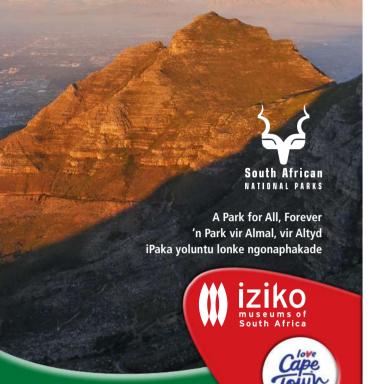
Devil's Peak The Saddle Route

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



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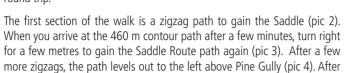


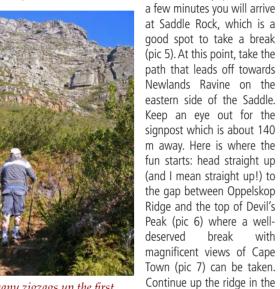
A Walk up the Saddle Route on Devil's Peak (1000 m)

'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





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.

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

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

Other walks on Devil's Peak

One of the many zigzags up the first

The start of the Devil's Peak Saddle Route

knowledge that the summit

is close. The views from here

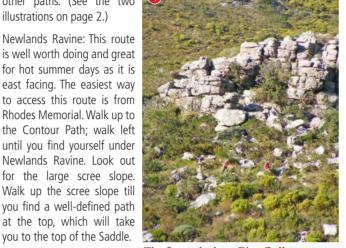
paths that lead up to it from Tafelberg Road, the King's Blockhouse and from the Newlands side.

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

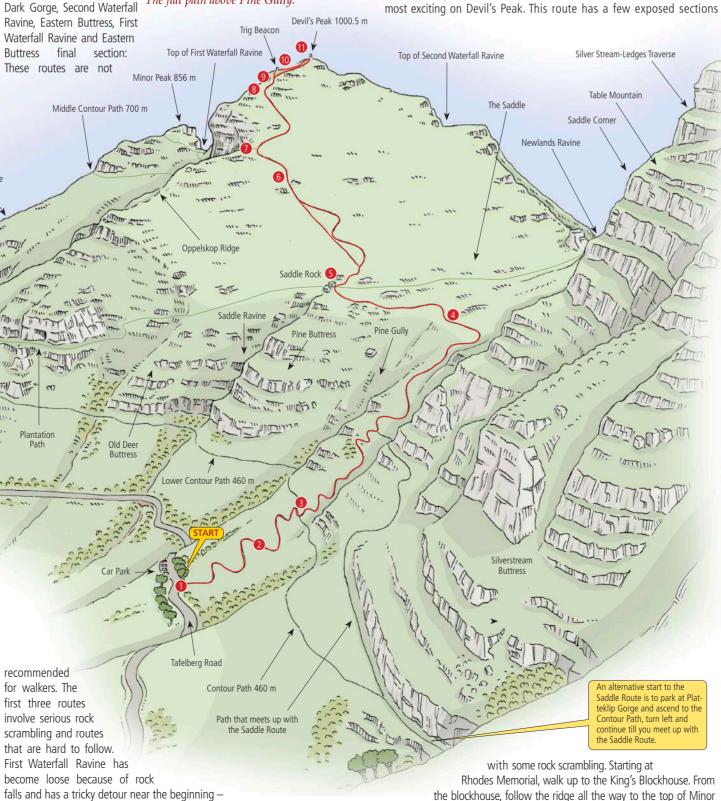
The Upper Contour Path (700 m) starts at the end of Oppelskop Ridge where it meets the last uphill section of the Saddle Route. This path skirts the bottom of the big rock face that overlooks the CBD, crosses over a gap, then traverses Minor Peak toward the Newlands side of the mountain, ending high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

other paths. (See the two illustrations on page 2.) 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 til you find a well-defined path









