

Lesotho



About the Country

Lesotho is a tiny country nestled in the middle of South Africa. Founded as a kingdom in the 1820s, Lesotho was a British protectorate for almost 100 years (1868-1966) before regaining independence in 1966. Today, the country is one of the world's smallest constitutional monarchies.

Lesotho is known for its beautiful mountains, horseback riding trails, fishing, and hiking. The country's economy is based primarily on subsistence agriculture, tourism and notably, textile production. Lesotho exports more garments to the US than any other sub-Saharan nation; American companies like the Gap, Levi-Strauss and Wal-Mart have factories there.

Overall, Lesotho is very underdeveloped; it has little industrial production and very few natural resources. Many people of Lesotho (the Basotho) rely on employment in South Africa to support their families.

English and Sesotho are Lesotho's official languages but Xhosa and Zulu are also spoken.

Education

In general, public schools in Africa charge tuition at all levels of schooling but since 2000, primary school education in Lesotho has been free and as a result, enrollment has increased. Unfortunately, students and parents face many issues paying tuition at the high school level. Only about a third of high school-age children attend school due to lack of funding and space.

The African Library Project

Lesotho is the home of the first African Library Project in Malealea Valley, begun in 2005. Since then, ALP has partnered with the U.S. Peace Corps, the Ministry of Education, and local citizens to start/improve more than 391 libraries; this includes libraries in schools, prisons and hospitals.

In 2009, Lesotho hosted the 2nd ALP African Partners Summit. Among other activities, the Summit featured library tours featuring Lesotho's innovative classroom libraries in primary schools.

Quick Facts

- Lesotho measures about 11k square miles (roughly the size of Maryland) and has a population of 2 million.
- Lesotho has one of Sub-Saharan Africa's highest literacy rates: 79.4%. (Males: 70.1%; Females: 88.3%)
- The UN estimates that 57% of the population lives below the international poverty line of US \$1.25 a day.
- Life expectancy in Lesotho is about 53 years.
- It's estimated that about 23% of adults in Lesotho are living with HIV/AIDS- the 2nd highest prevalence in the world.

