

#### Terrain[edit]

This Lesotho northern park protects a high-altitude, 2,600-metre (8,500 ft) patch of rugged wilderness, including one of Lesotho's few stands of indigenous forest with a number of rare undergrowth plants that are unique to this woodland habitat. Here indigenous "ouhout" (*Leucosidea*) trees of significant size are preserved.

The park has an altitude ranging from 1,940 to 3,112 metres (6,365 to 10,210 ft) and is considered mostly sub-alpine. The diversity of habitat types is exceptionally wide and derived from the large altitudinal range that the park has.

#### Biota[edit]

Avifauna: Species of interest include the

bearded vulturealpine swiftlanner falcongground woodpeckergrey-winged francolinmalachite sunbirdwhite-necked ravenrock kestrel and black stork  
There are also the alpine endemics, such as the

Drakensberg siskinmountain pipitsentinel rock-thrush and Drakensberg rockjumper

Fauna: Indigenous mammals include

Sloggett's vleirat  
Cape clawless otter  
black-backed jackal  
rock dassie  
Smith's red rock hare  
porcupine  
caracal  
rhebok  
mountain reedbuck  
common eland (released November 2009)  
baboons and serval cat

Snakes include the berg adder.

Flora: On the banks of the rivers and streams are stands of berg bamboo which are of significant cultural significance to the Basotho people. Berg bamboo is the host plant for an endangered butterfly species, the bamboo sylph *Metisella syrinx*. The reserve also encompasses a reasonable proportion of very rare mountain "fynbos" that do not occur anywhere else in the world. Also recorded are in excess of 220 flowering plant species. Lesotho's national plant is the spiral aloe, among other varied and abundant alpine flora, including over 180 flowering species.

Bird species[edit]

Bird species found in the park include:[1]

Black-headed heron

Cattle egret

Hamerkop

Yellow-billed duck

African black duck

Bearded vulture

Black-winged kite

Steppe buzzard

Jackal buzzard

Lanner falcon

Rock kestrel

Grey-winged francolin

Helmeted guineafowl

Rock pigeon

Cape turtle dove

Laughing dove

Red-chested cuckoo

Diederik cuckoo

Spotted eagle owl

Black swift

Speckled mousebird

Pied barbet

Ground woodpecker

Long-billed lark

Red-capped lark

European swallow

Orange-breasted rockjumper

Spotted flycatcher

Fairy flycatcher

Cape wagtail

Rock martin  
Banded martin  
Black crow  
Pied crow  
White-necked raven  
Red-eyed bulbul  
Cape rock thrush  
Sentinel rock thrush  
Mountain chat  
Familiar chat  
Stonechat (subsp. oreobates)  
Orange-throated longclaw  
Fiscal shrike  
Pied starling  
Red-winged starling  
Malachite sunbird  
Cape white-eye  
House sparrow  
Cape sparrow  
Cape weaver  
Masked weaver  
Pin-tailed whydah  
Black-throated canary  
Cape canary  
Yellow canary  
Cape bunting  
Rock bunting

Wild flower and shrub species[edit]

Wild flowers and shrubs recorded at Ts'ehlanyane National Park on the Matsa-Mararo route via Lets'a-le-ts'o and the lower bridle path (4 × 4 track) that leads to Holomo Pass

(\* = exotic)

\* *Cannabis sativa*

\* *Persicaria lapathifolia*: [a] exotic, robust annual herb in damp areas

\* *Solanum* sp. (wild potato)

*Ajuga ophrydis* (bugle-plant)

*Alepiea amatymbica* [a] (Lesoko): large serrated (basal) leaves, tall herb. Tea made from leaves applied as cough and cold remedy

*Alepidia* cf. *woodii*: small herb with white, star-like flowers

*Anisodontea julii* subsp. *pannosa* (lefeta; mountain hibiscus; wildestokroos): shrub, 1–4 m (3 ft 3 in–13 ft 1 in), flowers shiny pink. On the Holomo Pass bridle path, often near streams in scrub forest.

*Argyrolobium tuberosum*

*Argyrolobium* sp.: yellow pea-flowers

*Asclepias fruticosa*

*Berkheya cirsiifolia*: thorny sub-shrub with white daisy-like flowers, damp Basalt slopes at approx. 2,200 m (7,200 ft)

*Cephalaria natalensis*

*Clematis brachiata*: common climber esp. on dead cheche trees next to the 4 × 4 track leading to the Holomo Pass bridle path

*Coccinia* sp. or *Zehneria* sp.: [a] climber in cheche forest, deeply lobed leaves, hairy. Small cucumber-like fruit of approx. 30 mm (1.2 in) in length (slightly bitter, probably poisonous)

*Conium* sp.: tall herb >1 m (39 in), slightly aromatic

*Cotyledon orbiculata*: on eroded basalt cliffs (south-east facing) next to the Ts'ehlanyane river