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

Mowbray Ridge: This is a 5-star scramble, and undoubtedly the best and

left at the top, and follow the weakest line of resistance to the summit.

out: people have lost their lives on this section. A short walk to the start of When you reach the 460 m contour path, turn right for a few metres this ravine via a path above the King's Blockhouse is worth doing. Eastern to gain the Saddle Route path again. Buttress Upper Section Direct is a great way to gain the summit but should

if you miss this detour, it can turn your walk into a dangerous day

the blockhouse, follow the ridge all the way to the top of Minor Peak; the first section looks impossible with all the rock faces in the way Follow a path behind the blockhouse which takes you to the right of the ridge The path goes up a steep chute breaking two rock bands, then swings back left to the ridge. Gain height by climbing up some blocks on the edge. Zigzag along



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

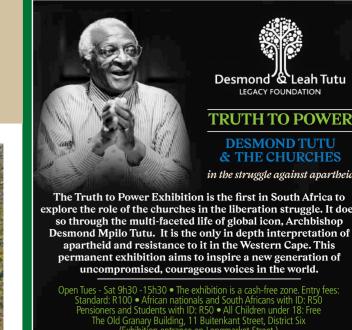


peak was also referred to as 'Crown Hill' and Minor Peak was named 'Windy Hill'. None of these names lasted long: 'Devil's Peak' won the naming game.

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



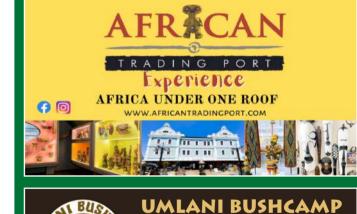
The Gap between Oppelskop Ridge and the summit ridge.



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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. Van Hunks was feeling the strain, but being an ex-pirate, he was a tough old sea dog. Eventually the stranger could take it no longer. When he collapsed, spluttering and begging for water, his hood fell off to reveal two horns sticking out from the top of his head. Startled, Van Hunks exclaimed, 'The devil himself!' The devil replied,'Yes, you are right, and I do not like losing a wager!' With that the devil jumped up, throwing off his coat and revealing his tail and cloven hooves. There was a flash of lightning and a roar of thunder, and the two



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

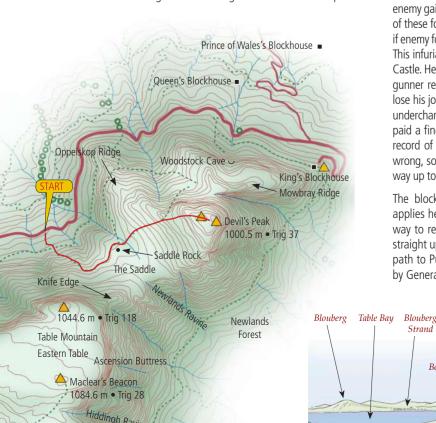
vanished

So, to this day, whenever the clouds start forming around the saddle on Devil's Peak and the southeaster 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. In 2002 the African Christian Democratic Party attempted to have the name changed to 'Dove's Peak', claiming that this was the original Dutch name. In 2014 the issue has raised its horns again.

Interesting places to visit on Devil's Peak

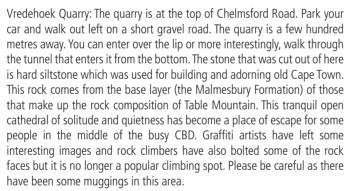
Woodstock Cave: This cave is situated above Woodstock, halfway between Mowbray Ridge and Blockhouse Ridge. You can reach it from Rhodes Memorial or from Tafelberg Road. Tafelberg Road used to be the preferred



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. This path will take you to the Contour Path; from here you can take a path directly to the cave. From the Rhodes Memorial side, head for the King's Blockhouse, follow the Contour Path behind the blockhouse till you reach the path up to the cave. The cave is a large overhang that has been formed by its situation in the Graafwater Formation which is made up of a sedimentary, softer mudstone that erodes much faster than the harder sandstone formation above which forms the roof of the cave.

