

Water in Lesotho & The Katse Dam

Water is one of Lesotho's primary natural resources. Much of Lesotho's export income comes from water, and most of its power comes from hydroelectricity.

The Katse Dam was built as a part of the first phase of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, which will eventually include five large dams. The idea for the dam came from a South African civil engineer, Ninham Shand, who identified it as a way to channel the water supply to South Africa. Water has been redirected to aid Maseru in times of dangerous shortages in Lesotho. This project was also created in order to generate electricity for Lesotho. In 1986, the World Bank arranged for a treaty between South Africa and Lesotho to start the project.

The Katse Dam is located high in the Maluti Mountains on the Malibamatso River. It is currently the second largest dam in Africa, the largest being the Tekeze Dam in Ethiopia built in 2009. The Katse Dam has a double curve arch structure. The dam was officially completed in 1996 and the reservoir was filled with water in 1997. On January 22, 1998, water began to be delivered to South Africa.



Facts about the Katse Dam!

- Height above foundation: 185m
- Crest length: 710m
- Concrete volume: 2.32million/m³
- The water flows downhill to South Africa through a tunnel that is 82km long and 4.8m in diameters

The water starts its journey at the intake tower Ha Lejone, eventually arriving in the Ash River, between Clarens and Bethlehem, then into the Liebenbergs Vlei River, which joins the Wilge River near Frankfort, before finally reaching the Vaal Dam.

The Katse Dam created problems for the lives of many farmers, who lost land to the project. The project was controversial, as many of the Basotho people do not have easy access to safe and clean drinking water.