

# Devil's Peak

## The Saddle Route

A walking guide to Devil's Peak, including a route description, history, stories, myths and legends, flora, fauna, maps and illustrations



South African NATIONAL PARKS

A Park for All, Forever  
in Park vir Almal, vir Altyd  
iPaka yoluntu lonke ngonaphakade



iziko museums of South Africa



Love Cape Town TOURISM

www.gatewayguides.co.za

## Dine with a view.

Our Food and Beverage outlets include Ten67, KLOUD Bar, Views, and TAP Bar.



TEN67



TAP



KLOUD BAR



Views

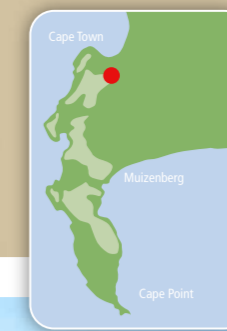
Queuing not for you?  
Then book **Fast Track** tickets  
via Webtickets.



TABLE MOUNTAIN AERIAL CABLEWAY

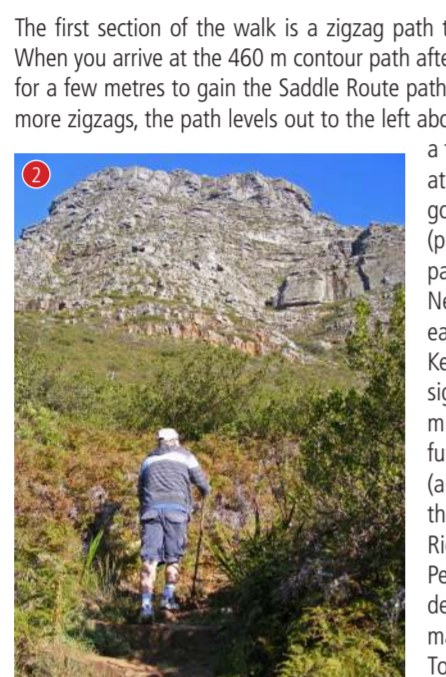
# A Walk up the Saddle Route on Devil's Peak (1000 m)

*'There is, for instance, the Devil's Peak – a perfect poem in itself, as it rises grandly over the military lines ... It stands out boldly against the sky-line ... a perfect battle-ground for the winds ...' (A diary entry of 'A Lady' – 26 August 1861)*



Standing slightly over 1000 m, this giant of the Cape Peninsula should be on every walker's peak-bagging list. Technically, the Saddle Route is considered an easy walk, but with a gain of 600 m in height from the start to the summit, it is a good test on the legs.

To get to the Saddle Route, head for the lower cable station, continue along Tafelberg Road, past Platteklip Gorge, for about another kilometre, where you will find the start of this route (pic 1). Allow yourself four hours for the round trip.



One of the many zigzags up the first section of the walk.

The first section of the walk is a zigzag path to gain the Saddle (pic 2). When you arrive at the 460 m contour path after a few minutes, turn right for a few metres to gain the Saddle Route path again (pic 3). After a few more zigzags, the path levels out to the left above Pine Gully (pic 4). After a few minutes you will arrive at Saddle Rock, which is a good spot to take a break (pic 5). At this point, take the path that leads off towards Newlands Ravine on the eastern side of the Saddle. Keep an eye out for the signpost which is about 140 m away. Here is where the fun starts: head straight up (and I mean straight up!) to the gap between Oppelskop Ridge and the top of Devil's Peak (pic 6) where a well-deserved break with magnificent views of Cape Town (pic 7) can be taken. Continue up the ridge in the knowledge that the summit is close. The views from here are spectacular (pic 8). The path eases off as you near the summit. All of a sudden, a trig beacon appears (pic 9); don't be fooled – the real summit is still a hundred or so metres off. Skirt this beacon on either the left or the right as the path forks here. When you reach the summit, you can either boulder hop along the top or walk around left to reach trig beacon 37 (pic 10). Your return journey will follow the same route.

The rest of this guide will give you interesting information about Devil's Peak which should enrich your experience and maybe instil a desire to try some of the other routes on this mountain.

