

# **The Rocks and Mountains of Cape Town**

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**John S. Compton**



to Lisa & Ross

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Figure 1. Topographic road map of Cape Town and the surrounding areas.

- 1 CBD
- 2 Disa River/Hout Bay
- 3 Chapman's Peak Drive
- 4 Noordhoek Beach
- 5 Kommetjie
- 6 Cape of Good Hope Reserve
- 7 Simon's Town/Boulders Beach
- 8 Fish Hoek
- 9 Peers Cave
- 10 Cecilia Plantation
- 11 Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens
- 12 Rhodes Memorial
- 13 Rietvlei
- 14 Tygerberg
- 15 Bottelaryberg
- 16 Sir Lowry's Pass
- 17 Hottentots Holland Mountains
- 18 Kogelberg Reserve
- 19 Stellenbosch
- 20 Franschhoek
- 21 Paarl
- 22 Paarl Rock
- 23 Malmesbury
- 24 Tulbagh
- 25 Darling Hills
- 26 Koeberg Nuclear Power Station
- 27 Blouberg
- 28 Koeberg
- 29 Bloubergstrand
- 30 Rondebosch Common
- 31 Kenilworth Racecourse



Figure 2. The city of Cape Town sits nestled within the City Bowl, a large mountainous amphitheatre that opens to the sea at the northern end of the Cape Peninsula. The suburbs of the city sprawl out over most of the Cape Flats to the east (left).

## Preface

After learning that I am a geologist, acquaintances often approach me with a question about a rock exposure they have seen on a hike or Sunday drive, or present me with a rock that has struck their curiosity. I have come to realise that many people besides the students I teach at university are interested in the rocks and mountains that they see every day on their way to work or on weekend outdoor excursions. It is for these people that this book has been written.

My aim is to provide a basic guide to the rocks and mountains that are so spectacularly on display in the Cape Town area. No prior knowledge of the earth sciences is assumed, and any essential scientific concepts and processes are briefly explained in separate text boxes. The emphasis is on the greater Cape Town area, but easily accessed and popular areas of the Western Cape, most within an hour's drive of Cape Town, are also included (Fig. 1).

Part of the joy of visiting or living in Cape Town is the ever-present, dramatic mountain vistas and beautiful rock exposures one views while walking in the mountains or along the coast (Fig. 2). I hope that this book will add new insights and a dimension of understanding that increase both the pleasure of being in Cape Town and a sense of 'connectedness' to the environment. In so doing, my objective has not been to diminish the mystique, but rather to enhance the awe; to get people thinking about and engaged in their surroundings. The main focus of the book is on the deep, geologic time of the rocks and mountains, but I have also integrated the story of the relationship of the landscape, plants and people to the rocks. In this way this book ties into the number of excellent guides available on the natural history, flora, people and hiking trails of the area. It is this interdisciplinary approach that yields a more holistic and deeper understanding critical to our appreciation and responsible use of our natural world.