

## Episode 71: Community Tourism in Lesotho

### Summary

Nick and Wendy talk about community tourism projects in Lesotho that help visitors get a better understanding of local life and culture while also improving the lives of local people through employment and other opportunities.

### Transcript

Nick: Today Wendy and I are talking once again about the small country of Lesotho, and, in particular, about community tourism here in Lesotho. But before we begin, let me remind you that you can get a special offer of 10 US dollars in italki credits with your first purchase by visiting <http://go.italki.com/englishin10minutes>. With italki, you can learn real language and culture and have a personal, customised experience to help you reach fluency fast.

So, we're here in Lesotho and we talked last time about how we really enjoyed Lesotho, but when you look at it as a country compared with other countries around it or other countries in the world, there aren't that many obvious destinations to visit within the country.

Wendy: Yeah, that's really true. Umm, Maseru, the capital, I would say is not a tourist destination. It's not a very attractive city, and that's really not what Lesotho has to offer. The best parts of Lesotho are the rural areas where you get out into the nature and the beautiful landscapes and the mountains. But, yeah, there's not really one particular mountain or one particular thing that you have to see that's, you know, so much better than everything else. It's more just the landscapes in general, I would say, and, you know, the experience of staying in a village and seeing the daily life of the people.

Nick: Right, and so that experience can sometimes be a bit hard to come by. You know, usually you have these particular destinations that you want to visit, and that's not really the case here. But what they've done in order to maximise the way that you can appreciate the daily life, like you said, is that there's a lot of community tourism that goes along ... that goes on<sup>1</sup> in the villages here. And there are, I think, four places in particular where you can go and participate in this community tourism. And I think that's been a really fabulous experience for us to

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<sup>1</sup> that goes on: that happens, that takes place

do while we've been here. And, you know, in some cases, bringing mass tourism to villages can have negative effects. Uhh, sometimes it's perhaps not done well, or there's simply too many people. Uhh, I know there's a place in Namibia that we chose not to go to because it seemed a bit contrived<sup>2</sup> where these busloads of people are just dumped into this village, and it just didn't seem like something we wanted to be a part of. But community tourism, real community tourism, when it's done well, I think can be really beneficial to everybody. And we've seen that in some other countries, uhh, like Kyrgyzstan for example, like Ethiopia, and I think here in Lesotho it's really ripe<sup>3</sup> for that for the reasons that we mentioned, and they've done it really well in the places that we've seen.

Wendy: Yeah, absolutely. Umm, Malealea, in particular, was the first village that we visited here in Lesotho and the community tourism there, uhh, which takes place through the Malealea Lodge, has been going on for decades now. They started in the early nineties or maybe even earlier. Uhh, I know they had some photos on the walls from 1991, so they've been there at least that long. And now there's a whole generation of children and young adults who have grown up with the lodge and it's such a huge part of the village. First of all, it brings in a lot of employment, umm, because it's quite a large operation and a lot of the residents of the village do work for the lodge and with the lodge in some capacity, whether it's as guides or as waiters or kitchen staff in the restaurants or all different things. And then they have lots of programs where they take the proceeds<sup>4</sup> from the lodge and then they give that back to projects in the community. So that could be in the form of schools. They have scholarships<sup>5</sup> for children to go to school and they help build extra classrooms and things for the local schools. They also have a library for the children, so, uhh, we met the librarian and he told us about, uhh, how he reads, uhh, stories to the children and the children have even created their own books where they illustrate the books themselves. They make drawings inside. And, so, yeah, it seems like the lodge has really had a very positive impact on the community as a whole<sup>6</sup> in so many ways.