*Crassula* cf. *natalensis*: small succulent (200 mm (7.9 in)) on damp rocks next to the Lets'a-le-ts'o trail

*Crassula sarcocaulis*: on eroded basalt cliffs (south-east facing) next to the Ts'ehlanyane river

*Diascia* cf. *barberae*

*Dierama* cf. *cooperi*: white, with mauve and yellow flecks on inside of perianth. Next to 4 × 4 track directly above the conference centre

*Dichilus reflexus*

*Disa cooperi*: [a] light pink with long spur, fragrant, evident in the vicinity of the quarry

*Erica caffrorum*: large shrub or small tree

*Erica oatessi*: [a] shrub with pink, bottle-shaped flowers

*Eucomis autumnalis* subsp. *clavata*

*Euphorbia* cf. *natalensis*: herb

*Euryops evansii*

*Euryops* sp.: large shrub up to 2 m (6 ft 7 in), small fynbos-like leathery leaves, small yellow flowers

*Geranium* cf. *wakkerstroomianum*

*Geranium pulchrum*

other *Geranium* spp.

*Gladiolius crassifolius*

*Gladiolius dalenii*

*Gunnera perpensa* [a] (qobo; wild rhubarb; rivierpampoen): usually in large stands, marshy places, or sub-shade

*Habenaria epipactidea*: greenish flowers with long white spur, one example seen on the 4×4 track leading to the Holomo Pass bridal path

*Helichrysum cooperi*

*Helichrysum herbaceum*: [a] golden yellow everlasting with small overlapping leaves

*Helichrysum mundtii*

*Helichrysum splendidum*

*Jamesbritennia* sp.: ill-aromatic herb, or sub-shrub, on path, disturbed soil

*Lobelia* spp.

*Lotononis* sp.: [a] : greyish sub-shrub, blue pea-flowers

*Myssotis semiamplexicaulis*[a] (Forget-me-not): common on disturbed areas i.e. the path, pink – deep blue  
*Orchidaceae*: [a] small leaves similar to *Agapanthus*, *Disa thodei*?  
*Orchidaceae*: [a] yellow-green flowers with two wings, long spur, probably *Habenaria epipactidea*  
*Oxalis smithiana*: [a] leaves are deeply divided, lobes narrow. Pink flowers. Common on the lower Lets'a-le-ts'o trail  
*Passerina drakensbergensis* (berg gonna): large shrub in scrub  
*Pelargonium cf. ranunculophyllum*: [a] herb with small white flowers, tiny pink flecks on the inside of petals. Leaves with purplish brown mark. Common on the lower Lets'a-le-ts'o trail  
*Pentzia cooperi*  
*Phygelius capensis*: grassy slopes within cheche forest, damp and rocky moist slopes and on streambanks. Flowers curved.  
*Printzia cf. pyrifolia* : grassy slopes within cheche forest  
*Plectranthus grallatus*: [a] common in shade of cheche forest  
*Polygala cf. rhinostigma*: small perennial herb, pink flowers  
*Polygala cf. uncinata*: perennial herb, purple flowers  
*Polygala virgata*: common shrub next to 4×4 track leading to the Holomo Pass bridal path  
*Rumex cf. saggitatus*: climber on dead/burnt cheche en route to the Matsa-mararo falls from Lets'a-le-ts'o. Heart-shaped leaves, conspicuous fruit: papery 3-winged, pink-red en masse  
*Satyrion parviflorum*: small yellowish green flowers on long spike, petals drying brown soon after flowering. Basal leaves, heart-shaped, fairly large  
*Scabiosa cf. columbaria*  
*Schizoglossum artropurpureum* subsp. *artropurpureum*  
*Scilla natalensis* : on basalt cliffs south of the Ts'ehlanyane river  
*Selago cf. melliodora*: white inflorescence, honey scented, next to path near Matsa-mararo falls  
*Selago galpinii*  
*Senecio macrocephalus*  
*Senecio* sp.: common, herbaceous shrub with masses of yellow flowers. Large stands in damp areas or rocky places  
*Silene cf. burchelli*: [a] pink, near campsite at river deck  
*Stachys cf. aethiopica*  
*Thalictrum cf. rhyncocarpum*: [a] herb, forest floor near and on the lower Lets'a-le-ts'o path, leaves resemble maidenhair fern (*Adiantum cappilus-veneris*)  
*Thamnocalamus tessellatus* (liqaloe; berg bamboo; bergbamboes) damp slopes and near rivers/streams 3–4 m (9.8–13.1 ft) tall. Endangered species in South Africa  
Unknown species: [a] common on disturbed soil, small herb (150 mm), leaves are serrated and spatulate, of particular interest are the discoloured characteristic of the leaves: above green and below purple-pink  
*Vernonia hirsuta*  
*Wahlenbergia krebsii*

