

## What to do in Maluti-a-Phofung

### PHUTHADITJHABA

#### Qwa-Qwa Nature Park

The park is about 60 km from Harrismith on the Golden Gate Road (R712) and forms an integral part of the Highlands Treasure Route.



Impressive sandstone formations, ablaze with the last red of the setting sun, or shrouded in a white winter blanket, are just two of the many moods of this beautiful mountain Park in the Drakensberg Mountains. The vleis are filled with birdlife, the kloofs luxuriously vegetated and the caves adorned with mystical Bushman drawings. The flora is also full of surprises, with species such as Ouhout, White Stinkwood, Karee, Kiepersol, wild Olive and Yellowwood.

The abundance of veld flowers in Spring and Cosmos in Autumn makes a visit more than worthwhile. Indigenous lilies, like Watsonia, Gladioli, Arums, Scilla and many more adorn the rolling, grassy plains, while Eland, Zebra, black Wildebeest, Blesbuck, red Hartebeest and Springbok go their way undisturbed. This park of 22 000 ha not only has a diversity of fauna, but also offers the discerning bird-watcher a rich variety of species, including the bearded and Cape Vulture, black and martial Eagle, Secretary Bird and Ostrich, as well as various aquatic species.

The Park is mainly a hiker's world and the two-day Spelonken Hiking Trail of 27 km, with two restored sandstone farm houses serving as overnight spots, will be an unforgettable experience for the hiker. During winter months provision is made for the 4x4 enthusiast, with a 40 km route and overnight facilities. The well known Basotho Cultural Village, which offers the visitor an unique experience of South Sotho culture and history, is also situated in the Park. Trophy hunting in the park is extremely popular and professional hunters participate in this each year. Visitors can enjoy any of the day trips to nearby places like Sterkfontein Dam, Clarens, Golden Gate, Bethlehem and Qwaqwa, where many art and industrial products are found.

#### The Sentinel Hiking Trail



Where the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho meets QwaQwa and the Royal Natal National Park, you will find the Sentinel Hiking Trail, your password to breathtaking scenery and awesome adventure in the Drakensberg Mountains. Hikers can be sure of spectacular sights, such as Devil's Tooth, the Maluti mountains, Drakensberg Amphitheatre, Mount-aux-Sources, Sentinel, Broom Hill and the Mahai Waterfall. Only the sharper eyed will take note of the shy *Proteanubigena*. This little pink flower can be found only on the slopes of the Sentinel.

### **Charles Mopeli Stadium**



The Charles Mopeli Football Stadium, home to the Free State Stars (formerly QwaQwa Stars) with a capacity of 50,000 is located between Harrismith and Clarens. The stadium is used primarily for sports and hosts athletics meetings as well as football for Free State Stars.

### **FikaPatso Mountain Resort**

The famous Sentinel and Amphi theatre, the Devil's Tooth and the Three Witches contribute to the rugged splendour of the Drakensberg. The majestic Maluti Mountains, with its maluti-coloured sandstone cliffs and the cave dwellings with its Bushman paintings, are endlessly fascinating. Accommodation comprises of two-bedroomed, self-catering chalets. Restaurant facilities are also available. Walking and hiking are the main attractions and the choice of route is endless. Climbing the chain ladder on the famous Sentinel trail can be very exciting and the breathtaking views from the top of the amphitheatre makes the experience an unforgettable one.

### **Wetsi Caves, Monontsha**

The Maluti Cave Trail has been laid out with the intention of introducing a new marked hiking trail experience to an area that almost exclusively consists of wilderness trails. Well constructed and appointed accommodation has been provided at three locations and this provides the hiker with the luxury of reaching the high berg without having to use a tent.



The Wetsi cave must rank as one of the largest in the Free State. Many of the caves have San rock art in them. Several of the caves are used by local people for religious purposes.

## **HARRISMITH**

### **Sterkfontein Dam Nature Reserve**

The Sterkfontein Dam Nature Reserve is located in the foothills of the Drakensberg and has some of the most beautiful scenery in South Africa. The extended nature conservation area around the dam of Sterkfontein is characterised by rugged mountains, endless expanse and a lot of water. Besides long walks and hikes, it offers watersport and fishing facilities in the dam.

The Sterkfontein Dam is situated in the very upper reaches of the Vaal Dam catchment on the Nuwejaarspruit, a few kilometers from the edge of the Drakensberg Escarpment. The dam receives its water via the Tugela-Vaal Project which is a pumped-storage scheme involving the net transfer of up to 630 million m<sup>3</sup> of water from KwaZulu-Natal.



