

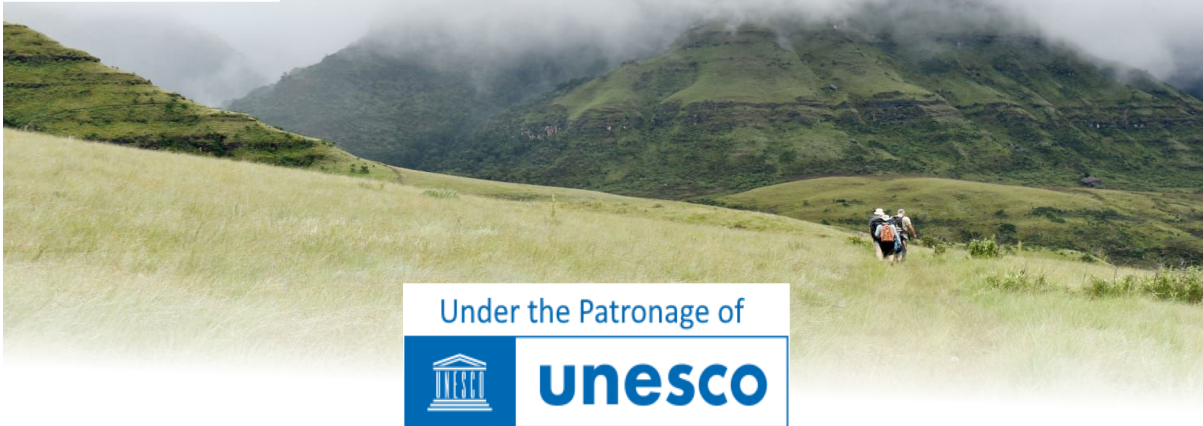


Second Southern African Mountain Conference

17-20 March 2025

Champagne Sports Resort, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Southern African Mountains – Overcoming Boundaries and Barriers



Preliminary Programme

Southern African Mountains: Overcoming Boundaries and Barriers

Historically, mountains have often been barriers between people; borders between nations – places of division and animosity. Yet – as Global Change drivers accelerate the pace of change in mountains, and threaten the essential goods and services they provide us – these same mountains present opportunities for co-operation among nations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This is no different in Africa, which has been leading the way with transboundary mountain co-operation since the 1920s – with opportunities for transboundary mountain co-operation growing since the 1992 Rio Declaration.

Mountains also provide rich landscapes for crossing research barriers – for fostering transdisciplinary initiatives. And southern African mountains have created a common hub for a regional Community of Practice that welds science, policy, and practitioner realms together. In Africa, mountains are central to the hope-filled aspirations of the world's most youthful continent.

As Conference Chair, on behalf of the SAMC Partners, I am honoured to extend a heartfelt invitation to you to join us for the 2nd Southern African Mountain Conference (SAMC2025). SAMC2025 will be a vibrant, dynamic, fully face-to-face event, showcasing and building Africa's contribution to the global knowledge and solution economy on mountains.

Professor Ralph Clark

SAMC2025 Chair

Director: Afromontane Research Unit

Associate Professor: Department of Geography

University of the Free State



MAIN SPONSORS



SAMC2025

Preliminary Conference Programme

Sunday, 16 March 2025

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|-------------|---------------------|--|
| 13:00-18:00 | Registration starts | |
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Monday, 17 March 2025

