AFRIQUE UNIE · TRAVEL NOTEBOOK

Lesotho in 10 days: a day-by-day itinerary

Lying entirely above 1,000 metres, Lesotho is a mountain kingdom best explored slowly, on spectacular roads. This ten-day trip links the key sites of Basotho history around Maseru, the Maletsunyane Falls, the Katse Dam and the top of the Sani Pass, on the edge of the Drakensberg. The stages are short in distance but long in driving time, so do not underestimate them. Here is the detailed itinerary, with advice on getting around safely.

Day by day

Days 1-2 · Maseru and the Thaba Bosiu stronghold (night : Maseru)
Moshoeshoe I International Airport lies about twenty kilometres south-east of Maseru. On the first day, settle into the capital and look out for the building shaped like a Basotho hat, the mokorotlo, which houses a craft shop selling blankets, basketry and woven hats. The next day, head to Thaba Bosiu, about 25 kilometres east. This sandstone plateau, at 1,804 metres, was the natural fortress of King Moshoeshoe I, founder of the Basotho nation, who withstood several sieges there in the nineteenth century. Climb to the top with a local guide to see the ruins and royal graves, then visit the cultural village at the foot of the hill. Opposite, Qiloane hill is said to have inspired the shape of the national hat.

Day 3 · Morija, cradle of Basotho writing (night : Morija)
Morija lies 35 kilometres south of Maseru, about three quarters of an hour by road. French Protestant missionaries founded the country's first mission here in 1833, and the village has remained a centre of education and publishing in Sesotho. The Morija Museum and Archives trace the kingdom's history, from geology to the first written texts, and hold dinosaur fossils. With a guide, a short hike leads to dinosaur footprints on nearby rocks. Then stroll around the old stone church and mission buildings under the tall trees. Here as elsewhere, be back before dark: travelling after sunset is not advised.

Days 4-5 · Semonkong and the Maletsunyane Falls (night : Semonkong)
Allow about three hours' drive from Morija to Semonkong, via Roma and then a mountain road with superb views. Semonkong, the place of smoke, owes its name to the spray of the Maletsunyane Falls, which plunge about 192 metres in a single drop into a basalt gorge. The viewpoint is about an hour's walk from the village. The next day, hike down to the bottom of the gorge with a guide, or ride a Basotho pony to nearby villages. The falls are most impressive after the summer rains; in winter, they can partly freeze. Leave nothing visible in a car parked at isolated viewpoints.

Day 6 · Into the highlands to the Katse Dam (night : Katse)
This is a long day: allow seven hours or more to reach Katse, dropping back to the lowlands and then crossing the highland passes, some above 3,000 metres. Leave at dawn, fill up before leaving the lowlands and check the weather, as snow or fog can close some passes. The Katse Dam, completed in 1996, is a huge double-curvature concrete arch holding back a winding lake in the heart of the mountains. It is part of a vast scheme that supplies water to the Johannesburg region. If you arrive in time, visit the nearby botanical garden, created to rescue plants from the flooded valley.

Day 7 · From Katse to Mokhotlong via the north (night : Mokhotlong)
Another big driving day: reach Mokhotlong through the north of the country, via Butha-Buthe and the far northern passes, on a paved but very mountainous road. Allow seven to eight hours with stops. The scenery changes constantly: villages of round huts, shepherds wrapped in blankets, flocks of sheep and angora goats, and peaks often snow-capped in winter. You will pass close to the country's only ski resort, usually open from June to August. Mokhotlong, the place of the bald ibis, is a remote highland town, long linked to the outside world by pony caravans over the Sani Pass. Arrive before dark and fill up in town.

Day 8 · The Sani Pass, on the edge of the Drakensberg (night : Mokhotlong)
About an hour and a half's drive separates Mokhotlong from the top of the Sani Pass, at 2,876 metres, where the Lesotho border post stands. From the edge of the escarpment, the view drops down the hairpin bends of the track descending to South Africa, more than 1,300 metres below, and across the cliffs of the Drakensberg. Thabana Ntlenyana, the highest point in southern Africa at 3,482 metres, is not far away: climbing it takes a long day with a guide. On the South African side, the pass is only open to 4x4 vehicles and means crossing the border, so this route turns back at the top. Return to Mokhotlong for the night.

Days 9-10 · Back to Maseru and departure (night : Maseru)
On day 9, take the northern road back via Butha-Buthe to Maseru: allow the whole day, seven to eight hours with breaks. If time allows, detour to Teyateyaneng, about forty kilometres north of the capital, known for its workshops weaving tapestries from angora wool and mohair. Reach Maseru before nightfall. On the last day, keep the morning for a market or a final Basotho blanket, then head to the airport, about half an hour from the centre. If your flight leaves early, it is best to sleep near the airport or in Maseru and avoid any driving at night.

Getting around

A hire car with high ground clearance is essential, and a 4x4 is recommended for the highlands. Many travellers rent in South Africa: check that the contract allows entry into Lesotho. The main roads are paved but winding, with animals on the road and sometimes reckless drivers: never drive at night, keep doors locked and windows closed, and do not pick up hitchhikers. The French authorities advise against local buses and taxis. Fuel stations are rare in the mountains, so fill up at every opportunity.

When to go

The best time is from October to April, during the southern summer: green landscapes, full waterfalls and mild days. From November to February, late-afternoon thunderstorms are violent and lightning kills people every year, so hike in the morning. From June to August, winter draws skiers, but it is very cold and snow often blocks mountain roads, sometimes until October, and the Sani Pass can close.

Practical information

Lesotho

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/lesotho/
Yellow fever	Certificate not required
Malaria	none
Currency	Lesotho loti (LSL)
Languages	Sesotho, English
Plugs	type M · dialling code +266 · UTC+2
Emergencies	police 123 ou 112 · ambulance 121 ou 124 ou 112 · fire 122 ou 112

Departure checklist

Documents

☐ Passport valid for at least six months after your return, with blank pages
☐ Visa or e-visa (printed if required)
☐ International vaccination certificate (yellow fever if required)
☐ Travel insurance certificate and assistance number
☐ Paper and digital copies of your passport and bookings
☐ Tickets, bookings and addresses saved offline
☐ International driving permit if you are hiring a vehicle

Health

☐ Travel consultation done and vaccinations up to date
☐ Malaria tablets if your doctor recommends them
☐ First-aid kit: plasters, antiseptic, anti-diarrhoea tablets, rehydration salts
☐ Mosquito repellent suitable for the tropics
☐ Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
☐ Personal medication and prescriptions

Money and connectivity

☐ Bank told, Visa or Mastercard (and a backup card)
☐ Cash in euros or dollars, recent notes in good condition
☐ eSIM or local SIM card sorted
☐ Plug adapter for the country
☐ Power bank and cables
☐ Offline maps downloaded
☐ Afrique Unie app installed

In the bag

☐ Light clothes that cover up (sun, mosquitoes, places of worship)
☐ A fleece for evenings, dawn safaris and altitude
☐ Walking shoes and sandals
☐ Head torch
☐ Water bottle (ideally with a filter)
☐ Small daypack and waterproof pouches
☐ Luggage padlock

Before you close the door

☐ Your government's travel advice reread
☐ Trip registered with your consular service (if it offers this)
☐ Itinerary and contacts left with someone close
☐ Online check-in done and baggage allowance checked

Notebook made from visiterafriqueunie.com/en/itineraries/lesotho-in-10-days/ · information checked in November 2026 against official sources. Entry, health and safety rules change: check them again before you leave (your country's official advice, the embassy of the country you visit).