

## LESOTHO CUSTOMS

### Greetings:

Upon shaking hands, two people greet by saying either *Lumela* (Hello) or *Khotso* (Peace be with you). This is followed by the phrase *U phela joang?* (How are you?).

If acquainted, each makes polite inquiries about the other's family. They also typically ask *U tsoa kae?* (Where are you coming from?) and *U tsamaea kae?* (Where are you going?); an explanation is expected.

The greeting process eventually evolves into a conversation. Greeting habits vary somewhat, depending on whether men, women, young adults, or children are involved.

Personal space among Basotho tends to be close. In farewells, the person leaving says *Sala hantle* (Stay well).

The one staying says *Tsamaea hantle* (Go well)

### Gestures:

Pointing with the index finger is impolite. One passes items with the right hand or both hands.

It is common for friends of the same gender to walk down the street holding hands.

If two people meet on the street and stop to shake hands and greet, they may hold the handshake throughout the conversation, regardless of their respective gender. Otherwise, members of the opposite sex do not touch or display affection in public.

People use subtle movements of the head and eyes to convey positive or negative responses to something.

### Holidays:

Lesotho's official holidays include New Year's Day, Army Day (20 Jan.), and Moshoeshoe's Day (12 Mar.).

Tree Planting Day (21 Mar.) is important because Lesotho is subject to severe soil erosion and has virtually no forests. The government sponsors tree-planting projects to provide future building and fuel supplies and to guard against further erosion.

Other national holidays include Family Day (first Monday in July), Independence Day (5 Oct.), and National Sports Day (first Monday in October). Easter (Friday–Monday) and Christmas are the most popular religious holidays. Boxing Day (26 Dec.) comes from the British tradition of giving small boxed gifts to service personnel and tradesmen. It is now usually a day spent visiting friends and relatives. Villages hold end-of-school “graduation” parties for schoolchildren.