Nick: Yeah and instead of changing people's lives for the worse by bringing in these other influences, it seems like it's changed their lives for the better. And what they've really tried to do and done successfully is preserve their traditional customs and cultures and then show that to the people like us who come to see it. Umm, and so we took ... we did a couple of hikes, umm, and so, you know, this is very well organised. They have a series of hikes listed, and then they have guides who will come and do it for a certain price depending on the hike. Uhh, one of our guides was very knowledgeable and was very keen to share all of what he knew about his own culture and told us all kinds of things regarding marriages and

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<sup>2</sup> contrived: unauthentic, artificial

<sup>3</sup> ripe: ready, prepared (usually when talking about fruit that is ready to eat)

<sup>4</sup> proceeds: earnings, profits (always plural for this meaning)

<sup>5</sup> scholarships: programs offering free or reduced-price education

<sup>6</sup> as a whole: overall, altogether

funerals and just traditional life in that area and so that was really great for us to learn all those things from him.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm. And he was also a member of a band who often plays at the lodge. So every evening, there is a local choir<sup>7</sup> who sings and then after the choir, there's a local band that plays. Umm, and that was one of my favourite parts about staying at the Malealea Lodge. I loved the band! They were just so energetic and I loved their music. They play all hand-made instruments, uhh, so they're not instruments that you buy in a store. They're, for example, the drum would be an oil drum that used to have oil in it and then, you know, they've added some kind of plastic or animal skin or whatever it is that they use to beat the drum. And then they have hand-made guitars that are, like, three-stringed guitars. And they have something that they call a violin. I mean, it's not really that close to what I think of as a violin, but it's that kind of stringed instrument. And so they play these, and then they sing, and some of them dance as well, and I thought it was really fantastic to watch. And of course it is, you know, part of the culture. It's the local traditional music as well, so that's another, kind of, thing that you get to learn about when you're there.

And I thought it was great the way they integrated them into the lodge. Because they told us that, initially, the band was just playing out on the streets in the village. So whenever they would see tourists, uhh, walk by, then they would start playing and, you know, in the hope that the tourists would leave a tip. And then the lodge said, 'Well, why don't you come here and we'll make it a bit more organised?' The lodge doesn't pay them any money, but they set up a very clear sign that says, you know, 'Suggested Donation', and they tell you how much they think you should pay, umm, as a donation, as a tip. And if you don't want to, then you don't watch or, you know. But it seemed like most people were definitely giving a donation. I think some people gave even more than the suggested donation. And so I think it probably works much better for the band and also for the tourists, because, you know, it can be kind of uncomfortable if, you know, you're walking down the street and someone is playing music and you know that they're hoping for a tip from you, whereas the way it works now, the tourists can all decide whether they want to go see it or not. And it was something that I, you know, started looking forward to<sup>8</sup> at the end of every day, because I thought the band was fantastic. So it's just another example of how people from the local community ... in this case, it's not ... a lot of these people don't work, like I said, they don't work for the lodge, and the lodge isn't paying them, uhh, to play the music. But they are still benefitting from the lodge being there.

Nick: So now we're in a different village which is called Roma and it's also one of these community tourism set-ups. And we're actually staying in an old trading

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<sup>7</sup> choir: singing group (note the pronunciation of the 'ch' as more like 'que' as in 'question')

<sup>8</sup> looking forward to (phrasal verb): anticipating eagerly or positively (note: 'to' is part of the phrasal verb. If another verb follows this phrasal verb, it takes the -ing form after the preposition 'to', not the infinitive with 'to' as part of the second verb, e.g. 'I'm looking forward to going to the party').

post<sup>9</sup> from the turn of the century<sup>10</sup> and, I mean, we're budget travellers, so we don't usually stay in places that are that nice to be honest, especially here in Africa. But this is probably the nicest room that we've stayed in on this whole trip.

Wendy: It is, it's a really beautiful room. We have two big windows where we can see out onto the grounds. We have a fireplace, although, you know, it's not that cold anymore so we don't need to use the fireplace. But just the furnishings and everything are really beautiful. It's a really lovely place just to sit and relax. And that's mostly what we've been doing, because we're almost at the end of our three months in Africa and we're a bit tired and we needed to relax and rest and this has been a fantastic place to do that.