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| 08:00 | Registration continues | |
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| | | |
|-------------|---|----------|
| 09:00-10:30 | Official Opening Welcome Statements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAMC (Prof Ralph Clark, SAMC2025 Conference Chair) • University of the Free State (Prof Hester Klopper, UFS Vice-Chancellor) [TBC] • EURAC Research (Prof Roland Psenner, President) [TBC] • African Mountain Research Foundation (Mr Alex Hickman, Chairman) • UNESCO [TBC] • The Mountain Partnership • SADC [TBC] | Sentinel |
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|-------------|------------------------------|--|
| 10:30-11:30 | Refreshments and Photographs | |
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| 11:30-12:30 | Plenary Keynote Address: Dr Steve Boyes, National Geographic Explorer and Founder of the Wild Bird Trust | Sentinel |
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| 12:30-13:00 | Book launches | Sentinel |
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| 13:00-14:00 | Lunch | |
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| 14:00-14:40 | Prèmiere screening of “ <i>Qwaqwa: Place of Barriers and Bridges</i> ” | Sentinel |
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|-------|------------------------------|--|
| 14:40 | Break into Parallel Sessions | |
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| | <i>Sentinel</i> | <i>Monks Cowl</i> | <i>Ondini</i> | <i>Zunckels</i> | <i>Turret</i> | <i>Amphlett</i> | <i>Ithaba</i> | <i>Injasuti</i> |
|-------------|---|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 14:45-18:15 | African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene | Mountains & Climate Change | Mountain Biodiversity - Vegetation | Mountain Biodiversity – Animals | Mountain People’s Livelihoods | Mountain Communities | Transboundary Water Management | Mountain Wetlands |

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|-------|-------------------------|--|
| 18:30 | Meet & Greet (Poolside) | |
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Tuesday, 18 March 2025

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| 08:30-09:20 | Plenary Keynote Address: Ms Sissie Matela, Director of Environmental and Rural Solutions | | | | | | | Sentinel |
| 09:20 | Break into Parallel Sessions | | | | | | | |
| | <i>Sentinel</i> | <i>Monks Cowl</i> | <i>Ondini</i> | <i>Zunckels</i> | <i>Turret</i> | <i>Amphlett</i> | <i>Ithaba</i> | <i>Injasuti</i> |
| 09:30-11:00 | African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene | Mountains & Climate Change | Mountain Biodiversity - Vegetation | Mountain Biodiversity – Animals | Mountain People’s Livelihoods | Promoting Transboundary Ecosystem Linkages | Invasive Species in Mountains | Making a Difference for Mountains through Partnerships |
| 11:00-11:30 | Refreshments | | | | | | | |
| 11:30-13:00 | African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene | Mountains & Climate Change | Mountain Biodiversity - Vegetation | Mountain Biodiversity – Animals | Mountain People’s Livelihoods | Promoting Transboundary Ecosystem Linkages | Invasive Species in Mountains | Land Use & Land Cover Change |
| 13:00-14:00 | Lunch | | | | | | | |
| 14:00-14:45 | Plenary Keynote Address: Minister Mhloni Moleko, Minister of Natural Resources, Kingdom of Lesotho | | | | | | | Sentinel |
| 14:50-16:30 | African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene | Mountains & Climate Change | Mountain Biodiversity - Vegetation | Mountain Biodiversity – Animals | Mountain People’s Livelihoods | Towards a Southern African Mountain Treaty/Convention | Measurements on Mountains | Land Use & Land Cover Change |
| 16:30-17:45 | | | | | | | Poster Session & Refreshments (Summit) | |
| Wednesday, 19 March 2025 | | | | | | | | |
| 10:00-15:00 | | | Royal Mountain Indaba | | | Early Career Summit | | AWS Technology Workshop |
| All day | Excursions of choice | | | | | | | |

Thursday, 20 March 2025

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|-------------|--|--|-------------------------------|---|----------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 08:30-09:20 | Plenary Keynote Address: Dr Steve Goodman, MacArthur Field Biologist at the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, USA, & Vice-President: Association Vahatra, Antananarivo, Madagascar | | | | | | | Sentinel |
| 09:20 | Break into Parallel Sessions | | | | | | | |
| | <i>Sentinel</i> | <i>Monks Cowl</i> | <i>Ondini</i> | <i>Zunckels</i> | <i>Turret</i> | <i>Amphlett</i> | <i>Ithaba</i> | <i>Injasuti</i> |
| 09:30-11:00 | African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene | African Mountain Biodiversity Assessment | Mountain People's Livelihoods | Contextualising African Mountain Carbon | Mountain Communities | Mountain Water Resource Management | Invasive Species in Mountains | Mountain Wetlands |
| 11:00-11:30 | Refreshments | | | | | | | |
| 11:30-13:00 | African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene | African Mountain Biodiversity Assessment | Mountain People's Livelihoods | Contextualising African Mountain Carbon | Mountain Communities | Mountain Water Resource Management | Invasive Species in Mountains | Mountain Wetlands |
| 13:00-14:00 | Lunch | | | | | | | |
| 14:00-16:20 | African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene | African Mountain Biodiversity Assessment | Mountain People's Livelihoods | Contextualising African Mountain Carbon | Mountain Communities | Mountain Water Resource Management | Invasive Species in Mountains | |
| 16:20 | Refreshments served in Summit | | | | | | | |
| 16:30-17:00 | Closing Session | | | | | | | Summit |
| 18:30 | Gala Dinner (Buttress) | | | | | | | |