The Vredehoek Tin Mine: In 1911 the Vredehoek Tin Company started mining above Vredehoek. (See side elevation drawing

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. The mine ceased operations during WWI after producing some four tons of ore. On old maps, this area, including Oppelskop, was known as Prospect Hill. If you are interested in exploring the mine, drive up Chelmsford Road in Vredehoek, park your car at the top and walk off towards the old Vredehoek Quarry; head up to the small valley on the right. Here you will find the remains of the old mine including dams, troughs and mine shafts. If you are looking for more detail on the mine and its honeycomb of shafts, find a copy of *The Table Mountain Book* by José Burman which gives details about exploring inside the mines. Going Looking back to Table Mountain. through these mines can be extremely dangerous, so explore intelligently.



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. The story of these fortifications starts with a gunner who, in about 1670, remarked that if enemy forces were to gain Devil's Peak, they could shoot down on the Castle. This infuriated the Governor, Isbrand Goske, as he had chosen the site for the Castle. He arrested the gunner and challenged him to back his statement. The lunner realised if he was correct (thus humiliating the Governor) he would lose his job, so when the cannon was hauled up the slope and positioned, he undercharged his shot so that it fell short of the Castle. He kept his job and paid a fine (the price of transporting the cannon up the hill). This is the only record of a shot ever being fired at the Castle. The Governor knew he was wrong, so a line of defensive structures starting at the sea and going all the way up to the corner of Devil's Peak was established.

The blockhouse is well worth a visit. (However the mugging warning applies here too, so walk in a large group and take precautions.) The best way to reach it is by a short walk up from Rhodes Memorial. Either walk straight up the path at the back of the car park or cut across on a horizontal path to Pudding Hill, from where you can walk straight up. Commissioned by General Craig, the King's Blockhouse was built by the British in 1796.

(This area towards Perdeberg

Malmesbury has

for the drawing)

Klein Winterhoek

Sneeugat Peak &

View of Devil's Peak from the City Bowl. It was the last building in the defensive line protecting the eastern flank. It is 8 m² in are and was topped by a metal structure which is no longer in existence. By 1893 the fort had became 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. It was declared a historical monument in 1936

raised from the estimated 30 000 citizens of Cape Town. Rhodes was larger than life, both loved and hated, but he was undoubtedly one of the history makers of

Rhodes Memorial: This memorial was built in honour of Cecil

John Rhodes in 1912. It was financed by public subscriptions

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. At the bottom of the steps is a bronze statue of a horseman, 'Energy' by George Frederic Watts. The memorial also bears an inscription by a close friend, Rudyard Kipling. (See Rhodes Memorial Guide at *Pelargonium* www.gatewayguides.co.za for more information.)

More old stories and facts about Devil's Peak

The iournals 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. Their first destination was the summit of Devil's Peak. Perhaps this was to get their bearings for their route

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. There are records of Travers-Jackson climbing Central Gully, King's Buttress and Central Buttress on Devil's Peak. In the 1920s, A. B. (Bert) Berrisford, also a renowned climber of his day, gave an account of running into a stray cow at night on Devil's Peak Contour Path, Trig beacon 116 at 986 m is passed on the way to the summit. above Woodstock, giving him and the unsuspecting bovine a terrible fright.

There are references in old hiking guides that show it was a well-visited peak for walking and scrambling; good locations for camping and picnic spots were even given. (Sometimes cooking utensils were hidden permanently on the slopes for re-use by hikers and campers.) When it comes to rock climbing, Devil's Peak is suddenly quite thin on information; this is probably due to the fact that the rock quality is of a poor standard.

Du Toit's Kloof Pass Witteberg

Nothing worth recording has been climbed in the last 80 years.