*Xerophyta viscosa*: on eroded basalt cliffs (south-east-facing) next to the Ts'ehlanyane river  
*Zaluzianskya cf. microsiphon*

*Zaluzianskya smitziae*: night-flowering species, common on the trail between Lets'a-le-ts'o and Matsa-mararo falls

Indigenous tree species in the Park[edit]

Indigenous trees as seen at the campsite, on the lower Lets'a-le-ts'o path en route to Matsa-Mararo falls and the lower bridle path (4x4 track) that leads to Holomo Pass

\**Rosa eglanteria* (rosehip): thorny tree, pink flowers followed by orange-red fruit, in scrub forest near river and cheche forest

*Buddleja loricata* (lelora; mountain sage; bergsaliehout) very similar to *B. salviifolia* but leaves are leathery, lanceolate, whilst *B. salviifolia* leaves are softer and oval/heart-shaped at base. *B. loricata* usually at higher altitudes than *B. salviifolia*, but their habitats do overlap (1,800–2,450 m (5,910–8,040 ft)). Inflorescences of *B. loricata*, smaller, only white, sweetly scented. *B. loricata* common in the vicinity of Lets'a-le-ts'o.

*Buddleja salviifolia* (lelothoane; quilted sage; saliehout) Very similar to *B. loricata* but leaves and inflorescence differ: see *B. loricata* (supra). Flowers: fragrant, white to mauve in spring. *Diospyros austroafricana* subsp. *africana* (liperekisi-tsa-makhoaba, senokonoko; firesticks star-apple; kritikom; vuurmaakbossie; jakkalsbessie) usually a shrub, sometimes small tree, grey appearance. Flowers: pink to red, highly fragrant during springtime. Fruit conspicuous: grey-green, red to black when ripe up to 20 mm (0.79 in) in diameter.

*Heteromorpha trifoliata* (monkhoane; parsley tree; pietersieliebos) small tree with conspicuous bark peeling off in papery flakes, on steep slopes and cliffs where protection from veld fires esp. vicinity of the Matsa-mararo falls. Flowers and seeds resemble parsley. *Leucosidea sericea* (cheche; oldwood: ouhout), according to an entomological study made on the cheche of the Golden Gate area (EFS), these trees are the habitat of 117 species of beetles

*Myrsine africana* (semapo; Cape myrtle; mirting) evergreen shrub with very small leaves, toothed in upper half, rarely a tree

*Rhamnus prinoides* (mofifi; dogwood; blinkblaar) small tree, often in shade of cheche forest. Glossy-green leaves, small red-black berries

*Rhus divaricata* (kolitsane; rusty-leaved current; roesblaartaaibos) shrub or small tree with trifoliate leaves, slightly leathery, dark olive green above, grey-green-rusty-brown hairs beneath, large numbers of small yellow to brown berries 3 mm (0.12 in) in diameter.

Other tree species[edit]

Other trees expected to occur in the area include:

*Bowkeria verticillata* (isiduli; umbaba; southern shell-flower)

*Euclea crispa* (mohlakola; blue guarri)

*Halleria lucida* (lebeta; tree fuschia; notsung)

*Passerina montana* (lekhapu; mountain gonna)

*Rhus dentata* (lebelebele; nana-berry)

*Rhus pyroides* (kolitsane; common taaibos)

Fern species[edit]

Ferns and fern allies

Underneath shade of cheche forest, an abundance of ferns occur: *Polystichum* spp. and *Cheilanthes quadripinnata*. *Pteris cretica* in damp places often near boulders. In exposed areas on rocky mountain slopes, typical poikylhydrous species evident like the resurrection fern and *Cheilanthes eckloniana*. *Selaginella* spp. expected on exposed rock surfaces.

#### Location[edit]

The park is located deep in the northern range of the Maloti Mountains at the foot of the Holomo Pass and only about 45 minutes on tarred road from the South African border post of Caledonspoort, 15 minutes drive from the popular Free State town of Clarens and about 4 hours from O. R. Tambo International Airport).

#### Activities[edit]

Maliba Lodge accommodation is located within the park

Numerous hiking and bridle paths have already been established with the park, one of which is a spectacular 39 km trail linking the Ts'ehlanyane National Park with the Bokong Nature Reserve.

Photographic opportunities. Not only is the scenery spectacular, but the fauna and flora offer a boundless variety of photographic subjects.

Basuto pony rides offer an ideal way to explore nature from a higher vantage point.

Swimming in the pristine streams and rock pools

Small to medium-sized game viewing with about 24 species present

Massage treatments at Maliba Lodge Spa

Restaurant meals and viewing/photography deck at Maliba Lodge

#### How to get there[edit]

A 32-kilometre (20 mi) tarred access road leaves the main A1 route 8 km (5.0 mi) south of Butha-Buthe. The route passes through the village of Khabo and parallels the Hlotse river along the Holomo valley until it reaches the park entrance gate.

#### Notes[edit]