

INTRODUCTION

Driving from Gauteng, early morning across the rolling landscape of the highveld, the traveler is met by the rising sun on the horizon, softened by the early morning mist (or pollution) that so often clouds the Highveld. It is therefore, easy to understand why the name Mpumalanga, “place where the sun rises”, is so appropriate.

It was previously known as the Eastern Transvaal, but changed to Mpumalanga in September 1995. It is bordered by the Limpopo, Gauteng, Free State, KwaZulu Natal, as well as Mozambique and Swaziland.

COAT OF ARMS



<http://www.southafrica.to/provinces/Mpumalanga/Mpumalanga.htm>

Two kudu are supporting the shield and the Barberton daisy is very prominent on the shield.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Even though it is one of the smaller provinces, Mpumalanga has a population of more than 3,5 million people (*Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2006*).

According to the 2001 Census results, 27,5% of those aged 20 years or older has not undergone any schooling, while the population growth rate is higher than the national average.

Area	79 490 km ²
% of total area	6.5%
Population (Mid-year Estimates, 2006)	3 508 000
Languages (SA Yearbook 06-07)	siSwati 30,8% isiZulu 26,4% isiNdebele 12,1%
Races	Black (92.4%) White (6.5%) Coloured (0.2%) Asian (0.2%)
Unemployment rate (Labour Force Survey, March 2006)	27.4%
Capital	Nelspruit
Largest city	Nelspruit
Premier	Mr. Thabang Makwelta

MUNICIPALITIES AND DISTRICTS

The former homelands of KwaNdebele (Ndebele), KaNgwane and part of Lebowa, have all been incorporated into Mpumalanga.

Mpumalanga Province is divided into three municipal districts, which are further subdivided into 17 local municipalities:

Gert Sibande District Municipality

- Albert Luthuli Local Municipality)
- Msukaligwa Local Municipality
- Mkhondo Local Municipality
- Pixley Ka Seme Local Municipality
- Lekwa Local Municipality
- Dipaleseng Local Municipality
- Govan Mbeki Local Municipality

Nkangala District Municipality

- Delmas Local Municipality
- Emalahleni Local Municipality
- Steve Tshwete Local Municipality
- Highlands Local Municipality
- Thembisile Local Municipality
- Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality

Ehlanzeni District Municipality

- Thaba Chweu Local Municipality)
- Mbombela Local Municipality
- Umjindi Local Municipality
- Nkomazi Local Municipality
- Bushbuckridge Local Municipality)

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES OF THE LANDSCAPE

Mpumalanga is divided by the Drakensberg Escarpment into two sections. The western part known as the Highveld, with its rolling grasslands, and as the name indicates, it is situated at a high altitude. East of the mountain is the subtropical Lowveld /Bushveld, mainly dominated by the Savannah biome. It is fairly flat with a few rocky outcrops here and there.

The mountain ranges

The Drakensberg, with an altitude of more than 2000m at most places, has alpine grasslands and small areas of Afromontane Forests. On the border with Mozambique, the Lebombo Mountains is rather a low range.

The geological wonder of Mpumalanga, is the greenstone belt that occurs in the Barberton area. This is believed to be the oldest rocks on earth, dating 3.8 billion years ago, and containing evidence of the first life on earth, a green algae.

The main rivers

The Highveld watershed give rise the the Vaal-River, flowing west towards the Gariep (Orange) River and finally into the Atlantic ocean. The Olifants (“Elephant”) and Komati/Usustu/Pongola catchments flows towards the Indian ocean.

CLIMATE

The province falls within a summer-rainfall area. The Highveld has cold frosty winters, due to its altitude ranging from 1700m to 2300m above sea level. However, the summers are hot with frequent thunderstorms in the late afternoon.

The Lowveld has mild winters and a subtropical climate, attributed to its low altitude and proximity to the warm Indian Ocean.

The highveld receives between 650 to 900 mm per annum, but some places on the Escarpment, such as Graskop, receive up to 2500mm per annum, the highest in the province.

ECONOMY

Although it is the second-smallest province after Gauteng, it has the fourth-largest economy in South Africa.

GDPR at current prices (2004): R94 450 million

% of total GDP: 6.8%

Mpumalanga produces about 80% of the country's coal, and remains the largest production region for forestry and agriculture.