Oribi, reedbuck, mountain reedbuck, grey rhebuck, the bald ibis, the blue and white-bellied korhaan, the buffstreaked chat, the ground woodpecker and the sentinel are found in this reserve covering 18 000 ha. Bearded and Cape vultures as well as black and martial eagles and secretary bird are also found. Yellowwood, wild peach, koko tree, silky bark, black bark

and bush guarri flourish in the sheltered kloofs. Wild grape has twined into the tree tops where they form a dense leafy canopy. Fungi and lichen nestle against living and rotten tree trunks. The mountain slopes are decorated with wild myrtle, redwood, ouhout, hush guarri, high veld protea, silver sugarbush and the scarce tree fern. The prevailing winds at Sterkfontein Dam make it ideal for sailing. The reserve is also a popular spot for angling, game viewing, biking and hiking. A two-day hiking trail has been established.

The weather is extremely variable and visitors should always be prepared for unexpected cold spells. Summers are mild and winters cold, with snow on the mountain peaks. The annual rainfall varies from 750-1400 mm. Accommodation and facilities offered include 17 fully equipped, self-catering chalets and 360 camping sites. There are also 63 caravan sites available with modern ablution and laundry facilities and power points. Slip-ways and boathouses are available for boating enthusiasts.

The Sterkfontein Dam is situated outside Harrismith in the eastern Free State. Access is from the R74 on the Oliviershoek Pass from KwaZulu-Natal and Harrismith. From the Bloemfontein and Gauteng (via N1) areas it can be reached from the N5 or the N3 over Villiers and is about a four hour drive from both areas. The contact number is tel.+27 (0)58 622-3520 / 1093 / 3892.

### **Platberg**

One of the most famous landmarks in the Eastern Free State is the 9 km long, 2 377 metre high Platberg.



The Platberg Game reserve is a 1400 ha wildlife area adjoining the Harrismith Botanical Garden. In the Platberg Game Reserve you will find various antelope species. 4x4 trails, mountain bike trails and hiking trails. Even overnight in the nature reserve is possible.

### **Llandaff Oratory**

The Llandaff Oratory, at Van Reenen, was built to honour Llandaff Matthew, a man who laid down his own life to help save others during a coalmine disaster. The petite little oratory can only seat eight people. It has been declared a National Monument.

### **Retief's Stone**

Kerkenberg marks the spot where the Voortrekkers camped and waited while their leader, Piet Retief, conducted negotiations with the Zulu king, Dingane. On Piet Retief's birthday his daughter Deborah painted his name and date of birth on a stone, which is now known as Retief's Stone, and can still be seen. She was still under the impression that the negotiations were going well. An authentic replica of the words that Deborah painted on the rock can be seen at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria where it has been immortalised in a frieze that depicts this incident.

## **Kestell**

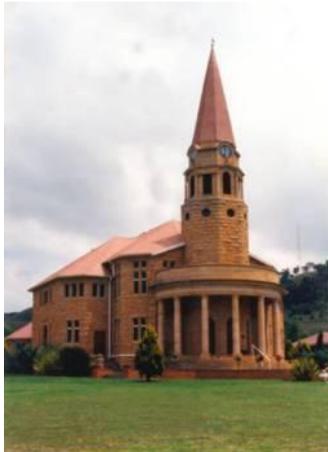
Some of the most spectacular scenery in the country (the Drakensberg & Malutis) can be seen here. Other attractions include;

## **Groenkop Battlefield**

The Groenkop Battlefield Site, several km north of the town, was the site of a Christmas Day surprise attack on the British by General Christiaan de Wet. Boer and British Monuments have been erected at the battle site.

## **Dutch Reformed Church**

The Dutch Reformed Church is a lovely sandstone building, complete with spire and pillared portico. It is the second largest sandstone church in the Free State and can seat 1 000 people.



Gerhard Moerdyk, the architect of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, designed this church.

## **Historic Oak Tree**

An oak tree planted in 1837 by the Voortrekker leader, Piet Retief, when he passed this way, later became known as the tree of "samekoms" (gathering) because people from the district

gathered here for church services before the establishment of the town and the building of the church. The huge old oak tree still stands and can be found at the foot of a hill, near an impressive sandstone mansion.

### **Retief Museum**

The Retief Museum, located in the Retief Book Shop, houses Retief and Voortrekker memorabilia, an interesting collection of German medicine bottles and medicines often found in Boer women's medicine chests.

### **Sandstone Route**

Follow the Sandstone Route to view the town's 30 sandstone buildings.

### **Voortrekker Grave**

The grave of the Voortrekker leader, Paul Maré, lies east of the town, just off the Bethlehem Road.

### **Insect and fossil collection**

This interesting privately owned collection of fossils and insects belonged to Dr Astrid Jenkielson, an entomologist and resident of the town. The collection can only be viewed by prior appointment.

### **San Rock Art and Archaeological Sites**

There are several noteworthy archaeological sites at Lemoenhoek, as well as several San rock art sites at Rooikrans.