

Mlawula Nature Reserve

Mlawula offers 16,500 Hectares of mountains and lowveld plains and a variety of walking trails ranging from gentle strolls to challenging day hikes. Picnicing is allowed at various sites along the trails. Alternative ways to see the park and wildlife include game drives on the 33 kilometres of road network (vehicles with high clearance required) or spending a luxurious night at SARA tented camp overlooking the Mlawula River.

Mammals of Mlawula

Mlawula is of key importance in protecting the natural heritage of the area and enables visitors to see many of the animals that used to naturally occur all over Swaziland. Game drives can be arranged but you don't have to go far into the reserve to see the herds of impala, kudu, zebra and wildebeest. Sightings of nyala, spotted hyena, serval, oribi and the elusive side-striped jackel have also been made.

Sexy Cycads

Cycads are an ancient dioecious plant (each individual is either male or female) that date back to the Jurassic era. At Mlawula you have an exceptional opportunity to see the endangered *Encephalatus umbuluziensis*.

These cycads are so rare that they are only found in the Mbuluzi Valley in Mlawula. A study has just begun into the diversity and distribution of the plant within the reserve.

As well as cycads Mlawula has examples of typical lowveld bush including the many different types of indigenous grasses and trees including the beautiful Ironwood Forests used locally for carvings and furniture.

Birds to watch out for...

Malachite kingfisher, Red bishop, Saddlebilled stork, Hoopoe, Egyptian geese, Lilac breasted roller, Bateleu Eagle and the magnificent Fish Eagle are just some of the fascinating inhabitants of the reserve.



Further information

SARA tented camp and Siphiso camp site are self-catering and situated in the heart of the reserve. For enquiries and camp reservations call Mlawula on **Telephone** (+268) 383 8885 **email** mlawula@sntc.org.sz



Mbuluzi Game Reserve

Mbuluzi Game Reserve has been privately run since 1994 and uniquely offers three well-equipped luxury self-catering lodges that each have stunning viewing platforms over the river. The excellent road and trail network enables visitors to explore the entire reserve including the spectacular northern Shengeni Loop that is almost entirely encircled by the Mbuluzi River.

Mbuluzi animals

Unlike the other reserves Mbuluzi offers the opportunity to see many different animals including giraffes, hippos and crocodiles. The giraffe population at Mbuluzi is growing and both adult and young can be seen. Mbuluzi also boasts large numbers of zebra, wildebeest, impala, bushbuck, waterbuck, kudu and nyala. There are a couple of inquisitive ostriches that live near the lodges which offer an excellent chance to view both crocodiles and hippos. Mbuluzi also has bird hides to watch the 300 bird species found in the reserve including the rare African funfoot.



Walking trails of Mbuluzi

Mbuluzi offers a number of enjoyable day walking trails ranging from a gentle 2.6 kilometres to the more challenging Imbvondvo loop at 8.8 kilometres. The walks take you through a fascinating variety of tree species from the distinctive Knob thorn acacia, into clusters of old Leadwood trees and the infamous Tamboti trees known to be excellent for furniture but toxic to humans if used as fuel on the braai. You will also see some fine examples of Marula, Red Bushwillows, mahogany species and Weeping Boar-beans with their beautiful red flowers that attract sunbirds in spring.

Further information

The Mbuluzi turnoff is 6 km north of Simunye. The Lodges are self-catering and must be booked in advance. For enquiries and lodge reservations call Mbuluzi on **Telephone** (+268) 383 8861 **email** mbuluzi@africaonline.co.sz



Lubombo

LUBOMBO CONSERVANCY RESERVE

GUIDE TO

Shewula Mlawula Mbuluzi Reserves



The Lubombo Story

In April 1999 the Lubombo Conservancy was officially opened to encompass Shewula Nature Reserve, Mlawula Nature Reserve, Mbuluzi Game Reserve, Hlane Royal National Park and SISA Ranch. The aim of the Conservancy is to protect a wilderness area large enough to re-establish game stocks and to ensure conservation and development programmes work together to create sustainable economic opportunities for local communities. Looking to the future, the Lubombo Conservancy will become a key Game Reserve in a huge 'wildlife corridor' linking together reserves in Swaziland, South Africa and Mozambique to create a Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) or 'Peace Park' between these neighbouring countries.



