

## HISTORY OF THE REGION

The Waterberg (Northern Sotho: *Thaba Meetse*) is a mountainous massif of approximately 654,033 hectares in north Limpopo Province, South Africa. The average height of the mountain range is 600m with a few peaks rising up to 2000 m above sea level. Vaalwater town is located just north of the mountain range. The extensive rock formation was shaped by hundreds of millions of years of riverine erosion to yield diverse bluff and butte land formations. The ecosystem can be characterised as a dry deciduous forest or Bushveld. Within the Waterberg there are archaeological finds dating to the Stone Age, and nearby are early evolutionary finds related to the origin of humans.

Waterberg (Thaba Meetse) is the first region in the northern part of South Africa to be named as a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO.

The underlying rock formation derives from the Kaapvaal Craton, formed as a precursor island roughly 2.7 billion years ago. This crustal formation became the base of the Waterberg, which was further transformed by upward extrusion of igneous rocks. These extruded rocks, containing minerals such as vanadium and platinum, are called the Bushveld Igneous Complex. The original extent of this rock up thrust involved about 250,000 square kilometers, and is sometimes called the Waterberg Supergroup.

Sedimentary deposition from rivers cutting through Waterberg endured until roughly 1.5 billion years ago. In more recent time (around 250 million years ago) the Kaapvaal craton collided with the supercontinent Gondwana, and split Gondwana into its modern-day continents. Waterberg today contains mesas, buttes and some kopje outcrops. Some of cliffs stand up to 550 meters above the plains, with exposed multi-coloured sandstone.

The sandstone formations could retain groundwater sufficient to make a suitable environment for primitive man. The cliff overhangs offered natural shelters for these early humans. The first human ancestors may have been at Waterberg as early as three million years ago, since Makapansgat, 40 kilometres away, has yielded skeletons of *Australopithecus africanus*. Hogan suggests that *Homo erectus*, whose evidence remains were also discovered in Makapansgat, "may have purposefully moved into the higher areas of the Waterberg for summer (December to March) game".

Bushmen entered Waterberg around two thousand years ago. They produced rock paintings at Lapalala within the Waterberg, including depictions of rhinoceros and antelope. Early Iron Age settlers in the Waterberg were Bantu, who had brought cattle to the region. The Bantu created a problem in the Waterberg, since cattle reduced grassland caused invasion of brush species leading to an outbreak of the tse-tse fly. The ensuing epidemic of sickness depopulated the plains, but at higher elevations man survived, because the fly cannot survive above 600 meters.

Later people left the first Stone Age artefacts recovered in northern South Africa. Starting about the year 1300 AD, Nguni settlers arrived with new technologies, including the ability to build dry-stone walls, which techniques were then used to add defensive works to their Iron Age forts, some of those walls survive to today. Archaeologists continue to excavate the Waterberg to shed light on the Nguni culture and the associated dry-stone architecture.

The first white settlers arrived in the Waterberg in 1808 and the first naturalist, a Swede, appeared just before mid-19th century. Around the mid-19th century, a group of Dutch travellers set out from Cape Town in search of Jerusalem. Arriving in Waterberg, they mis-estimated their distance and thought they had reached Egypt.

After battles between Dutch settlers and tribesmen, the races co-existed until around 1900. The Dutch brought further cattle grazing, multiplying the impacts of indigenous tribes. By the beginning

of the 20th century there were an estimated 200 western inhabitants of the Waterberg and grassland loss began to have a severe impact upon native wildlife populations.

Lepogo Lodge's Noka Camp is situated in the Lapalala Wilderness overlooking the Palala River. The Reserve itself encompasses some 48,000 hectares within the Waterberg region.

As part of a greater conservation initiative, we make every effort to ensure that care is taken of this pristine wilderness to ensure future generations have the opportunity of enjoying our magnificent heritage.