### Other walks on Devil's Peak

Devil's Peak might not be a sought-after area for rock climbing, but in the hiking and scrambling department, it is a great destination with numerous walks of easy technical standard. All of the walks are on good paths and are easy to follow. Some of the older routes on the Newlands side are not recommended as they are dangerous and route-finding is a challenge in itself. In addition to the Saddle Route, some of the other routes are:

**Contour Paths:** There are three levels on Devil's Peak. The first level (460 m) is the standard Contour Path that makes its way around Table Mountain and Devil's Peak and continues all the way through Newlands Forest to Constantia Nek. This Contour Path can be reached by



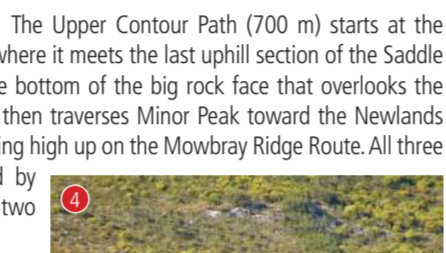
When you reach the 460 m contour path, turn right for a few metres to gain the Saddle Route path again.



The start of the Devil's Peak Saddle Route.

paths that lead up to it from Tafelberg Road, the King's Blockhouse and from the Newlands side.

The Middle Contour Path (580 m) dissects the middle section of Devil's Peak starting at Saddle Rock, descending via the plantation path; then it runs horizontally, cutting across above Woodstock Cave to meet the Mowbray Ridge route.



The flat path above Pine Gully.

The Upper Contour Path (700 m) starts at the end of Oppelskop Ridge where it meets the last uphill section of the Saddle Route. This path skirts the bottom of the big rock face that overlooks the CBD, crosses over a gap, then traverses Minor Peak toward the Newlands side of the mountain, ending high up on the Mowbray Ridge Route. All three contour paths are linked by other paths. (See the two illustrations on page 2.)

**Newlands Ravine:** This route is well worth doing and great for hot summer days as it is east facing. The easiest way to access this route is from Rhodes Memorial. Walk up to the Contour Path; walk left until you find yourself under Newlands Ravine. Look out for the large scree slope. Walk up the scree slope till you find a well-defined path at the top, which will take you to the top of the Saddle.

**Dark Gorge, Second Waterfall Ravine, Eastern Buttress, First Waterfall Ravine and Eastern Buttress final section:** These routes are not



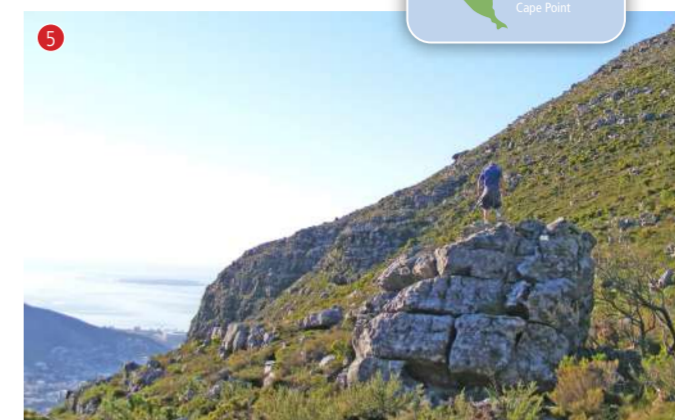
recommended for walkers. The first three routes involve serious rock scrambling and routes that are hard to follow. First Waterfall Ravine has become loose because of rock falls and has a tricky detour near the beginning – if you miss this detour, it can turn your walk into a dangerous day out: people have lost their lives on this section. A short walk to the start of this ravine via a path above the King's Blockhouse is worth doing. Eastern Buttress Upper Section Direct is a great way to gain the summit but should



Van Hunks and the Devil do battle for Van Hunks's soul and the kingdoms of the world at the Saddle Rock.

only be tackled by experienced walkers who can handle heights. Preferably do it with someone who knows the route well. The route starts at the top of the gap between Minor Peak and Devil's Peak. Facing the summit of Devil's Peak, walk up as far as you can till the slope meets the final rock band. At this point, you can walk out left along a grassy ledge. Walk till you are overlooking the Newlands side of the mountain. You will have to gain height to a ledge about 5 m above: this section is steep. Keep moving left till you see a gully which is left of the centre of the buttress. Scramble up this gully, moving out left at the top, and follow the weakest line of resistance to the summit.

