

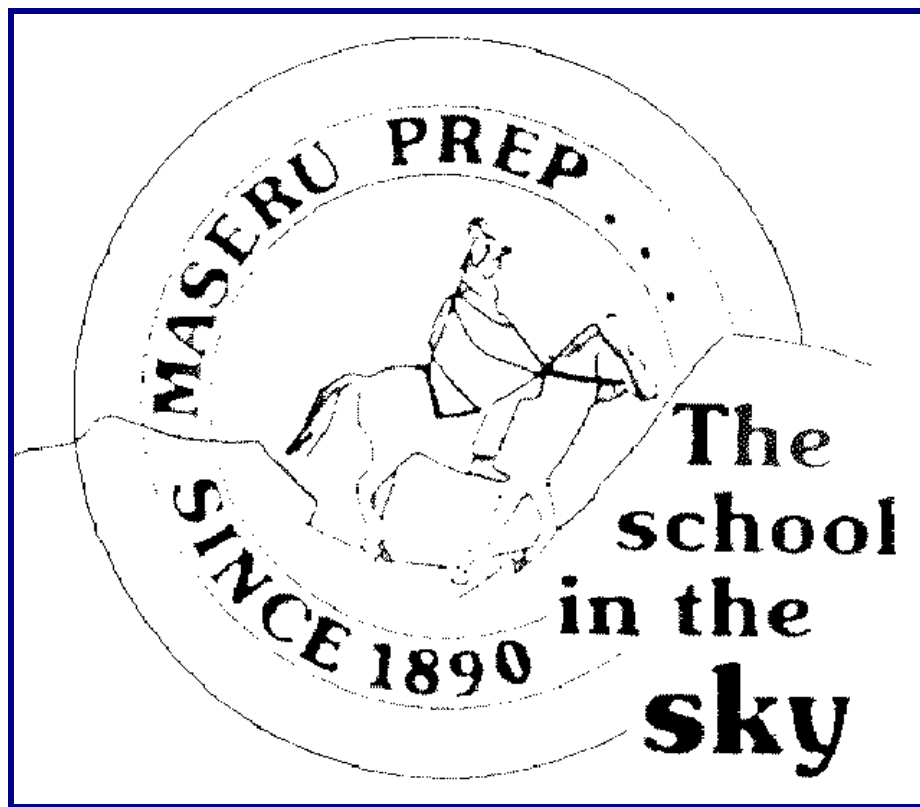


## **MASERU ENGLISH MEDIUM PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

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**Information for Teachers Recruited Overseas  
2009-2010**

## **Information for Teachers Recruited Overseas**

### **The land:**

Lesotho is the only country in the world with all of its territory lying entirely at altitudes in excess of 1,000 metres above sea level. Lesotho possesses the primary natural resource of an abundance of water, often referred to as 'white gold' by the Basotho. This asset has led to the development of the largest and most ambitious civil engineering project in the whole of Africa – the Lesotho Highlands Water Project – with considerable impact on all other spheres of life in the Kingdom.

Lesotho comprises an area of 30, 335 square kilometres (11, 720 square miles), roughly the size of Belgium or Taiwan. Running north-east to south-west, the mountains of the Maluti (meaning simply 'the range') overlook the western districts and are often snow-capped. The Drakensberg range in the east (meaning 'mountain of the dragon') is Lesotho's principal chain, with the high cliffs of the escarpment making access from the east difficult. Close to this escarpment is Thabana-Ntlenyana, the highest peak in southern Africa (at 3,482 metres or 12, 600 feet), with two of southern Africa's most important rivers, the Orange and Caledon, rising nearby.

An enclave within the Republic of South Africa, Lesotho lies completely outside the tropics, between latitudes 28 and 31 degrees south and longitudes 27 and 30 degrees east. The country enjoys a cool, invigorating climate, with temperatures and rainfalls variable. Vegetation is mainly grassland and bushveld, with forests in the ravines and the windward slopes of mountains.

Geographically the country falls into three regions. The 'Lowlands', this area is the valley of the Caledon or Mohokare (Sesotho name) River east of the border with South Africa, which is defined by the river, and west of the 'Foothills'. It lies about 1,500m above sea level and is intensively farmed for subsistence maize, vegetables, sheep and cattle. The main towns, including Maseru, the capital are situated in the 'Lowlands' and most of the people live in the 'Lowlands'. The 'Foothills' lying between the 'Mountains' and the 'Lowlands' is an attractive, hilly area, also intensively farmed and suffering from serious soil erosion. The 'Mountains' extend over the eastern half of the country. They rise from about 1,800m to over 3,000m at the edge of the Drakensberg escarpment and the South African border. The scenery is spectacular and the area offers many opportunities to hike, camp, climb, view rock art, go bird watching and pony trekking. The climate of Lesotho is temperate because of the altitude. There are two main seasons, a cold, dry winter and a warm, wet summer. However there is a lot of variation and extremes of heat, cold, rain and drought. The annual average rainfall in Maseru is 800mm, winter temperatures in the daytime are usually 8° to 12° C, but nights are often below freezing. In the summer the daytime temperatures are usually between 20°/30 ° C. Nights are not too hot.

