

The Sehlabathebe National Park is located in the Maloti Mountains in Qacha's Nek District, Lesotho, and is part of the larger Maloti-Drakensberg World Heritage Site. Home to both striking biological diversity as well as important cultural heritage, the park was first established on May 8, 1969.[2] The landscape is dominated by grassland of various types. The larger ecosystem as a whole performs invaluable functions including providing freshwater to Lesotho, South Africa and Namibia.[3]

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Location[edit]

Situated in the south-east corner of Lesotho at an average elevation of some 2,400 metres above sea level.[4]

Access[edit]

Access from the Bushman's Nek Pass, near Underberg, KwaZulu-Natal. Khotso Horse Trails are currently the only tour operator providing this service on horseback, though the pass is accessible to all on foot.

A road accessible with 4x4 vehicles lead to the park from the town Thaba-Tseka 122 km to the north passing the Matabeng mountain pass. The approximate travel time is 12 hours. Another road accessible with 4x4 vehicles lead to the park from the west and passes the Ramatselitso border crossing (36 km / 4 hours) with South Africa as well as the Qachas Nek border crossing (106 km / 12 hours).[5]

Accommodation[edit]

Accommodation is available in the Heritage Lodge that was built in 2013. Camping nearby the old Jonathan Lodge is also possible.[6] Accommodation is available near the park at a number of locations in the nearby settlements of Sehlabathebe, and Mavuka.

Geography[edit]

The park includes a wide range of features including cliffs, waterfalls, pools, rock dwellings and rock art, and a unique ecosystem of plants, animals, and birds.[7] It offers a significant habitat to a range of unique Afro-Alpine and Sub-Alpine plants, mammals, avifauna, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. It has spectacular scenery with unique rock formations. Most of the Park is taken up by a designated wilderness area and although small by international standards, it retains its natural character and is uninhabited.[8]

The Park is noted for its outstanding biodiversity. Some of the endemic species are endangered, including three vertebrate species:[8]

the Maluti redbfin, *Pseudobarbus quathlambae*, a critically endangered species of fish which is endemic to the park

the cape vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*)

the bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*)

The Sehlabathebe water lily is an endangered aquatic plant.[9]

The Tsoelikanyane waterfall is the biggest waterfall in the park.[10]

This site hosts 23 percent of the plant species in the whole of Maluti Drakensberg area. The park has not only a unique floral presence in the park, but also a record number[clarification needed] of 65 rock art sites which have been identified, as well as other forms of previous habitation of the site.[citation needed]

World Heritage status[edit]

This site was added to the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List on October 8, 2008 in the Mixed (Cultural + Natural) category.[3] This park will be included into the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation Area, Peace Park. Sehlabathebe is currently run under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture.

Notes[edit]

^ "Sehlabathebe National Park". [protectedplanet.net](#).

^ Ramutsindela, M. (2007) p 68

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a b UNESCO World Heritage Centre. "Sehlabathebe National Park - UNESCO World Heritage Centre". [unesco.org](#). Retrieved 19 March 2015.

^ "GeoNames - Sehlabathebe National Park".

^ "Welcome to Tracks4Africa". [tracks4africa.co.za](#). Retrieved 19 March 2015.

^ "Sehlabathebe Accommodation - 4x4 Community Forum". [4x4community.co.za](#). Retrieved 19 March 2015.

^ "Drakensberg Adventures Sehlabathebe Tour". [sanilodge.co.za](#). Retrieved 19 March 2015.

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a b UNESCO World Heritage Centre. "Maloti-Drakensberg Park". [unesco.org](#). Retrieved 19 March 2015.

^ Wickison, Sue. "Aponogeton ranunculiflorus". [suewickison.com](#). Retrieved 6 March 2015.

^ stephen. "Malealea Tours in Lesotho - Sehlabathebe - Jonathan's Lodge". [malealeatours.com](#). Retrieved 19 March 2015.

Sehlabathebe National Park - UNESCO World Heritage Centre Retrieved 2009-03-02.

Ramutsindela, M. (2007), Transfrontier Conservation in Africa: At the Confluence of Capital, Politics, and Nature, CABI. ISBN 1-84593-221-8

External links[edit]

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/lesotho/eastern-lesotho/sehlabathebe-national-park#ixzz2pPZKta7y>

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National Parks of Lesotho

Sehlabathebe Ts'ehlanyane