**Mowbray Ridge:** This is a 5-star scramble, and undoubtedly the best and most exciting on Devil's Peak. This route has a few exposed sections



The Saddle Rock where many walkers stop for a well-deserved break. It is said this is the spot where Van Hunks and the Devil had their battle.

some ledges gaining height through the rock bands. The path gets technically easier as you gain height. Pass an old fire lookout hut. A broad ridge takes you up to the next narrow section (Knife Edge) with a nice exposed drop-off into First Waterfall Ravine. The next section ahead is the summit of Minor Peak. Walk up and then scramble up a ramp slightly right of centre. The path will take you around to the City Bowl side of Minor Peak. At this stage, you can continue via the high-level traverse to Devil's Peak or take the path down and around the mountain back to the King's Blockhouse.

### How Devil's Peak got its name

The early European explorers referred to this mountain as 'Windberg' (Wind Mountain). At a later date (around 1691) the Dutch started to call the peak Duiwepiek, 'Duiwekop' (on account of the 'wind doing the devil's work' when the wind blasted down its slopes and caused havoc to ships in the bay) or 'Duiwenberg' (duiwe meaning 'doves'). One theory is that the English word 'Devil's' came to be used probably as a corruption of the similar sounding duiwe. In 1620 the English decided to name Devil's Peak 'Charles Peak' after Charles I of England in order to try to stamp their authority over the Cape as the Dutch were also interested in laying claim to this important new refreshment station en route to the East. At the same time, however, the English Captain Humphrey Fitzherbert named the peak 'Herbert's Mount' after himself. In 1687 the Dutch peak was also referred to as 'Crown Hill' and Minor Peak was named 'Windy Hill'. None of these names lasted long: 'Devil's Peak' won the naming game.

The second explanation of the origin of the name comes from a legend captured in the writings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the 19th century. The legend was based on an old folktale from 1700 which is told in different variations. The legend is about a Dutchman named Jan van Hunks, a retired pirate, who had settled at the Cape and lived on the slopes of Devil's Peak with his wife. He was a prodigious pipe smoker and rum drinker. His wife forbade him to smoke in the house so he was made to smoke outdoors. Van Hunks would take himself off up Devil's Peak into the saddle between Devil's Peak and Table Mountain and settle down at Saddle Rock for a serious smoking session. One day a hooded stranger appeared at his favourite smoking spot. The stranger, also a pipe smoker, asked Van Hunks if he could join him. The stranger noticed Van Hunks smoked a very strong mix, of which Van Hunks was very proud. As they were typical men, a wager was brought into the conversation after Van Hunks had boasted that he could outsmoke any man on the planet. The stranger remarked that he would compete but he had run out of tobacco, so if Van Hunks allowed it, he would have to compete smoking Van Hunks's strong blend. The stranger's wager was, 'Your soul against the kingdoms of the world' or as



The Gap between Oppelskop Ridge and the summit ridge.

Please support our advertisers who make this free guide possible.

**Desmond & Leah Tutu**  
LEGACY FOUNDATION

**TRUTH TO POWER**  
DESMOND TUTU & THE CHURCHES  
in the struggle against apartheid

The Truth to Power Exhibition is the first in South Africa to explore the role of the churches in the liberation struggle. It does so through the multi-faceted life of global icon, Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu. It is the only in depth interpretation of apartheid and resistance to it in the Western Cape. This permanent exhibition aims to inspire a new generation of uncompromised, courageous voices in the world.

Open Tues - Sat 9h30 - 15h30 • The exhibition is a cash-free zone. Entry fees: Standard: R100 • African nationals and South Africans with ID: R50 • Pensioners and Students with ID: R30 • All Children under 18: Free  
The Old Granary Building, 11 Buitenkant Street, District Six (Exhibition entrance on Longmarket Street.)  
GPS coordinates: -33.9268534° S, 18.4226203, 17° E  
www.tutu.org.za @TheTutuLegacy