SPECIAL SESSIONS

The SAMC2025 programme includes a number of special sessions, focused on specific interest groups and/or areas of high importance for southern African mountains. These include:

African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene: (Re)mediating Mountain Imaginaries

The session includes a range of papers that explore the relationship between mountains and the deeper meanings they enable in relation to the human and social. These papers, utilising a disciplinary, inter-and and/or multidisciplinary lens, examine new paradigms of looking at (re)mediations of mountain imaginaries and bring to light their fluidity, as well as their changing and transformative virtues. Themes include (i) Heritage, memory and spirituality in African Mountainscapes; (ii) Identity, imagination and visibility in African Mountainscapes; (iii) Mountains, Women and Gender; (iv) Mountains and the Utilitarian; (v) Mountains as and in media/literature; (vi) Mountains as sites of meaning and communication; (vii) Mountainscapes, marginality and resistance; (viii) Anthropocentric anticipation and action; and (ix) Mountains as a locus of artistic inspiration and expression.

Towards a Southern African Mountain Treaty/Convention

The world's major mountain ranges are transboundary in nature and are home to exceptional biodiversity, diverse cultures, and multiple language groups. Mountains' provision of common goods and services extends beyond national boundaries. Nations sharing the largest mountain ranges have established – or are considering establishing – governance mechanisms that include multilateral agreements in some form between their countries. Successful examples include the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention (Europe), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD; Asia) and the Andean Initiative (South America). So far, Africa is largely absent from the international mountain research and policy platform, but it has a long history in transboundary agreements in and for mountain regions. This Panel Workshop seeks to highlight the successful legacy of African transboundary co-operation in the field of

environmental policies and protection activities on mountains in the past, and consider the pros and cons of different forms of multinational agreements in other mountain sections around the world to upscale this to a regional treaty or convention. A particular focus will be placed on the experience concerning the challenges of climate governance issues.

Promoting Transboundary Ecosystem Linkages: The Role of Southern African Development Community Transfrontier Conservation Areas in Southern Africa's Mountain Regions

Transfrontier conservation areas are an important part of conservation initiatives in southern Africa. Their aim is to work across political boundaries to collectively protect and manage the region's natural and cultural heritage and to contribute to sustainable livelihoods, including nature- and culture-based tourism. Of the current 13 TFCAs, seven have mountainous landscapes and of these, two can be considered truly mountainous – the Maloti-Drakensberg TFCa and the Chimanimani TFCa. TFCAs allow for a variety of benefits, such as focal areas for scientific research and cooperation, a framework for social-ecological interventions for sustainable livelihoods, and encouraging specific types of activities, such as ecotourism. This session will consist of a number of short presentations relevant to transboundary conservation and governance – from the perspective of SADC TFCAs and the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation Area in particular. Topics to be discussed include governance mechanisms, community beneficiation, water security, and tourism development. With support from SADC, the session is organised primarily by the MDTFCA and sponsored by GIZ.

Contextualising African Mountain Carbon

Carbon offset and restoration have become big ecological and business enterprises in Africa in recent years. This includes both a well-meaning desire for restoration of ecological systems, as well as a lucrative market for cash-strapped African governments. It has also come with grave ethical and ecological concerns where indigenous communities are forcibly removed from their land, naturally open habitats are slated for artificial “woodification” in the name of “restoration”, and extensive proven local science and indigenous

landscape experience are side-lined in favour of influential "Global North" / northern hemisphere policies that are often not well-contextualised in Africa. Yet, at the same time, the carbon market provides a very valuable opportunity for best practice and socially empowering interventions for degraded and stressed mountain social-ecological systems in Africa. This session seeks to explore and discuss controversial carbon + restoration agendas as relating to African mountains.

