Activities

- Game viewing drives (self driven) – it is not only the game that makes this setting a memorable trip in this part of the world; one gets to enjoy the beautiful rock formations, birds, grassland and the stunning scenery that forms part of the Drakensberg and Maluti mountains.
- Museum tours – visitors get to feel the Basotho experience by tasting traditional cuisine and getting to know equipments and weapons that were used then.
- Cultural route - one gets afforded an opportunity to be taken through the Basotho culture and the way of living in the 18th century.
- Herbal trail - visitors are lead through this trail in order to be educated about the medicines that were used (and still are) by the African Traditional Healers.
- Visit the home of the first, second or third wife of the chief, and experience the sight of the tribe’s women grinding maize and sifting beer.
- Stop by at the art gallery and catch a glimpse of local artists' work. Also features a permanent photographic exhibition that details the building process of the village.

South African
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Your Natural Heritage
Basotho Cultural Village

The Basotho Cultural Village is a cultural jewel of the Free State. Located next to the R712 from Qwa Qwa enroute to Golden Gate Highlands National Park, it forms part of the scenic highlands route. It is situated in the heart of the three major metropolises and is only 55 km from Harrismith and the N3. It is sited along the Maluti Drakensburg Route only 350 km from Pietermaritzburg, 330 km from Bloemfontein and 320 km from Johannesburg. The picturesque little town of Clarens is a mere 42 km away.

Rest Camp

Shake off the hustle and bustle and unwind at a luxurious spot that transports guests back into time. The Basotho Cultural Village of the Free State’s Golden Gate Highlands National Park mirrors an 18th century Basotho village where visitors can relax and unwind while reveling in the amazing architecture, settings and decorations that echo the cultural lifestyle of the tribe.

The rest camp offers comfortable self-catering accommodation and provides stunning views of the natural surroundings. What’s more, guests can enjoy safe game viewing from the camp, saving them the trouble of having to go out on an actual game searching journey.

Accommodation

Guests can choose between 2- and 4-sleeper rondawels:

**Rondawe (2-sleeper)**
- 1 bedroom with double bed
- W/c (flushing toilet) and shower
- Communal braai lapa
- Kitchen
- Veranda with Weber braai

**Rondawe (4-sleeper)**
- 1 bedroom with double bed
- 2 bathrooms, each with w/c and shower
- 2 bunk beds
- Communal braai lapa
- Kitchen
- Veranda with Weber braai

Communal braai facilities are shared amongst families in the camp, but each chalet also has a private weber braai.

Curio Shop

The nearby curio shop offers traditional clay pots, basketware and other handmade items. Guests can feast their eyes on the beautifully created sculptures, paintings, beadwork and jewellery, all traditionally created by the surrounding communities. All materials used in the creation of these items are from the area, which adds to the rich history and experiences of the Basotho people. When buying an item, guests don’t just take home a clay pot, they take home a piece of history itself. The curio shop helps to alleviate the communities from poverty and also serves as a gallery for artists in the area.

What to See...

The surroundings take you back from the pathway of previous times to the modern days.

Visitors can take part in a tour, which officially commences with a visit to the chief, whose permission must be gained first. The chief will offer a sip of Sotho beer as a token hospitality, and allow the guest to consult his Ngaka (bone thrower) for some fortune telling. The interesting utensils and colourful decorations of the tribe are viewed and discussed. Visitors are also allowed to take part in a traditional game of maraba-raba and view the dwellings of the first and second wives, where they can enjoy some motoho and dipabi.

Viewing the people of the tribe going about their everyday duties, in traditional dress, is both fun and educational as this tour depicts the lifestyle, architecture and hospitality of the Basotho.
Introduction to Golden Gate Highlands National Park

Tucked away in the North-eastern Free State’s Maluti mountains lies Golden Gate Highlands National Park. The park’s name originates from the brilliant shades of golden sun cast on the park’s sandstone cliffs, especially the imposing Brandwag rock, keeping watch over the main rest camp. Vast valleys lay stretched out as far as the eye allows, sketching a perfect background for the environment’s wildlife. A superb collection of fauna can be seen roaming around, including black wildebeest, eland, Burchell’s zebra and oribi. Lilies, watsonias and red-hot pokers are speckled over the grasslands, while exciting birdlife (bearded vulture, bald ibis and more) soar high above the interesting assortment of imposing sandstone cliffs, all bent on decorating this piece of paradise to near perfection.