### **The climate:**

If you are arriving in the winter (i.e. during August) you will find that because of the severe frost, most plant life is dead and everything seems to be brown. However when the spring rains come in October everything greens up again.

The climate is generally very healthy, but people who suffer from allergies can experience problems with certain types of pollen and the sulphur given off from coal burnt on domestic fires. Mosquitoes are found and they do bite but they are not malarial. Tick bite fever may be contracted after being bitten by a tick. It is quite an unpleasant condition but is easily recognised and treated. Ticks are fairly common in long grass during the wet season.

### **Infrastructure:**

The domestic water supply is treated and generally safe to drink, but most people prefer to filter and boil it, or purchase bottled water, as an extra precaution. The electricity supply is 220/240 volts AC and fairly reliable. A domestic telephone service is available and A.D.S.L. connection for Internet have just been introduced. There are good mobile phone networks available. Most houses have telephones installed. You may be able to come in and take over the previous tenant's phone without a problem. However you may have to pay a bond to get a new phone, which you will own, sell back at the end of your contract and collect your bond. This is the simplest and quickest solution if problems are encountered.

### **The people:**

The country is called Lesotho, the people Basotho, one person a Mosotho and the language is Sesotho. There are many interesting local cultures and traditions. The people are friendly; English is widely spoken as it is the official medium of instruction in all schools. There is a lot of poverty in Lesotho, especially in the rural areas although the urban areas are increasingly wealthy. There is a level of crime in the country sufficient to give some cause for concern and basic precautions need to be taken. Beggars and street children can be seen in the larger urban areas of Lesotho and South Africa. There is a high incidence of H.I.V. Many opportunities exist for volunteer work with orphanages through N.G.O.s and church organizations.

### **The Press and broadcasting:**

There are local newspapers and several South African newspapers on sale. The BBC World Service reception is excellent in Maseru. Many teachers use DSTV. Sports and news are particularly well catered for from South Africa on M Net.

Lesotho is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT).

### **Shopping:**

There is a fairly high turn over of expatriates who often have goods for sale at reasonable prices. Supermarkets and other stores are to be easily found in central Maseru close to the school. Ladybrand and Bloemfontein are close enough in South Africa for major shopping expeditions.

All goods brought into Lesotho are subject to Customs control and baggage may be subject to examination. Customs declarations are required upon arrival. False or incomplete declaration is an offence involving penalties, including forfeiture of any

Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland are not permitted to bring liquor into Lesotho.

**Duty free:**

The following items and quantities to a total value not exceeding M1,250.0 per person are allowed under rebate duty:

- one litre of any alcoholic beverage.
- 400 cigarettes or 50 cigars.
- 300ml perfume.

**Prohibited or restricted goods:**

Counterfeit coins, notes, dangerous weapons, blasphemous material, obscene material, articles of an inflammatory nature, (e.g. political pamphlets and posters) and drugs, are all prohibited.

**Visa requirements:**

Visitors must have a valid passport. Citizens of countries, which have visa agreements with Lesotho, do not require visas. You should contact your nearest Lesotho Embassy or High Commission for confirmation. British passport holders do not need a visa.

**Incoming travel arrangements:**

Teachers who are recruited by the school overseas are responsible for purchasing air tickets to Maseru at the cheapest fare available to assume duty. Teachers must arrive in good time for an induction programme scheduled for at least three days before the first day of term. It is advisable to arrive earlier to settle in and be familiar with your surroundings and to make travel arrangements in conjunction with the school to ensure that someone is able to pick you up from the airport. When arrive, you need to carry your contract with you as you may encounter problems trying to get from South Africa through to Lesotho. There are several flights daily from Johannesburg to Maseru. Please keep all the receipts of travel and baggage in order to get your money back from the school quickly.

**Settling In:**

If you arrive by air you will be collected from the airport. Basic food will be provided initially. Arrangements will be made for accommodation and to take you to all the various places you need to go to in the first few days – i.e. banks, shops etc.