Mining, manufacturing and electricity contribute about 41% of the province's GDPR, while the remainder comes from government services, agriculture, forestry and related industries.

Agriculture

- Standerton, in the south, is renowned for its large dairy industry
- Ermelo used to be the district that produces the most wool in South Africa, but has since moved into third place.
- Piet Retief in the south-east is a production area for tropical fruit and sugar.
- Malelane also has a large sugar industry.
- Sabie is situated in the forestry heartland of the country.
- Carolina-Bethal-Ermelo is mainly a sheep-farming area, but potatoes, sunflowers, maize and peanuts are also produced in this region.
- Nelspruit, is the second-largest citrus-producing area in the country and export one-third of South Africa's oranges.

Other produce include:

- Subtropical fruits – mangoes, avocados, litchis, bananas, pawpaws, granadillas, guavas
- Vegetables
- Tobacco

Mining and Industries

- Witbank: The centre of the local coal-mining industry.
- Middelburg produces steel and vanadium.
- Barberton: The oldest gold-mining towns in South Africa.
- Secunda: South Africa's second petroleum from-coal installation is located here.
- One of the country's largest paper mills is situated at Ngodwana, close to its timber source.

Infrastructure

The Maputo Corridor, which links the province with Gauteng and Maputo in Mozambique, holds the promise of new economic development and growth for the region.

Tourism

- These forestry plantations are an ideal backdrop for ecotourism opportunities, with a variety of popular hiking trails, a myriad waterfalls, patches of indigenous forest and many nature reserves.
- Lake Chrissie is the largest natural freshwater lake in South Africa and is famous for its variety of aquatic birds, especially flamingos.



CULTURES : THE SWATI NATION

Swazi culture

- The Swazi are a very large part of the Nguni speaking group.
- They are found in Swaziland and in South Africa in the area that borders Swaziland and South Africa.
- The Swazi people who do not live within the borders of Swaziland do not live under the kings rule.
- In Swaziland they are ruled by ingonyama (the king/the lion) and indlovukazi (the queen mother).
- In rural areas the Swazi live in huts that are built close to one another so as to build homesteads. These are beehive huts.
- In traditional huts you will not find beds or chairs. People sleep on grass mats.
- In the centre is the cattle byre.
- Only men and boys are allowed to enter the byre, women on special occasions.
- The head man controlled the amount of grain used because the grain storage was in the byre.
- Clothing plays a big role in Swazi culture, the children do not wear much, just narrow beaded waistbands around the waist to protect them from evil.
- Married women wear heavier skirts made from cowhide and aprons made of goat skin.

Initiation and marriage

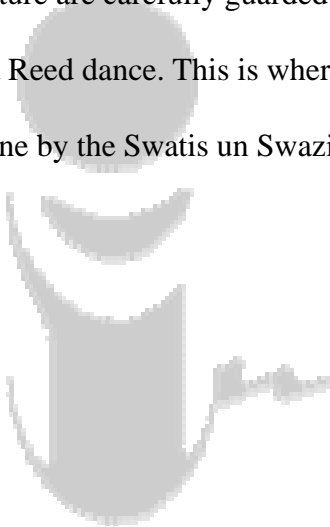
- Puberty is important to the Swazi, but is not celebrated publicly.
- Legend has it that king Msawti banned circumcision after a group of boys who had just been circumcised were killed by a zulu impi. Their weak state was taken advantage of by the Zulus.
- Now only the king gets circumcised before his installation as king.
- Marriage is regarded as the uniting of two families more than the individuals themselves.
- This unification is symbolised by the lobola that is paid for the wife by the husband to be.
- She only becomes a wife after she bears a child to prove her fertility. If she was infertile her family either returned the lobola or provided the brides blood sister to conceive for the husband.
- If the lobola is high it shows the status of a woman. For a commoner the lobola can be 12 head of cattle.

The homestead

- The heart of the homestead is the biggest hut which belongs to the granny and is known as kagogo.
- The life of the homestead revolves around this hut.
- Isibaya (cattle byre) is also important and along with kagogo, these are known to be also the spiritual core of the homestead.
- Next to kagogo is edladleni (main kitchen) and the females of the homestead gather here in the early evenings, here knowledge is shared by the older women to the young girls.