Summertime sees the park designed with rainbow-tinted colours, as all plants and flowers are in full bloom. A winter wonderland can be found during the colder months, with the occasional snowfall transforming the park into an exquisite beauty of nature. Golden Gate offers a myriad of activity options, no matter what the season. Undoubtedly one of the more exciting choices would be a hiking trail that takes the participant sightseeing around the splendid park that incorporates both the Maluti and Drakensberg mountains in one environment.

There are a wide variety of hiking trails in the Golden Gate area to choose from, depending on the fitness and age-groups of the hikers:

Ribbok Hiking Trail

This two-day, one-night trail can take a maximum of 18 people per group to the very top of Brandwag Buttress. Advanced booking is essential and hikers must provide all their own necessities.

Please inquire at the reservations office. The trail starts off with a steep introduction as it ascends up Brandwag. The sandstone cliff formations sighted along the way are definitely some of the most beautiful found in the Free State. Leaving the views of Glen Reenen and other accommodation facilities behind, the trail follows Boskloof. A scenic little stream complements the route. Trailists spend the night at Ribbok Hut, which comes complete with bunk beds, a kitchen area, outside braai area and an ablution block. The 2nd day kicks off with an early start, as it can take up to 8 hours to complete. A stroll along the Ribbokspruit is a great way to start the day. The stopover at the top (2800m above sea level) is greeted with a far off view of Lesotho. The descent goes past a rocky ridge that makes up the watershed between the Buffelspruit (the stream that provides water to Glen Reenen and Golden Gate Hotel) and the stream which flows into the little Caledon River further to the West. Encountering high winds while hiking in these parts is not at all uncommon, which adds to the exhilaration of the experience. Numerous hills, peaks and other natural features are passed on the Ribbok hiking trail such as Brandwag buttress, Echo Ravine, Wodehouse Peak, Mushroom Rock and Boskloof.

One can not help but feel success once the Van Reenen campsite comes into view, knowing that you have just conquered one of the most popular (and most beautifully crafted) hiking trails of the Free State.
Wodehouse Peak Trail

The Wodehouse Peak Trail really takes it out of one, as it lasts for 4 hours and takes you near Highlands Mountain Retreat cabins, which are situated 2760m above sea level. Wodehouse peak was named after Sir Percy Wodehouse, the governor of the Cape in the 1840s, who was responsible for the erection of beacons on the Rooiberge to create a border system. The first beacon was erected on Wodehouse hill.

Echo Ravine Trail

A vast chamber eroded and hollowed out over the years by the weathering effects of wind and water on sandstone. Today it forms a natural echo chamber which reverberates with any sounds made, giving the spot its name. The Echo Ravine self-guided walk takes you to this magnificent sight, in about an hour.

Mushroom Rock Trail

Another simple rock formation that was beautified by means of erosion. Mushroom Rock, situated near Glen Reenen rest camp, stands tall and seems to keep guard over the little camping site. Its smooth pinnacles are visible from afar, giving it the impression of 2 or more mushroom-shaped roofs. The Mushroom Rock hiking trail lasts about half an hour.

Boskloof Trail

One of the more easier trails and one which is not too strenuous. The name translates to “Bush Valley”, and trail is about an hour’s walk.

Brandwag Buttress Trail

A hike that doesn’t reach the top of the buttress, but still lets the trailists see the area’s gorgeous scenery and geology. The trail lasts for about an hour.

Holkrans Trail

Meaning “Hollow Crags”, this walk is about 2km and shouldn’t last longer than an hour. The aptly named trail takes you to see the magnificent Holkrans, which very much resembles a cave with its huge hollow opening.

REFERENCES AND PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

- Route Marker
- Trail
- Road
- Pafass Brown
- Selling of Pets
- Littering
- Hang Gliding

NOTE: MAP NOT TO SCALE