**Housing:**

Staff houses are located on the other side of the playing field from the school buildings within the school campus. Security is provided. Houses contain all the basic furniture like carpets, curtains, lounge and dining room suites, beds, cooker and fridge. Some of the houses have two bedrooms. Each house is located in a small

garden. Single arrivals may be requested to share accommodation. Teachers have to provide their own bed linen and towels. A basic set of cooking equipment, crockery and cutlery is provided. Vacuum cleaners, kettles and washing machines are not always supplied but are obtainable locally. It is common to employ a domestic helper who is fully conversant with all housework and will often look after the garden as well. In addition the domestic helper may baby sit or house sit if needed. Costs for domestic help will vary but are very reasonable by most standards around the world (You can expect to budget M1,000 per month for a five day week). Pets are allowed, many teachers keep dogs or cats.

### **Residence**

Most people entering Lesotho will be issued with an entry permit at the border or international airport. Before the initial permit expires teachers have to apply for a further temporary residence permit and the school assists with this process.

### **Work permit:**

Within the first few weeks teachers apply for their work permits. The School assists and pays for this process. The procedures of obtaining work permits, residence and border passes are tedious ones and will require patience.

### **Salary:**

Salary is paid in Maloti (the local currency) interchangeable with the Rand. Income tax is levied at 32% and everybody pays it! Note that the cost of living is low compared to European countries. Salaries are paid directly into local bank accounts on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month. A salary scale and projection is available for those teachers requiring it.

Modern banking facilities are available throughout the region and teachers bank either in Maseru or Ladybrand (South Africa). Most banks are open from 9am to 3.30pm on weekdays and 8.30am to 11am on Saturdays. Electronic banking is available in most towns.

### **What to bring:**

You should bring all types of clothes to suit hot (38°C) to cold (below freezing), wet and dry weather. There are no significant clothing restrictions in the region. All types of clothes, books, cameras, camping, hi-fi equipment etc. are available in Lesotho or South Africa at prices comparable with Europe and USA. Electrical goods may be cheaper. Due to the uncertainty of arrival of freight you should make sure you bring clothing for early spring weather which is generally rainy, but warm by day (15 °- 25°C) and cold (2°-10°C) at night. At this time you may still encounter freezing nights and mornings.

All types of household goods are available in the region; some may be expensive but locally manufactured goods usually compare well in value with other parts of the world. It is a good idea to bring bedding, towels, music centres, hair dryers etc. with

the laptop, music and personal items that you would particularly like to have with you. The electricity supply is 220/240 volts AC with round pin plugs as standard. You may need to buy the plugs here after you arrive. You will need to bring a transformer or adapter for items that do not run on 220/240 volts.

### **Teaching materials:**

It is a good idea to bring with you some teaching materials that you are familiar with although classrooms are basically resourced.

### **Medical:**

A full range of medical services is available in Maseru or in South Africa. Teachers go for routine treatment in Ladybrand or Bloemfontein (RSA). Bloemfontein also has advanced and specialist medical services. A medical insurance scheme is available to teachers that covers major medical costs. Costs of medication can be high so bring a supply of anything essential, including contact lenses if you use them. Please note that it is extremely important to complete pre-employment medical requirements in good time for the school to arrange cover from the time of your arrival.

### **Food:**

An adequate range of foods, both imported and locally grown, are available throughout the year with some seasonal variation for fresh produce. There are rarely shortages and it is not necessary to stockpile.

### **Clothing:**

There are plenty of shops in Maseru and nearby towns in South Africa that stock a full range of smart clothes. Sports clothing is readily available. Prices are reasonable and compare favourably with most of the developed world. Male teachers wear open necked shirts, slacks and jumpers/jackets if it is colder. Female teachers wear dresses, blouse and skirt or smart slacks as necessary. Teachers only wear sports clothing for P.E. It is a good idea to bring a suit, or something more 'dressy' for functions or important school events. National and International celebrations feature during the year when national costume can be worn, or something that is typical of your country of origin. It is as well to be prepared for this and know how to cook a national dish!

### **Postal services:**

Postal and DHL services are available. Teachers use the school **PO Box 34, Maseru 100, Lesotho** – do not use street name! The normal time taken for airmail to countries outside of Southern Africa is 2 to 3 weeks. The school has e-mail and you will be allocated an e-mail address on arrival.

### **Transport:**

School can advise you on buying a car and sorting out paper work etc. Most teachers find having a car essential if you are to enjoy living in and touring around the region.

