

MALOTI DRAKENSBERG ROUTE

BACKGROUND

The **Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation Area** was established on 11 June 2001 by linking the Sehlabathebe National Park in the Kingdom of Lesotho and the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

The merged park includes Golden Gate Highlands National Park, QwaQwa National Park and Sterkfontein Dam Nature Reserve, (Free State); uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park and Royal Natal National Park, (KwaZulu-Natal) and Sehlabathebe National Park, (Lesotho).

ROUTE

In the north and north west, the route takes in the charming Free State towns of Rosendal, Ficksburg, Clocolan, Fouriesburg and Clarens, renowned for its bustling artists' community. This part of the route also features the Golden Gate Highlands National Park, with its exquisite sandstone cliffs, and the uKhahlamba Drakensberg transfrontier conservation area, which is home to a number of walking and hiking trails.

GOLDEN GATE HIGHLANDS NATIONAL PARK

The park derives its name from the brilliant shades of gold cast by the sun on the park's sandstone cliffs, especially the imposing Brandwag rock, keeping vigil over the main rest camp.

This 11 600 hectares of unique environment is true highland habitat, providing home to a variety of mammals – black wildebeest, eland, blesbok, oribi, springbok and Burchell's zebra - and birds, including the rare bearded vulture (lammergeier) and the equally rare bald ibis, which breed on the ledges in the sandstone cliffs. Ribbokkop, the highest point in the park, reveals a breathtaking tapestry of red, yellow and purple hues as its warm shades merge with the cool mountain shadows towards evening.

The Golden Gate Highlands National Park has four rest camps, namely the Basotho Cultural Village, the Golden Gate Hotel, the Glen Reenem Rest Camp and the Highlands Mountain Retreat.

STERKFORTEIN DAM NATURE RESERVE

The 7000 hectare Sterkfontein Dam is situated near Harrismith in a nature reserve with 12 000 hectares of conserved land offering several different veld types and a compelling variety of landscapes. The reserve offers wildlife, birding, windsurfing and fly-fishing with a magnificent view over the Drakensberg. The Sterkfontein Dam is also home to the biggest hydro-electric power station in South Africa.