**Some interesting creatures to look out for during your stay:**

**Small Mammals:** Lesser Bush baby, Eastern Rock Elephant Shrew, Dwarf Mongoose

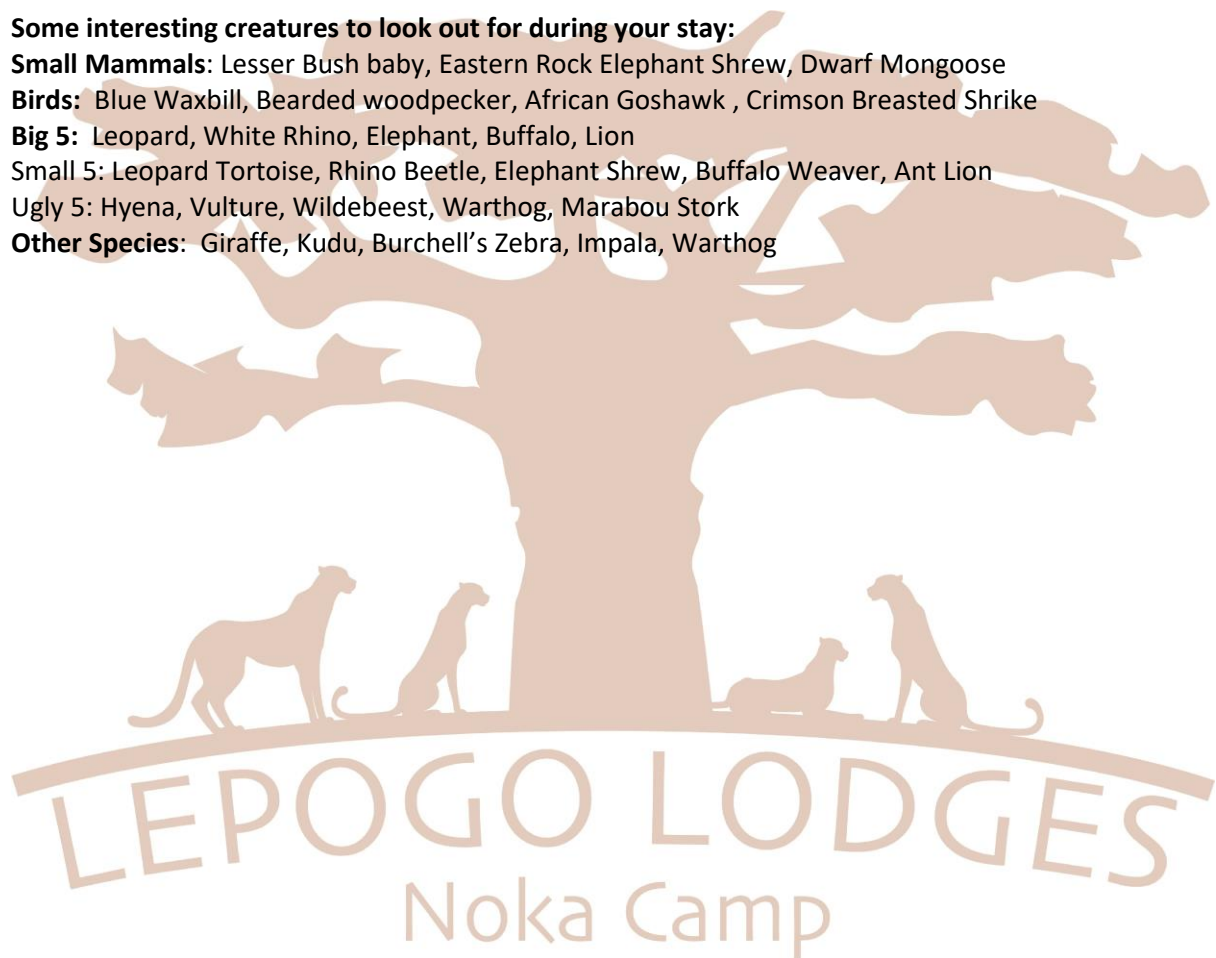
**Birds:** Blue Waxbill, Bearded woodpecker, African Goshawk, Crimson Breasted Shrike