African Mountain Biodiversity Assessment

Sponsored by the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA) located at the University of Bern, Switzerland, this session and workshop bring together mountain biodiversity scientists interested in participating in an assessment of the status of and trends in African mountain species and in African mountain biodiversity research. The session aims to (i) map existing expertise onto taxonomic groups and mountain systems, (ii) share examples of ongoing African mountain species accounts and assessments, and (iii) identify research questions and hypotheses, as well as policy needs underlying an African synthesis of mountain biodiversity knowledge and trends.

Transboundary Water Management – Perspectives from the Source

As the world's second-driest continent, mountain ecosystems in Africa are particularly important, as all economically- and socially important major rivers in Africa have their sources in mountains. In arid regions, mountains provide as much as seven times more runoff than lowlands and contribute up to 90% of the total runoff in a river basin. In semi-arid South Africa, for example, only 8% of the nation's surface area (mostly mountains and highlands) provides 50% of the country's fresh-water resources. As a region, southern Africa is characterised by high levels of water insecurity, due to high rainfall seasonality and unpredictability. This is compounded by 70% of southern African water resources crossing international boundaries – including mountain sources and catchments. This makes southern Africa even more reliant on ecologically intact mountain catchments, managed in effective transboundary agreements, as a stable source of water supply. Water security, along with food and energy security, has become a global issue. SDG Goal 6.5 calls for countries to "implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary

cooperation as appropriate". Effective transboundary management of water resources and catchments requires diplomatic, scientific, and practitioner excellence. This session will compare and contrast transboundary water management in different regions, learning from good practice, and sharing challenges and solutions.

Measurements on Mountains

Measurements in mountainous regions provide insight into hydrology, vegetation dynamics, plant physiology, biodiversity and animal behaviour, amongst others. Measurements of climate, and particularly rainfall, support our need to protect mountainous regions as they provide clean water to rivers and recharge regional groundwater levels, which support rural communities, commercial farmers, and cities lower in the catchments. However, measurements in mountainous regions can sometimes feel like an uphill struggle. Locations where measurements are required can be remote and inaccessible. Once installed, equipment is exposed to extreme and violent weather, including high wind speeds, hail, lightning, and freezing conditions. Slopes can be steep and unstable and ridges can form provincial or international boundaries. Baboons are curious about scientific equipment and damage items left in the field. Uncontrolled fires can wreak havoc and the security of batteries and solar panels is a challenge. These challenges and complexities have resulted in a general dearth of information in mountainous regions. These challenges and cost of equipment, including the logistics of maintaining the equipment, need to be weighed up against the value derived from the data. Without data, it is difficult to quantify the effects of climate change and predict how biodiversity, vegetation and the water supply is likely to change in the future. This session is dedicated to the value of measurements in mountainous areas and sharing knowledge around using suitable equipment to gather reliable data. It may include experience of transboundary measurement systems, data retrieval and dissemination, and maintenance strategies. Interesting measurements around extreme weather or variations in microclimate would be relevant.

SCIENTIFIC SUB-THEMES / TRACKS

The programme has been structured to encourage and promote participation and presentations from science, policy, and practitioner sectors. Based on the approved abstracts, within the overall theme of SAMC2025 (“*Southern African Mountains – Overcoming boundaries and barriers*”), 11 sub-themes have been included. The vast number of accepted papers requires that eight parallel tracks will be part of each day’s programme. The sub-themes are:

- Effective Management of Mountain Water Resources
- Environmental Management of Mountain Areas
- Invasive Species in Mountains
- Land Use and Land Cover Change
- Making a Difference for Mountains through Partnerships
- Mountain Biodiversity – Animals
- Mountain Biodiversity – Vegetation
- Mountain Communities
- Mountain People’s Livelihoods
- Mountain Wetlands
- Mountains and Climate Change

POSTER SESSION

An interesting and diverse Poster Session will be held in the Exhibition Hall (Summit) on Tuesday, 18 March. Each presenter will present their topic by way of a lightning talk, and then be available for discussion and questions. A panel will consider all posters, with a prize awarded at the Gala Dinner for the best poster presentation.