Southern Africa is a very big place! It takes five hours to drive to Johannesburg, Durban and longer to Cape Town. Cars come in all shapes and sizes and you may need to consider buying one when you get here. There is a thriving used car market but prices are generally high (M15,000 might buy a 1000cc saloon ten years old with 100,000 kms on the clock, M65,000 an imported 4WD of the same age with half that mileage and three times the engine capacity). There is a very wide range of vehicles to choose from. It is a good idea to obtain an international driving licence before coming to Lesotho. You can take the local driving test. Road tax is fairly cheap and paid annually, third party insurance is automatically levied through petrol sales, and additional insurance is advisable. The rules of the road are similar to most countries; wearing seat belts and carrying a driving licence are compulsory. On the spot fines are normal for minor road offences in both Lesotho and South Africa. Driving is generally safe and fairly easy except at night and in heavy rush-hour traffic. There are relatively low traffic densities, especially outside of the larger cities. The main roads in the lowlands of Lesotho and in the neighbouring areas of South Africa are tarred. Side roads in South Africa and many of the roads serving the mountains in Lesotho are not tarred but fairly easy to negotiate even with a two-wheel drive vehicle.

Walking is fairly safe in Lesotho during the day; it is not so safe after dark. There are large buses serving the rural areas of Lesotho, including the mountains. Minibus taxis provide a taxi/bus service throughout the lowlands of Lesotho and in Maseru. Buses and taxis are generally crowded and not always well maintained or all that fast at times as they fill up before they go anywhere. There is some potential risk to your property and person.

### **Religion:**

Lesotho is predominantly Christian with other indigenous traditional beliefs. Maseru Prep School is a secular school but there are practising Christians and people from other religious traditions on the staff.

### **Life outside the school day:**

There are a limited number of activities to participate in, or watch, namely football, tennis, squash, horse riding, cycling, gym, golf as well as the Hash, hiking, climbing and so on.

There are some facilities but many people just get together and arrange things for themselves.

- **Sport:** football, tennis, squash, bowling, cricket, swimming, horse riding, gymnasium, golf, snooker are all readily available. There is a 'hash' club, hiking, climbing and long distance running can be easily pursued.

**Societies:** Hash House Harriers, St. Andrew's, St Patrick's, Horticultural Society. All of these hold regular events and activities. The Hash House Harriers is largely an expatriate group of runners and walkers who venture out each week over a course that has been set. It gives you a chance to go to areas in and around Maseru that you couldn't get to safely if you were on your own. It is good way to meet people and to see your local environment.

- **Entertainment:** There are cinemas in Maseru showing up to date films. Many people go to Bloemfontein in the Republic of South Africa and that has good theatres, which regularly hold excellent productions. A number of local musical groups perform at the hotels and visiting bands from South Africa are a regular feature. There is one public library in Maseru and one in Ladybrand. There are many video and DVD loan shops. There is an excellent music academy in Ladybrand. Singing in choirs is very popular.
- **Restaurants:** There is a limited choice of restaurants in Maseru and Ladybrand offering a variety of different cuisines, including Indian and Chinese, mostly at reasonable prices. There are two Sun Hotels in Maseru with swimming pools, buffet restaurants and cabanas. The South African braai (barbecue) is a popular way to offer hospitality.

### **Schools for Staff children:**

The school pays for the tuition costs of up to three staff children attending the school or Machabeng College just over the road (C.I.S. accredited with M.Y.P., I.G.C.S.E. & I.B. Diploma programmes). Teachers pay the book fee, registration, examination fees, capital levy and uniform costs for their own children.

You will be able to save money in Maseru but your life style will determine to what extent you can save. Most people find that they can have a good life style here and still have money for holidays but care needs to be taken.

### **Some things worth remembering:**

- Do wear seatbelts while driving in Lesotho.
- Do try to be friendly and polite. A smile and a wave while driving through the country goes a long way.
- Do inform the chief or headman if you intend to camp in the area. Generally speaking you shouldn't encourage the beggars. However many people do give money for a service that is provided such as carrying shopping or watching/washing your car.
- Do not give children sweets or money as it encourages begging.
- Do not wander alone at night as this invites trouble.
- Roads are generally well surfaced throughout the country
- Do not take photographs of government buildings, including: The Royal Palace, Police Stations, Government Offices, The Central Bank Buildings, Lesotho Bank Buildings, Royal Lesotho Defence Force Buildings and Offices. The Royal Family is accorded great respect and protocol should be observed.
- As a matter of courtesy do ask any individuals for their permission before photographing them.
- Service may seem slow and help sometimes a bit off-hand. By being polite and smiling you are more likely to get improved service.

01/09/2009