



Mashovhela Bush Lodge

Morning Sun Bush Camps

Drumbeat Restaurant Venue

Lokovhela Mountain Cottages

Stargazing Hammock Camp

Exclusive 4x4 Mountain Camp

Marketing & Bookings

Faerie Glen • 0081 • South Africa

Mobile: + 27 (0) 79 4276333

Tel & Fax: +27 (0) 12 991 6930

Bookings: [bookings@morningsun.co.za](mailto:bookings@morningsun.co.za)

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## Background

Mashovhela Lodge is situated on and part of Morning Sun Nature Reserve in the Soutpansberg Mountains of the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

Morning Sun Nature Reserve presently consists of four farms, namely Zwarthoek, Zwarthoek portion1 (Lokovhela), Little Leigh and Morning Sun in the Soutpansberg District. The first of these, Little Leigh, was purchased in 1970 by the current owner, Dr Hans H Hahn.

The nature reserve is registered under No. 89 as a National Heritage Site, because it is a prime example of the unique biodiversity of the Soutpansberg.

Mashovhela Lodge was built on the already degraded site of an abandoned Venda settlement in order to minimise the ecological footprint and a conscious decision was made not to connect to the public power grid. Instead renewable energy, wherever possible, would be used to satisfy the energy needs of the Lodge. In this manner Mashovhela Lodge contributes to minimising greenhouse gas emission and climatic change.

Mashovhela Lodge received its first paying guests in May 2008. The lodge has 10 en-suite chalets and a restaurant and conference centre that can accommodate 60 covers in one sitting, a safari tent annex is under construction (one prototype tent is already available).

### Business Brief, Objectives and Goals

#### Vision:

Enjoyment of a unique eco-experience amidst stunning scenic beauty and biodiversity in a malaria-free area providing guests with an escape from the busy city life in an atmosphere of warm and friendly hospitality.  
Promoting understanding, respect and preservation of the Venda culture, upliftment of local communities and conservation of the Soutpansberg environment.



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## Objectives and Goals:

- Create an economically sustainable operation.
- Create new employment opportunities
- To provide an eco-friendly operation
- Provide on-going training and skills transfer to all staff
- Increase the land under conservation, through purchasing further farms or creating a conservancy with likeminded neighbours.
- Controlled introduction of game species indigenous to the region
- Removal of all exotic and invasive plant species
- To provide a memorable experience for guests
- To inform and educate staff and guests in eco-friendly living
- To aid in the upliftment of the local village through employment, including part time employment of dancers and labourers, village tourism and skills transfer.
- To create awareness of the Soutpansberg as a tourism destination

## Achievements

- Creating an economically sustainable operation
  - Since the lodge was opened in May 2008 the lodge has experienced an increase in occupation each year.
  - The restaurant has been received well by the local community for casual meals, events and weddings and has won prizes at local competitions.
- Creating new employment opportunities
  - The lodge has a 22 full time staff and 4 at the head office
  - On average 3 casual Labourers are employed on a casual basis
  - 10-12 dancers regularly perform at the lodge
- To provide an eco-friendly operation
  - The Lodge has been awarded with a Gold Leaf by the Wilderness Foundation Green Leaf standard.
  - Mashovhela Lodge won the Imvelo Award in the independent class for Best Single Natural Resource Management Program: Energy in 2010
- Provide on-going training and skills transfer to all staff
  - The majority of the staff started at Mashovhela as builders and through on-going training they are now employed in hospitality related positions, with some holding junior manager status.
  - All staff hold a 1<sup>st</sup> Aid certificate



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- Increase the land under conservation, through purchasing further farms or creating a conservancy with likeminded neighbours.
  - Since the first farm Little Leigh was purchased, the farms Zwarthoek and Morning Sun were purchased and in 2009 the latest addition to our reserve is Zwarthoek Portion1. Making the total land under conservation in excess of 3000 ha.
  - The Owner of the reserve is presently in negotiations with neighbours to drop fences between properties, hence increasing the land under conservation to possibly 5000 ha or more
- Removal of all exotic and invasive plant species
  - Morning Sun Reserve has an on-going management program for the eradication of all exotic and invasive plant species. Wood obtained from such programs is utilized in the production of furniture, wood work for the lodge as well as firewood for our boma, restaurant fire place and water heating boilers.
- To provide a memorable experience for guests
  - Mashovhela Lodge won the Welcome Award for Best Lodge 2009/2010 by South African Tourism for our high service levels
  - Guests enjoy a true nature and authentic cultural experience
  - Mashovhela Lodge is well known for its high standard of cuisine and won 2 awards in this regard at the 2010 Bush Banquet competition
- To aid in the upliftment of the local village through employment, including part time employment of dancers and labourers, village tourism and skills transfer.
  - The majority of staff employed at Mashovhela Lodge are from the local village and all temporary staff used are from the village
  - 10-12 dancers from the local village perform regularly at the lodge
  - A tour of the village has been introduced as an activity for guests of Mashovhela, which has a financial benefit for the village
  - Mashovhela supports their vegetable farm, ensuring its on-going success.
- To create awareness of the Soutpansberg as a tourism destination
  - Through Mashovhela's marketing plan it promotes the whole Soutpansberg district and surrounds.
  - Tours into Venda and the surrounding area are conducted from the Lodge.