**Big 5:** Leopard, White Rhino, Elephant, Buffalo, Lion

**Small 5:** Leopard Tortoise, Rhino Beetle, Elephant Shrew, Buffalo Weaver, Ant Lion

**Ugly 5:** Hyena, Vulture, Wildebeest, Warthog, Marabou Stork

**Other Species:** Giraffe, Kudu, Burchell's Zebra, Impala, Warthog



## HISTORY OF LAPALALA WILDERNESS

*“The moment that Dale Parker and Clive Walker looked out over the Palala River Valley in May 1981, their love affair with the region began and the vision that would become Lapalala Wilderness was born.”*

Clive, a renowned artist and conservationist, had brought Dale to inspect a game ranch being sold by one of the last ‘great white hunters’ of East Africa, Eric Rundgren, who had turned protector of the wildlife he had hunted with such dedication in the past.

As a conservationist, farmer and businessman, Dale immediately recognized the value of the area and the importance of preserving its natural beauty. With Clive’s help and encouragement, he spent 35 years adding 17 farms to his original purchase, and by the year 2001 the 36,000 hectare (now 48,000 hectare), Lapalala Wilderness had become a reality. From the beginning it was recognised that conserving wildlife depends on preserving the habitat, and the larger the area, the more species can be conserved. The enormous size of Lapalala, and its rich biodiversity, made it ideal as a key component of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. The first region in the northern part of South Africa to be declared as a biosphere reserve by UNESCO, this ground-breaking initiative was spearheaded to a large extent by Clive, representing Lapalala Wilderness.

Lapalala became the first private reserve in South Africa to acquire black rhino when five of these highly endangered animals were brought to the reserve in 1990. Lapalala’s commitment to preserving these magnificent creatures continues to this day and it is now one of the leading private rhino sanctuaries in South Africa.

Importantly, Lapalala has always been as much about people as about nature. From tourism to education, Lapalala continues to work tirelessly to strengthen the interconnectedness of man and the environment since this is the only real way to secure the sustainable future of both.

Under Clive’s leadership, the Lapalala Wilderness School has become an important provider of environmental education to learners from all sectors of society, bringing them together with the shared aim of doing their part to help create a sustainable future for all South Africans. Over the years, the school has been successful in awakening an interest in conservation in young people by giving them the opportunity to experience nature at close quarters. As evidence of this effectiveness, a number of South Africans who are doing great work in conservation and ecotourism today were first inspired to enter their fields by their experiences at the Lapalala Wilderness School. To date more than 70 000 youngsters have passed through the various programmes on offer and, more recently, teacher training has formed an increasingly important part of the school’s offering.

After Dale’s untimely death in 2001, his son Duncan Parker took on responsibility for Lapalala and, in collaboration with neighbouring farm owner Gianni Ravazzotti, has developed a bold plan to ensure the sustainability of this exceptional and uniquely important reserve.

## OUR LOCAL CULTURE

The local culture of our area is predominately Sepedi. However, the region is culturally diverse and enjoys representation from Tswanas and Shangaans.

Our staff are drawn from these local communities which are situated around the Waterberg area. The concept of multiple lodges on the reserve has secured permanent employment for many local families.

Through the continued upliftment of the local communities we are able to contribute to the sustained growth and development of the people in the area.

|                   |               |            |   |                         |
|-------------------|---------------|------------|---|-------------------------|
| Hello             | Dumela        | Pronounced | - | Doo-mair-la             |
| Thank you         | Keyaleboga    | Pronounced | - | Key-yuh-lair-bore-gha   |
| Goodbye           | Sepelagabotse | Pronounced | - | Se-pair-lar-gha-bots-se |
| How are you?      | Gobjang?      | Pronounced | - | Ggob-yung               |
| I am fine.        | Golokile      | Pronounced | - | Ggo-law-key-lair        |
| What is the time? | Ke-nako-mang? | Pronounced | - | Care-nuko-mung          |

*Some other words in Sepedi to consider perhaps.*

|              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| Good Morning | Letsogile      |
| Good Night   | Robela Gabotse |
| How are you? | Le Kae?        |
| Goodbye      | Sepela Gabotse |
| Please       | Kgopela        |
| Thank you    | Ke A Leboga    |