SUSTAINABILITY & RESPONSIBLE TOURISM POLICY

LESOTHO IN A NUTSHELL

At Malealea Lodge, sustainability is not just a buzzword – it is a way of life.

Located in the beautiful mountain kingdom of Lesotho, we recognise our responsibility to protect the natural environment, support our local community and operate our tourism business in a socially and environmentally responsible manner. Our commitment extends beyond environmental protection. We believe tourism should create meaningful economic opportunities, preserve cultural heritage and contribute to the long-term development of the Malealea community.

Our sustainability commitment is based on six key principles.

1. ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

We are committed to reducing our environmental footprint and protecting the natural resources of Malealea.

Renewable Energy

In 2016, we moved from relying primarily on a diesel-powered generator to a solar energy system with battery storage. This transition significantly reduced our fuel consumption and emissions, improving air quality and supporting climate protection.

Our solar panels charge a bank of deep-cycle batteries, allowing us to provide electricity 24 hours a day. A backup diesel generator is still required occasionally, particularly during cloudy weather or periods of high demand, but our reliance on fossil fuels has been dramatically reduced.

Water Conservation

We source our water from a natural mountain spring. Under normal conditions, this water is chemical-free and suitable for washing, bathing and brushing teeth. However, after heavy storms or during drought conditions, additional treatment or alternative water supplies may be necessary.

We also harvest rainwater wherever possible by collecting runoff from our rooftops through a system of gutters and pipes. This water is channelled into storage tanks, where it is stored for later use, particularly for showers and flushing toilets. Rainwater harvesting helps reduce our reliance on the natural spring and makes better use of this valuable resource.

We encourage guests and staff to use water responsibly, recognising that water is one of our most valuable natural resources. Through responsible water use and rainwater harvesting, we aim to reduce wastage and promote sustainable water management throughout our operations.

Wastewater Management

We operate a natural wastewater system that filters wastewater through a constructed wetland using local plants and minimises the use of chemicals. This system helps protect the surrounding soil, water table and natural landscape.

Waste Management

We encourage responsible waste disposal and ask guests and staff to use the bins provided. We aim to minimise unnecessary waste and promote environmentally responsible practices throughout our operations.

As part of our commitment to recycling and creative reuse, we have repurposed wine bottles in the construction of our beautiful labyrinth. This unique feature gives waste materials a new purpose while creating a peaceful space for guests to walk, slow down, reflect and enjoy a moment of tranquillity in the natural surroundings of Malealea.

Soft drink cans are collected separately and sold to a recycling company that visits Malealea to purchase them, ensuring that these materials are returned to the recycling process rather than discarded.

Food waste suitable for animal feed is made available to staff to take home and feed to their pigs. This helps reduce the amount of organic waste we dispose of while providing a useful resource for local households.

Soil and Landscape Protection

Soil erosion is one of Lesotho's most pressing environmental challenges. We recognise the importance of protecting our fragile mountain environment and support initiatives that encourage sustainable agricultural practices, soil conservation and responsible land management.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & CULTURAL HERITAGE

We believe responsible tourism should directly benefit the communities in which we operate.

Malealea Lodge is part of a living Basotho community, and we recognise that our success is closely connected to the wellbeing and development of the people who call this valley home.

We are committed to:

- Creating employment opportunities for local people.
- Supporting local suppliers and purchasing locally produced goods and services wherever possible.
- Promoting Basotho culture, traditions, crafts and heritage.
- Supporting community development initiatives through the Malealea Development Trust (MDT).
- Encouraging responsible cultural tourism that respects local traditions and customs.
- Supporting educational, agricultural and environmental projects within the community.
- Creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs, artists and craftspeople to benefit from tourism.

We believe tourism should create opportunities that extend beyond the lodge itself and contribute to the wider local economy.

3. ETHICAL TOURISM

Understanding the Community We Visit

The adventurous visitors who make the journey into our mountains arrive in a small village where tourism has a significant impact. We warmly welcome every visitor and want to help them understand the community they are entering.

We believe visitors have the ability to leave behind either a positive or negative impact. The difference lies in understanding the community, respecting its people and recognising that good intentions alone are not always enough.

Lesotho faces several economic and geographical challenges. Its relatively small domestic market, limited natural resources and position within the much larger South African economy create particular difficulties for economic development. Tourism and the services industry therefore offer important opportunities for the country's future.

Tourism brings direct economic benefits through accommodation, meals, guiding, transport, crafts and souvenirs. Visitor spending creates employment and opportunities for local food producers, artists, artisans and small businesses. However, the benefits of tourism extend much further than the immediate exchange of money.

Understanding Local Needs

The development challenges facing rural communities are complex. In Malealea, important priorities include:

- Improving agricultural practices and restoring eroded land.

- Supporting health and wellbeing.
- Ensuring children have access to quality education.
- Providing access to books, computers, technology and the internet.
- Developing skills and opportunities for future generations.
- Supporting vulnerable members of the community.

What may appear to a visitor to be the most urgent need is not necessarily what the community itself has identified as its greatest priority.

We believe the people who live and work in a community are best placed to understand its needs. We therefore encourage visitors to listen, learn and approach village life with humility and an open heart.

Responsible Village Immersion Tours

Malealea Lodge and the Malealea Development Trust work together to offer responsible and educational community experiences.

Our Malealea Community, Culture & Sustainability Tour gives visitors an opportunity to learn about everyday life in our village.

During the tour, visitors may experience:

- Traditional Basotho homes and village life.
- The communal water source used by local households.
- Traditional beer brewing and local livelihoods.
- Community leadership and the role of the Herd Man.
- Local farming practices and agricultural challenges.
- Village schools and educational opportunities.
- Traditional crafts and local entrepreneurship.
- Community development and sustainability projects.