The Swazi Kingdom

- Swaziland is currently a monarchy.
- In 1968 Swaziland regained its independence.
- Swazi traditions and culture are carefully guarded and colourful ceremonies mark special occasions.
- Like the Zulus there is a Reed dance. This is where the king usually picks a the next wife.
- A lot of the practices done by the Swatis un Swaziland are not practiced by South African Swatis.



CULTURES : THE NDEBELE NATION

Religion and beliefs

- The Ndebele have a strong belief in the spirits.
- They believe that a lot of their fortunes, good or bad, are direct interventions from the spirits.
- Abezimu (the ancestors), are jealous and want to be given attention because they are the most important in the spiritual world.
- Belief says if you fail to constantly sacrifice and follow their directions leads to bad luck.
- The ancestors are also believed to be the ones protecting the living from evil spirits.
- This is done through dreams.
- Traditional healing is believed to be a gift from the ancestors.

Gender division

- Certain attitudes and practices are still very alive in the Ndebele community.
- Ndebele men, especially those from chiefly backgrounds still practice polygamy.
- These patriarchs are powerful and full of authority.
- This authority is an influence from the forefathers who were tenants on white farms and if anyone needed anything they needed to ask the male authority.
- The Ndebele women would then work for years as domestics in Pretoria. They would eventually go back home to look after the children and be supported by the husbands.
- Throughout the years the women have begun to get financial independence through making and selling mats, beadwork, dolls and other crafts.

Rites of passage

- To this day males and females still go through initiation.
- This marks the growth of an individual from childhood to adulthood.
- After the rites have been passed, initiates are allowed to engage in sexual intercourse so as to begin the process of engagement and marriage.
- Initiates of the same age group are encouraged to bond together so they can be distinguished from other age groups.
- Abakhetua (male initiates) are told to only socialize and associate themselves with other men who have been initiated, and not to share any of their experiences with the younger boys who have not gone through it.
- The initiates are secluded in an initiation lodge (umphadu).
- Initiation involves the education of both males and females of the deep mysteries of the group.

- These teachings are passed on from generation to generation of initiates.
- Wela or ingoma (male initiation) is practiced among the Ndebele after every four years with boys who are between the ages of 15 and 18.
- Their names have to be registered with the chief then the chief will then set a date for the initiation.
- The initiates then wear a grass headband called isonyana which is a symbol of the initiate being in preparation.
- Each of the abaketua is given isititirimba (loin cloth) before they go to the chiefs residence.
- Rituals are performed at the chiefs home to bid farewell to their boyhood.
- At dawn they are circumcised near a sacred river.
- They then cross the river (ukuwela) and are dispersed to different lodges according to what village they come from.
- For two months they are in isolation being taught on how to be a man.
- Feasts are the order of the day as they return home.
- They set alight the uphadu on departure as a symbol of burning boyhood and starting a new life as men.
- They return covered in blankets and wearing only isititirimba.
- They are now ready for sexual intercourse.
- Ukuthombisa (female initiation) has no circumcision involved, therefore is less painful.
- When girls reach puberty, the girls are stripped naked and every hair on their bodies is shaved off as a sign of returning the girls to nature.
- At night the girls gather around a fire and sing and launch into speeches of abuse and curse against males, male sexual organs and masculinity.
- Early the next morning, the girls are taken to the river and washed and the same happens the next morning.
- In isolation the girls are taught about homemaking.
- Until the isolation is over, the girls may not have contact with males so they do their work that they are being taught at dawn.
- The clothes she used during initiation are burnt as a sign of bidding farewell to girlhood.
- She is then given a beaded apron called isiphephetu as a sign of graduation, and is now ready to flirt and attract the attention of a potential husband.

Art and Beadwork

- The Ndebele are best known for their art.
- They decorate murals with similar motifs, designs and colours.
- Patterns are of many forms and symbols and geometric shapes are used.
- With the help of white trade, they were introduced to various colours of paint.
- The beadwork and art were done when there was not a lot of work to be done.
- The jewellery worn by a woman was a sign of her husbands status.

- Inzila are the copper rings worn by married women around the necks and when a woman got older, they would remove them in hospital, they often deformed the neck area. Nowadays they are not worn permanently.

Resources and further reading

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