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## **Comment - Environment**

### **General:**

We operate Morning Sun Nature Reserve and Mashovhela Lodge as a demonstration Project as part of the UNESCO-registered Vhembe Biosphere Reserve (VBR) in respect of **all objectives of the VBR**. Our founder and CEO, Dr. Hans H. HAHN, serves on the development and conservation committees of the VBR.

Comprehensive information on our environmental endeavours is available from our website and formed the basis for Mashovhela Lodge in 2009, having been awarded the Gold Leaf level (more than 95% compliance) of the Wilderness Foundation's Green Leaf Environmental Standard. We are now busy with developing the entire Morning Sun Nature Reserve, including all its camps and lodges and infrastructure, towards achieving the Platinum Leaf award level.

In 2010, we received the Imvelo Award in the category Best Single Resource Management Programme – Energy.

## **Comments – Community**

### **General**

From the outset, we closely cooperated and regularly met with the chief and elders of the Ramalamula Clan of Tshikuwe and Kavhembe Villages, Farm Mooiplaats, adjoining our property, to whose community we give preference as regards our labour force, whenever possible. Mashovhela Lodge was largely built using mostly previously unskilled members of that community, teaching them the basics of building and subsequently of hospitality.

## **Comments – Local Economic Impact**

### **General**

Opening in May 2008, Mashovhela Lodge is still relatively new and has worked hard in getting known by the trade and general public. With limited funding available for marketing Mashovhela Lodge registered with TEP. This has been of great advantage for the lodge and has aided it getting on the map. Through TEP marketing team has been able to exhibit at 2 major international tourism exhibitions and local workshops in both Cape Town and Johannesburg, which otherwise would not have been financially possible.

TEP has also aided the lodge in contributing to the costs of producing marketing material, such as banners, brochures, CD's and videos, which have formed a vital part of the Lodge's success.



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The attendance at the Exhibitions and Workshops has resulted in Mashovhela Lodge seeing a continual growing occupancy year on year, even during the global recession when other lodges in the area, sat basically empty. Owing to the growing occupancy plans are already underway to increase the number of chalets, introduce a tented camp, a hammock camp already operating and a hiking trail with its own camp.

The success of the Lodge is due the dedication and determination of the owner Dr. Hans Hahn who leads the team. His son, Norbert initially started the building of the lodge which was later completed by his daughter, Ingrid, who is now in charge of operations. Most of the local building team has been trained in hospitality and with ongoing training some of them have already reached junior management positions. The high levels of service and friendliness by all staff members ensured that the Lodge won the Welcome Award in 2009/2010 for best Lodge in South Africa by South African Tourism.

### ***Salt Shaker Finalist of the year: 2011***

***This major annual event organised by the local Chamber of commerce, SACCI and Tourism board , accredit selected properties for their efforts in the local economic Impact on tourism in the area.***

### **Research**

Understanding all aspects forming this complex ecosystem

Mashovhela Lodge proudly houses its own private research institute, founded by Dr. Norbert HAHN, including the only internationally recognized and electronically catalogued herbarium in the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

Norbert's greatest interest is in botanical research, for which he obtained his PhD degree from the University of Pretoria. His research work, his resultant involvement with scientists from all over the world, and his serving on conservation-orientated committees, and meeting political and traditional leaders, is of great value to the reserve.

His multi-disciplinary approach has made him a recognized authority and source of knowledge on the natural and cultural history of the region, its fauna, flora and people, its archaeology, geology and climatology.

Norbert's contributions to an understanding of the endemism and unique biodiversity of the Soutpansberg Region (including his discoveries and identification of numerous species new to science) enjoy international recognition.



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## **Education**

Education forms the backbone of our Responsible Tourism policy from training of the local community members in different skills and environmental awareness to educating our guests in socio-ecological and environmental practices.

Guests visiting the lodge will automatically become aware of our on-going eco-tourism efforts and unobtrusively they will become educated in eco-friendly living, conservation, caring for the environment and socio-economic problems of the Venda people, whilst enjoying the spectacular mountains and nature surrounding them. Special interest programs, in Venda culture, photography and botany give our guests the option to gain more knowledge in these fields.

The majority of the staff at the lodge are from the local community that we have trained for their respective positions. Continuous training ensures that they develop further skills making promotions available to them. With construction completed we have started training, through our qualified Venda guide, some of the building team, who are now out of work, to become guides for the Lodge or at other destinations.

Our Moto:

Through Positive thinking we will achieve our goal and reflect a smile from every guest.