**TANDEM SKYDIVING EVERY DAY\***  
\* WEATHER PERMITTING

**SKYDIVE CAPE TOWN**

**BOOK NOW**  
+27 (0)82 800 6290  
bookings@skydivcapetown.co.za  
www.SKYDIVECAPETOWN.CO.ZA

ONLY 35 MIN DRIVE FROM CAPE TOWN CBD

**AFRICAN TRADING PORT Experience**  
AFRICA UNDER ONE ROOF  
WWW.AFRICANTRADINGPORT.COM

**UMLANI BUSHCAMP**  
GREATER KRUGER NATIONAL PARK  
Experience the real deal only 2.5 hr. flight from Cape Town.

www.umlani.com  
Bookings: 021 785 5547 • Email: info@umlani.com • follow us on @UmlaniBushcamp

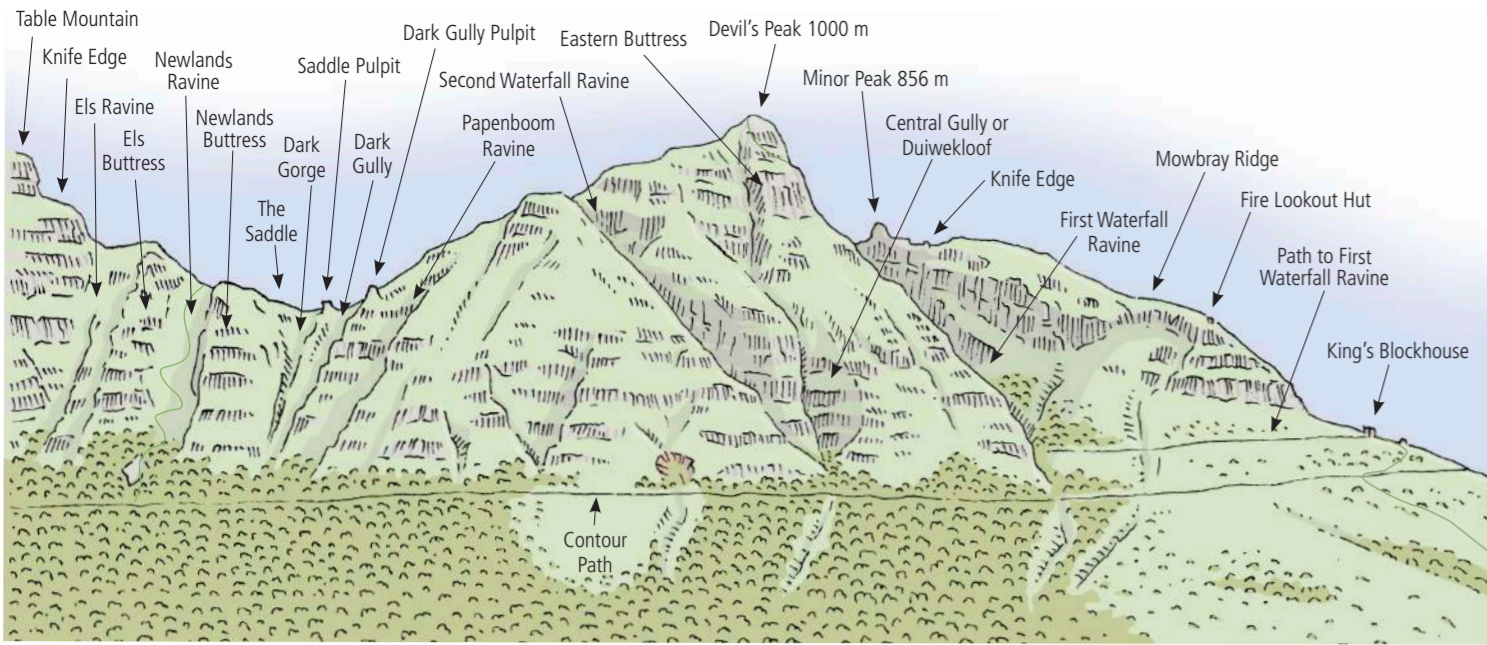
**NAPIER FARM STALL AND RESTAURANT**

This quaint farmstall and restaurant offers delicious home cooked lunches, home-baked, doll items and gifts. Sip a glass wine while you relax under the vine covered stoep and watch the world go by.