Nick: Yeah, the Roma Lodge, the Roman Trading Post Lodge, is not as well organised in terms of the community activities as Malealea was. Although one thing we did today which was really nice was that we went to a community centre which is just down the road. Umm, there's a German volunteer who's staying here at the lodge who works there. And she's here for one year, uhh, to work at the community centre. And so every day kids go there, umm, some kids go after school, some kids go instead of school because their parents can't afford to send them to school. Umm, but it was really nice to go and see that as well.

Wendy: Yeah, and, you know, they've done a lot with the limited resources that they have. They have a library there with quite a few books. They have a wonderful little home-made playground where they've built all these toys and things that the children can play on. Umm, yeah, it was great to see what they're doing in the community. Uhh, and particularly for the children in the community. And I did speak to the managers of the lodge and they said that they are working now on training guides that can lead, uhh, tourists on hikes as well. Right now they're really just proposing one short hike out to some dinosaur footprints, which is another attraction that Lesotho has, umm, that you don't see in many parts of the world.

Nick: And which we accidentally stumbled across, uhh, upon ourselves yesterday.

Wendy: Yeah, we were planning to take the guide and then we just went on a walk by ourselves and saw something on the ground and said, 'I bet that is a dinosaur footprint 'cause that's definitely what it looks like!' Umm, but, yeah, this lodge is under new management, has been for the past few months. And so they are working on training guides and creating more hikes and things like that, so if people come, you know, say a month from now, I think there will be even more activities for people to do if you're not lazy like us and just want to sit around and read books and relax.

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<sup>9</sup> trading post: a building used for trading goods sometimes as an inn, often in between major settlements along trade routes

<sup>10</sup> turn of the century: end of the 19th century / beginning of the 20th century. This expression is still used even though there has been another turn of the century since then.

## Comprehension Questions

1. Why is Lesotho 'ripe' for community tourism, according to Nick?
2. How has the band changed the way it operates, as Wendy explained?
3. What changes are coming soon at the Roma Trading Post Lodge?

## Exercises

*Use the words and expressions in the footnotes of the transcript to fill in the gaps.*

1. She has a very good voice. She used to sing in the \_\_\_\_\_ when she was at school.
2. The university doesn't give out many \_\_\_\_\_, so if you get one, you should consider yourself very lucky. Otherwise, the tuition fees would be so expensive.
3. The school donated all the \_\_\_\_\_ from the bake sale to charity. They raised even more money this year than they did last year.
4. He bought a beautiful old rocking chair from the flea market. The seller said that it dates from \_\_\_\_\_, so it's about 120 years old.
5. They attended a 'cultural performance' while they were on holidays but they found it to be quite \_\_\_\_\_. They said it was just a tourist show which didn't really reflect the cultural realities of the country.
6. They've won a lot of games in a row but they have some injuries now so they might be \_\_\_\_\_ for a loss. I think their streak could end this week.
7. The new trade deal is a good political win for the prime minister, but more importantly, it will improve the economy of the country \_\_\_\_\_.
8. In the old days, people used to ride horses between cities and stay overnight in a \_\_\_\_\_ along the way.
9. He's bringing his girlfriend to the party on Friday. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ finally meeting her. I've heard that she's lovely.
10. You don't want to know all the stuff \_\_\_\_\_ at their house when their parents are away. They have a lot of parties there.

## Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions with a partner or in the [English in 10 Minutes Listeners group on Facebook](#):

1. Do you have community tourism projects in your own country or have you experienced them in other countries? What were they like?
2. Which of the following community tourism activities offered at Malealea Lodge would you like to do most: guided hiking, horse trekking, or lunch in the house of a local village family? Why?
3. Do you think you would enjoy listening to the local band as much as Wendy did? Why or why not?

## Answers

### Comprehension Questions

1. Because it doesn't have many obvious attractions, so community tourism is a way to create attractions and give tourists an insight into local culture.
2. The band used to play on the streets of the village but now they have a regular timeslot at the lodge itself.
3. They are going to offer more guided hikes in a similar way to the Malealea Lodge.

### Exercises

1. choir
2. scholarships
3. proceeds
4. the turn of the century
5. contrived
6. ripe
7. as a whole
8. trading post
9. looking forward to
10. that goes on