

A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL TREASURES OF THE
SOUTPANSBERG AREA

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COURSE SYNOPSIS

MODULE 1: Introduction and natural treasures

COMPONENT 1: Introduction and Photographical Journey
(Including Bibliography and Resources for the whole course)

MODULE 2: Natural Treasures

COMPONENT 2: The natural treasures of the Soutpansberg

- Geology, topography and rainfall
- Veld, types and botany
- Birding and game watching

MODULE 3 : Peopling of the Soutpansberg

COMPONENT 1: Peopling of the Soutpansberg (1)

- Prehistory
- Proto-history up to the 17th century
- The VhaLemba
- The Vha-Venda up to 1821
- The Buys people

COMPONENT 2: Peopling of the Soutpansberg (2)

- The Voortrekkers up to 1838
- Interactions and developments after 1838
- The Indians
- From the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) to the present

MODULE 4: Venda Culture

COMPONENT 1: Vhavenda Social organization and tradition

- Social organization
- Economy and Political structures
- Traditional education and rites of passage
- Marriage
- Religion
- Illness and death

COMPONENT 2: Venda legends, myths and scenic places

- Lwamondo and the sacred baboons
- Crocodile brains and the singer
- Love potions and Epsom salts
- Why monkeys are lean and agile
- Your fate is sealed in a hut with four doors
- Lake Fundudzi and its legends
- Phiphidi Waterfalls
- The Sacred Forest
- Tshatshingo Potholes

COMPONENT 3: Venda music, song and dance

- Dzata Museum and ancient terraces
- Instruments
- Song
- Dances
- The traditional healer, divination and medicine
- Most commonly used plants

INTRODUCTION

The Soutpansberg area in the far northern section of Limpopo Province, offers a richness of colours, textures, a variety of landscapes, unspoilt natural beauty, more than 600 of the estimated 1000 tree species recorded in South Africa and about 450 of the more or less 900 bird species recorded in South Africa. At least 30 tree species are endemic to the Soutpansberg.

It is therefore not surprising that such a magnificent and fertile part of Limpopo Province attracted people from the earliest times, and the prehistory, history and cultures/lifestyles of a fascinating mix of peoples (the San, VhaVenda, Shangana-Tsonga, Afrikaners) can be explored.

This publication is a synthesis of numerous studies over many years and does not pretend to be original research but aims to give a brief overview in a compact fashion students and tourists. No references appear in the text – my aim was maximum user-friendliness. The Bibliography contains all the sources used.

The Author

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