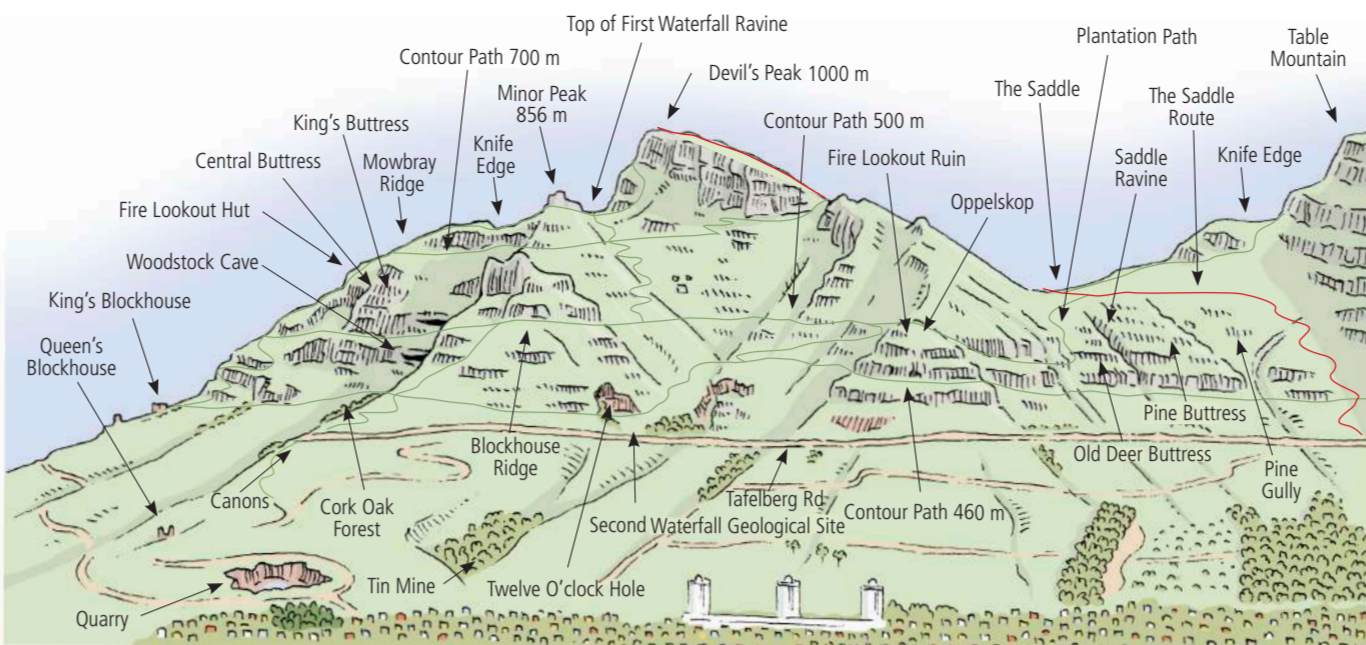
108 Sarel Cilliers St., Napier.  
Tel/fax: +27 28 423 3440  
napierfarmstall@trekomsa.net  
OPEN: Open 7 days a week 08H00 – 16H00

To advertise contact Clifford Smith: 082 728 4229 • cliff@gatewayguides.co.za

Please support our advertisers who make this free guide possible.



View of Devil's Peak from the Southern Suburbs.



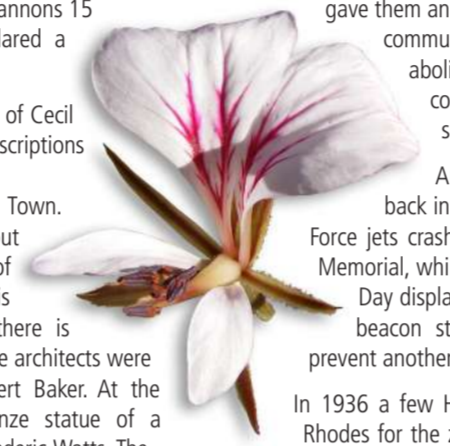
View of Devil's Peak from the City Bowl.

other versions of the story go, 'Your soul against a barquentine of red gold' (rum). Van Hunks agreed, the contest started immediately, pipes were filled and smoked, filled and smoked, hours went by, days went by, the sky was filled with smoke and eventually the top of Table Mountain was covered with a white tablecloth of smoke.

approach, but owing to rock falls the road has been closed near the start of the Saddle Route, although you can still walk in from here. Walk along the road until you reach the end of the tarred section. Here you will find a path that leads straight up, running next to a stand of cork oak trees on your left.

