

**TRIED & TESTED**



## HOTEL CHECK LESOTHO

# Maliba Mountain Lodge

**BACKGROUND:** Open since September 2008, Maliba Mountain Lodge is the first five-star lodge in Lesotho. It owes its origins to the access road to the Hlotse tunnel, as part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. Local Basotho people were used in the construction of the lodge and it now employs 33 staff members.

**WHAT'S IT LIKE?** A great venue for a luxurious African mountain experience. The stone and thatch main lodge is large and magnificently furnished. It overlooks all that makes the area a pristine mountain retreat. Spectacular water features greet guests and the reception area is surrounded by three open fireplaces. The main lodge incorporates a bar, wine cellar and restaurant, and the large open viewing deck peers out over the breathtaking highland valley.

**LOCATION:** Maliba Lodge is situated in Northern Lesotho, approximately one hour's drive south of the popular South African Free State town of Clarens. It is 365 kilometres from Johannesburg, 491 kilometres from Durban (via Bethlehem), 1324 kilometres from Cape Town and 160 kilometres from Maseru, the capital of Lesotho. If travelling from South Africa, you will need a valid passport, valid for a minimum of six months. There are various border posts and the Ts'ehlanyane Park is reached by a good 32 kilometre access road. The route passes through the village of Khabo's and parallels the Hlotse River along a very picturesque valley, until it reaches the park entrance.

Unless you have international roaming, there is no South African mobile network available in Lesotho and no cell coverage at all at the lodge. Walking shoes and warm clothes are recommended, particularly in the winter months.

**ROOM FACILITIES:** Guests are accommodated in one of six private and luxurious Basotho-style chalets. Each chalet is tastefully decorated in natural earthy tones. Each unit has fully under-floor heating, heated bed blankets, heated towel rails and heated wall panels, which provides for a comfortable environment – particularly in winter. There is an open fireplace, large bed, sunken bath with views into the mountains, luxury lounge area, and mood lighting, which completes the splendid accommodation. Doors open up to a private deck that cantilevers out over the forest. A lot of plantation timber and natural organic materials were used in construction and the fixtures, fittings and interior design are of the highest standard.

**RESTAURANTS AND BARS:** Three meals a day are included in the tariff. They are prepared with fresh ingredients by the staff. The meals were one of the highlights of our stay and the service was enthusiastic. My only criticism would be the obvious lack of experience, but the staff more than make up for that with enthusiasm and a desire to be of service and meet every need. An open fireplace warms the restaurant, where the meals are served. As an alternative, guests

can request meals on the private chalet decks for intimate and special occasions. A full bar service with an extensive wine list is available and in-room service comprises a coffee bar and light snacks.

**RECREATIONAL FACILITIES:** Activities offer guests a unique opportunity to explore the beauty of the tranquil natural surroundings. There are three hiking trails, horse riding, swimming in natural springs, bird-watching, rock-climbing, village and cultural tours and snow activities, which are organised through the lodge.

**VERDICT:** Awe-inspiring ! Maliba Lodge is true luxury and offers a unique African mountain experience. The pride in every detail by the management and staff is remarkable and we were made to feel incredibly welcome. It is a world-class lodge and the directors of Maliba have clearly taken a vested interest in the local Basotho people, providing employment and upliftment for a section of the local community.

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## FACTFILE

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