These experiences are designed to encourage understanding, cultural exchange and meaningful engagement. We ask visitors to respect people's privacy and dignity and to follow the guidance of their local guides.

Our community is not a tourist attraction; it is our home.

Supporting Local Enterprise

We believe that sustainable community development is about creating opportunities for people to develop skills, earn an income, access education and become self-reliant.

Three good examples of this approach are the Eco Cookbag Project, the Malealea Teaching Farm and the Paleng Children's Library, all supported by the Malealea Development Trust.

The Eco Cookbag Project, developed in partnership with Africa's Gift and Eternal Flame Worldwide, has enabled local people to produce reusable cooking bags using locally sourced natural fibres. More than 1,000 bags have been made, creating opportunities for local participation, skills development and income generation. The bags also provide an environmentally friendly way to conserve energy while cooking.

The Malealea Teaching Farm, developed with support from the Malealea Development Trust and Rotary, demonstrates sustainable and climate-conscious farming practices. The farm promotes food production, soil conservation and water management through initiatives such as swales, biochar, a solar-powered irrigation pump and the planting of indigenous trees. It provides a practical learning space for the community and helps strengthen local food security. Malealea Lodge also supports the project by purchasing fresh produce from the farm.

The Paleng Children's Library provides an important educational resource for children in the Malealea community. The library encourages a love of reading, supports literacy development and gives children access to books and a space where they can learn, explore and develop their knowledge. Open on Wednesdays and Thursdays, it helps create opportunities for young people through education and access to learning resources.

Together, these projects reflect the kind of development we believe tourism should encourage: building on local skills and resources, supporting community enterprise, investing in education, protecting the environment and creating lasting economic opportunities for present and future generations.

Responsible Giving and Donations

During village tours, visitors may occasionally be approached for money or gifts. We understand that these situations can be difficult. Visitors naturally want to help when they encounter people facing hardship.

However, giving money directly to individuals during tours can create dependency, unequal expectations and unintended consequences. It may also undermine longer-term community development initiatives.

The Malealea Development Trust works with the community to identify needs and direct resources towards planned, purposeful and sustainable projects.

We therefore encourage visitors who wish to make a contribution to support the Malealea Development Trust or recognised community initiatives rather than giving money directly to individuals during village tours.

The Trust supports programmes and projects addressing areas such as:

- Education and access to learning resources.
- Agricultural development and food production.
- Support for vulnerable and disadvantaged community members.
- Health and wellbeing initiatives.
- Environmental conservation and sustainable land management.
- Skills development and community empowerment.
- Addressing social challenges within the community.

Our philosophy is simple:

We are not in the business of simply giving people fish. We are in the business of teaching people how to fish and providing them with the tools they need to succeed.

We believe meaningful development comes from addressing underlying challenges, building skills and creating opportunities that benefit the wider community over the long term.

Respecting Our Community

We ask visitors to:

- Respect local people, their homes and their privacy.
- Listen to local guides and community members.
- Ask permission before photographing people.
- Respect Basotho customs and traditions.
- Avoid making assumptions about what the community needs.
- Support local businesses and craftspeople.
- Avoid distributing sweets, money or gifts directly to children.
- Support community development through recognised initiatives.

We thank every visitor who takes an interest in our community and helps ensure that tourism makes a positive and lasting contribution.

4. RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYMENT & FAIR TREATMENT

Our employees are an important part of Malealea Lodge, and we recognise their contribution to our success.

We are committed to:

- Treating all employees fairly, with dignity and respect.
- Providing a safe and healthy working environment.
- Complying with applicable Lesotho labour legislation.
- Promoting equal opportunities and non-discrimination.
- Supporting staff development, training and skills transfer.
- Providing opportunities for local people to develop their skills and careers.
- Prohibiting child labour, forced labour and all forms of exploitation.

We value the experience, knowledge and contribution of our long-serving employees and believe in developing local talent wherever possible.

5. RESPONSIBLE GUEST & SUPPLIER PRACTICES

We encourage our guests, employees and suppliers to share our commitment to responsible tourism.

We aim to:

- Inform guests about our environmental and community initiatives.
- Encourage guests to conserve water and electricity.
- Promote responsible waste disposal.
- Encourage respect for local people, culture, wildlife and the natural environment.
- Support local suppliers and businesses wherever practical.
- Work with suppliers who demonstrate responsible business practices.
- Promote locally produced goods and services.
- Encourage responsible behaviour during activities and community visits.

We believe every visitor has a role to play in protecting the environment and ensuring tourism benefits the communities they visit.

6. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We recognise that sustainability is an ongoing journey.

Malealea Lodge regularly looks for opportunities to improve our environmental performance, strengthen our community involvement and operate more responsibly.

We are committed to reviewing our sustainability practices and identifying practical improvements as opportunities arise.

Our aim is to ensure that Malealea remains a place of natural beauty, cultural richness and community opportunity for generations to come.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Malealea is more than a lodge. It is a community, a landscape, a culture and a way of life.

We believe responsible tourism should protect the environment, celebrate Basotho heritage, create meaningful employment and contribute to the long-term development of the people who live here.

Our community is our home. We know it, we love it and we understand the importance of working together to make it a better place.

We thank our guests for visiting, taking an interest in our home and helping us protect it for future generations.

MALEALEA LODGE – LESOTHO IN A NUTSHELL.

BACKGROUND READING

Some of the economic-development context informing our approach to responsible tourism is discussed in:

In the Shadow of South Africa: Lesotho's Economic Future, by Mats Lundahl, Colin L. McCarthy and Lennart Petersson (Ashgate Publishing, September 2003).