It was the last building in the defensive line protecting the eastern flank. It is 8 m² in area and was topped by a metal structure which is no longer in existence. By 1893 the fort had become a prison for convicts working for the forester who lived in a cottage near the two old cannons 15 m lower down from the blockhouse.

In 1905 there was a report in The Cape Argus (a local newspaper) on the unofficial 'Coloured Advisory Council' that used to meet every Sunday at a boulder known as 'The Stone' on the slopes of Devil's Peak. Meeting here gave them an outlet to discuss and act on issues that affected their communities.



Pelargonium



One of the natural view platforms found just off the path, close to the summit.

The Vredehoek Tin Mine: In 1911 the Vredehoek Tin Company started mining above Vredehoek. (See side elevation drawing above.) In its short-lived heyday, 100 men worked these mines, only to discover that the ore was erratically scattered in solid rock, and it was cheaper to mine alluvial tin in the Durbanville area.

Rhodes Memorial: This memorial was built in honour of Cecil John Rhodes in 1912. It was financed by public subscriptions raised from the estimated 30 000 citizens of Cape Town.

An incident that happened in 1971 put Devil's Peak back in the news. Three Hawker Siddeley 125 (Mercurius) Air Force jets crashed into the side of Devil's Peak just above Rhodes Memorial, while flying in formation on a practice run for a Republic Day display.

vanished.

So, to this day, whenever the clouds start forming around the saddle on Devil's Peak and the southeast starts blowing, some townsfolk will look up and exclaim, 'The devil and Van Hunks are at it again!'

In 1957 a Roman Catholic priest, the Revd E. Klimeck, launched a campaign in the press to have the mountain renamed 'Christus Peak'. The climax of this campaign involved the priest and his followers climbing Devil's Peak while chanting prayers and placing a cross on the summit.

Rhodes was larger than life, both loved and hated, but he was undoubtedly one of the history makers of southern Africa. The memorial is modelled on a Greek temple: there is symbolism in every aspect of it. The architects were Sir Francis Macey and Sir Herbert Baker.

In 1936 a few Himalayan tahrs, which had been imported by Cecil Rhodes for the zoo on Devil's Peak, escaped, resulting in about 700 offspring running wild all over the mountain by the year 2000.

More old stories and facts about Devil's Peak

The journals of The Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA) which span over 100 years, now and then bring to light some interesting little nuggets of information on Devil's Peak. In 1688 nine slaves, including freed slaves, had had enough of their masters and decided to make their escape to Mozambique which was Portuguese territory.

Devil's Peak has always been a spiritual place for religions, with prayer and praise meetings taking place at Woodstock Cave. Several holy men are buried on Devil's Peak above De Waal Drive, including Sheikh Abdul Kader, a mysterious auliyah (holy man of Islam).

Interesting places to visit on Devil's Peak

Woodstock Cave: This cave is situated above Woodstock, halfway between Mowbray Ridge and Blockhouse Ridge. You can reach it from Rhodes Memorial or from Tafelberg Road.

The King's Blockhouse: Devil's Peak was important in terms of the defensive structures (of which this blockhouse is one) that formed part of the peninsula's fortification system. This system was necessary because the site of the Castle of Good Hope meant it was surrounded by higher ground on three sides: if an enemy gained these heights, hell could be rained down on the Castle.

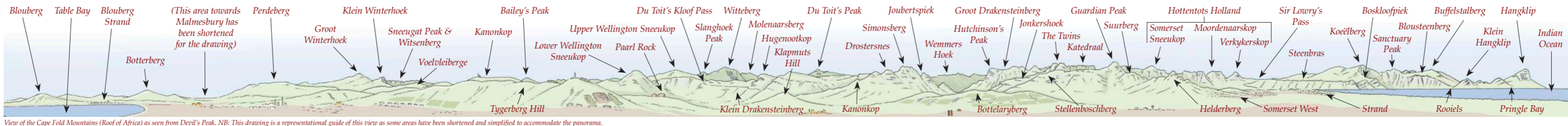
east. Three days later, they made the summit. Hunger eventually got the better of them; they returned and were arrested because of their little venture.