Lower Wellington Paarl Rock

history/). There is also the gruelling Bat Run held at night in late February or early March when there is a full moon. This run also involves the three summits but does not include the section below Tafelberg Road (www.batrun.co.za). **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

Top of First Waterfall Ravine

Devil's Peak 1000 m

Contour Path 500 m

Fire Lookout Ruin

Contour Path 700 m

King's Buttress

Central Buttress

Fire Lookout Hut

King's Blockhouse

Du Toit's Peak

present-day Bellevue Street.

Devil's Peak has three different sedimentary rock formations that are visible today, starting with the oldest formation, the Tygerberg Formation of the Malmesbury Group, made up of siltstones. This formation is sometimes incorrectly referred to as Malmesbury shale. (Shale has much finer grains and can be cleaved along its lamination to make thin roof tiles or paving stones, which is not the case with siltstones which tends to break into

Groot Drakensteinberg

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. This second formation is called the Graafwater Formation, with a thickness of 60-odd metres. It includes mudstones which are soft and erode faster than the sandstones above and below. It is in this formation that we find most of the interesting features on Devil's Peak, such as Woodstock Cave and Twelve O'clock Hole above Second Waterfall on Tafelberg Road. (Just above Twelve O'clock Hole, the sandstones at the top of the Graafwater Formation are gently folded into a U-shaped fold, known as a syncline. In contrast, the younger sandstones of the thick-bedded Peninsula Formation are horizontal, not folded. This implies that the top of the very gently folded Graafwater Formation was eroded before the sandstones of the younger Peninsula Formation were deposited). The maroon colour of this rock shows that the original mud of this formation was exposed to the air, causing oxidisation of iron. The Graafwater Formation was probably deposed in a quiet floodplain or tidal mudflat.

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. It consists of light grey hard sandstone with 98% quartz (silicon and oxygen [SiO₂]).

Table

Mountain

Knife Edge

Plantation Path

The Saddle

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

school for 'coloured' children.

prevent another such incident.

referred to in African folklore.

gave them an outlet to discuss and act on issues that affected their

communities. Every December 1st they celebrated the

abolition of slavery here but this talk shop also had

concrete results such as the establishment of the first

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

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. Culling has

eliminated most of them, although a few sneaky ones still remain.

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). Some say that he is a divine guide

Devil's Peak is part of the annual Three Peaks Challenge which originated

in 1897 when Carl Schneeberger ran from the old Johannesburg Hotel in

Long Street, up Devil's Peak, Table Mountain and Lion's Head in one day,

returning to the start each time between peaks. His time was 9 hours and

5 minutes, not counting rests! Today it is run from 108 Long Street. The

men's record (4:50.21) is held by Andre Calitz (2012) and the women's

(06:15:02) by Katya Soggott (2013). (www.threepeakschallenge.co.za/

Day display. For many years after this incident, a radar reflector

beacon stood on Pudding Hill above Rhodes Memorial to

Oppelskor

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. Also found here is a small stretch of critically endangered Peninsula Shale Renosterveld. A small forest of cork oaks grows below Woodstock Cave.

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 then the northern side. Dense Afromontane forests used to occupy this whole area before the early settlers got their hands on them. Today you can still walk through these forests, but with areas of commercial pine and gum plantations interspliced. There is a push to return the forest to its original state, but this will take time as the indigenous trees are slow regrowers. There was a time when the upper



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. Plan your walk allowing sufficient time. Muggings have occurred on the mountain so please take care (police at Tel: 10111 or TM National Park Safety at 0861 106 417). Environmentally, use the rule of thumb: leave the mountain in the same condition as you found it. But most of all, enjoy your walk!

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.

Boskloofpiek

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larger block shapes, such as the stone used in the walls of the Castle of

Guardian Peak

Hottentots Holland

Mountain. Geologists joke, however,

that there is some granite on Devil's

Peak in the form of 26 000 cubic feet

of Table Mountain granite used in the

construction of Rhodes Memorial. This

granite came from the Bellevue Quarry

in the upper City Bowl near the