Shewula Nature Reserve

Established as a Nature Reserve in 1999, Shewula is the newest addition to the Lubombo Conservancy. The Shewula Community is descendant from the Sifundza clan whose Chiefs are all buried in the Nswayi sacred forest on the edge of the escarpment. Shewula is a community collaboration reserve and offers visitors an unique opportunity and a fascinating insight into life in a traditional rural Swazi community.

Hiking trails

Shewula is for adventure seekers, boasting some of the most breath-taking views in Swaziland. The hiking trails that lead up and down the escarpment to the Mbuluzi River, prove both challenging and spectacular. Trails vary in length and difficulty and can be guided or self guided. Mountain camp offers hikers and visitors traditional thatched accommodation with all the mod-cons.

Functional flora...

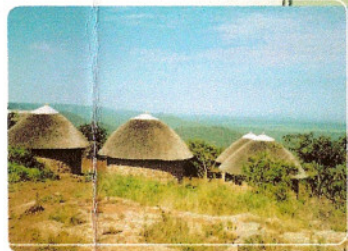
The enormous variety of trees and plants found in the reserve not only add to the interest of the hiking trails but also provide the Shewula Community with essential medicines, materials and food. The Untfuma Tree *Solanum auleastrum* contains poisonous fruit but the juice can be rubbed into the skin to cure skin disease. Ask the rangers about the Umpahlantfu Tree *Ziziphus mucronata* which is widely used by the traditional healers for medicinal and magical purposes when the leaves are placed in newly dug graves. The red fruit of *Plicosepalus kalacharieis* can be chewed to produce a sticky gum which is very loosely wrapped around branches and hung near water to catch drinking bats and birds. The Toothbrush Plant is traditionally used to clean teeth. The stem is dipped into an opened fruit which acts as a natural toothpaste.

Bountiful birds...

Mountain camp is a perfect vantage point to watch soaring birds of prey. White backed vultures, black eagles and bat hawks all frequent the skies over Shewula. Common birds you will see walking the trails are the olive woodpecker, helmeted guinea fowl, African green pigeon and the blackeyed bulbul. Ross's lourie has stunning red tail feathers that are used in traditional Swazi headdresses.

Further information

The Shewula turnoff is ten kilometres south of Lomahasha border post. Mountain camp is half an hour scenic drive through the community. For enquiries and camp reservations contact Swazi Trails. **Telephone** (+268) 416 2180
email tours@swazitrails.co.sz



Hiking trails at Shewula Nature Reserve

Contributors

Ian Abrol, Anna Biddlestone, Kat Brendel, Ella Calnan, Cate Donnelly, Helen Fothergill, Ali Grainger, Marcus Green, Jon Leith, Louisa Lopez, Tom Owens, Julian Simpson, Caroline Spencer, Jacs Tierney, Lucy King, Jenny Bowen.



QUEST OVERSEAS

In March/April 2001 a team of volunteer students visited the Lubombo Conservancy for six weeks. Based at Mountain Camp for two weeks they worked hard alongside the Shewula Rangers and Guides to create and mark 20 kilometres of new hiking trails throughout the reserve.

The students also spent a few hours helping at the orphanage schools. Quest Overseas is returning to Shewula in 2002 to continue to support the community with their work.

The team then spent four weeks in Mlawula and Mbuluzi and carried out large-scale vegetation surveys concentrating mainly on mapping the invasion of alien plants in the reserves. The location of high density patches of *Chromolaena odorata*, *Parthenium spp* and *Lantana camera* were identified and new methods of eradication of these plants will be undertaken using the results.

The students collected the information in this leaflet as part of their project work.