In 1902 the first rescue on Devil's Peak was undertaken by Amphlett Wright, who was not a member of the MCSA. Three soldiers got stuck on a ledge on Second Waterfall Ravine. As a result of his part in the rescue, Wright was elected an honorary member of the MCSA.

George Travers Jackson, who was one of the best-known climbers of his generation, was a frequent visitor to Devil's Peak. It so happened that Cecil Rhodes was also a great lover of its slopes. What started as polite passing greetings ended in a long-lasting friendship, which resulted in several visits to Rhodes' home, Groote Schuur.

Devil's Peak geology

Devil's Peak shares the same geological history as Table Mountain and Lion's Head, with one difference: there is no granite. When the granite pluton intruded into the Malmesbury Group 540 million years ago its contact zone cut through Lion's Head towards Platteklip Gorge and runs through the Saddle between Devil's Peak and the Eastern Table on Table Mountain.



View of the Cape Fold Mountains (Roof of Africa) as seen from Devil's Peak. NB: This drawing is a representational guide of this view as some areas have been shortened and simplified to accommodate the panorama.

Good Hope.) This formation is about 18 km thick and rises up to Tafelberg Road on Devil's Peak. A good example is found at Second Waterfall on Tafelberg Road. During the next 20 million years there was extensive erosion but no new formations were laid down until there was a change in geography and climate that created the next level of the geological story.

Above the Graafwater Formation is the Peninsula Formation (commonly known as Table Mountain Sandstone). It is the youngest formation and was laid down about 450-500 million years ago. This formation extends all the way to the top of Devil's Peak and was probably deposited in river channels, as the grains were large enough to settle in faster-flowing water.

Vegetation

The northern slopes overlooking Woodstock face the sun all day; these slopes are exposed, very hot and prone to frequent fires. The type of vegetation found here is well suited to these conditions – typical Cape Peninsula Shale Fynbos, which is very low growing because of the high winds that blast across this area which therefore supports grasses and small bulbous plants, rather than bushes and trees.

As you move left around Mowbray Ridge, there is a stand of silver trees that are rare and endangered. The further south you travel, the thicker and taller the vegetation gets. The east side of Devil's Peak is more sheltered and wetter, and sees less sunlight than the northern side.



Trig beacon 37, the summit of Devil's Peak at 1000.5 m.

slopes of Devil's Peak were covered with a forest of cluster pines (alien trees) in a misguided commercial venture from the 1850s to the 1950s. You can see cluster pines around Rhodes Memorial and higher up the mountain a few have so far managed to escape the axe.

An interesting article in the MCSA 1998 journal refers to a protea called Protea grandiceps. This protea, which was found all over Devil's Peak, was thought to be extinct by 1912. Several dozen (taken from Jonkershoek) were re-introduced on the Saddle Path on Devil's Peak, but in 1990 Colin Paterson-Jones found two original plants which had defied their own obituary notices.

Safety on the mountain and conservation

Do not undertake these walks if the weather will put you in danger. Let someone know the route you are taking and your expected time of return. Carry a mobile phone if you can (Mountain Rescue 021 937 0300). Take warm back-up clothes, water and additional energy food.

For More Information

Thanks to Alan Macey (for the walk), John Rogers (for the geology) and Mike Scott for help in naming the peaks in the panorama illustration. Thanks to Shelley Brown for editorial input. © Richard Smith • 1st edition, 2014 • Gateway Guides

MAGIC LAGOON CHARTERS KNSNSA Boutique Boat Cruises on Knysna Lagoon. Includes contact information and a QR code for 'Discover The Magic'.

LONG SHADOWS FARM. Come and experience the Overberg in a different way with LONG SHADOWS outrides. Includes a photo of people on horseback.

Serendipity. Grace us with your presence at the luxurious Serendipity Guest House and Restaurant. Includes a photo of a restaurant interior.



Teniqua Treetops, its more than a one night stay... unique, tented tree top resort in the heart of the Knysna forest. Includes contact information.

Cheetah Outreach. See It, Sense It, Save It. Make a difference to conservation by visiting Cheetah Outreach. Includes photos of cheetahs and a contact number.

To advertise contact Clifford Smith: 082 728 4229 • cliff@gatewayguides.co.za