AUTOMATIC WEATHER STATION TECHNOLOGIES WORKSHOP

This workshop will address theoretical and practical training on the use and application of measurement equipment in the environment with a focus on automatic weather stations in mountainous regions of southern Africa. The training, to be held on Wednesday, 19 March, will include sensor and datalogger technology as well as power systems and direct or remote data retrieval. Attendees will require a laptop to install free software that will be used to connect to a data logger. They will write a program, upload the program to the data logger, wire up sensors, and collect data, which will be downloaded and checked. The Workshop will be presented by Prof

Alistair Clulow (UKZN), and a representative from Campbell Scientific SA, the sponsors of the equipment.

ROYAL MOUNTAIN INDABA

Large tracts of mountain land in southern Africa are under customary law and are administered by hereditary Traditional Authorities, including Royal Houses. Although these Traditional Authorities overlap with elected governance structures, their involvement and influence is different and they are often more influential in their contexts than elected systems. They also have strong transboundary relationships across the mountains that straddle international borders. As a result, there is a largely overlooked need to bring the custodians of customary law and their indigenous knowledge systems together to foster dialogue and collaboration for transboundary issues that impact on the sustainable development of southern African mountains. A key component of SAMC2025 will be the Royal Mountain Indaba, sponsored by UNESCO Southern Africa and the UFS Qwaqwa Campus Principalship, as a special event for and with Traditional Authorities in the greater Maloti-Drakensberg/Eastern Great Escarpment area that have customary law jurisdiction over mountain landscapes. Set for Wednesday, 19 March, with key Traditional Authorities represented by invitation.

POSTGRADUATE AND EARLY CAREER SUMMIT

A comprehensive Postgraduate and Early Career Summit will be held as a capacity development add-on to contribute to strengthening the southern African mountain community of practice and help grow the pipeline of future research expertise. This will be held on Wednesday, 19 March. The programme will be highly interactive, with a training session, short presentations on relevant topics, and round-table discussions in a World Café format. Sessions include:

- Training session on ‘How to get your paper published’ with the editors of *Mountain Research and Development*
- “World Café format” discussions with a lead presenter on:
 - Communication and public engagement (including policy & advocacy)
 - Crafting a winning resumé
 - How to present/pitch your research (oral presentation, poster presentation, lightning talk)

- Early career challenges
- Engaged scholarship and citizen science
- Teamworking, collaboration, and networking
- Alternatives to academic careers
- How to raise funding
- Grant writing

SOCIAL PROGRAMME

- **Meet-and-Greet**

An informal Meet-and-Greet, with an international flavour, will be held poolside on the evening of Monday, 16 March – sponsored by the UFS Office for International Affairs. To keep with the “international” flavour, participants are encouraged to wear or bring something that reflects their culture or nationality – making this a festive, inter-cultural event, sharing the best of all our countries. Entertainment will be provided by the popular **Qadasi & Maqhinga**, who are sure to get everyone mingling, moving, and relaxing.

- **Gala Dinner**

The Conference will conclude with the Gala Dinner. Entertainment will be provided by the world-renowned **Drakensberg Boys’ Choir**, and we are in discussion with Saray Khumalo, adventurer supreme and the first black African woman to summit Everest, to be our guest speaker. This will undoubtedly be an inspiring and memorable event to close off what will have been an epic conference.

EXCURSIONS

Mid-week Excursions

Wednesday, 19 March has been set aside for delegates to relax and enjoy what the area has to offer. For those who do not select to be part of the events scheduled for the day, the area offers a range of activities. Bookings for these can be made through the hotel when you arrive.

SAMC has organised and will be taking bookings and payments at the start of the Conference for:

1. Mountain Hike

Two separate hikes will be available – one for a stronger group, and another for a more average or slower-moving group. Both hikes will be led by guides from the Mountain Club SA.

- Keartlands Pass, Blindman’s Corner and the Sphinx Loop is an ideal hike for a stronger group. It is a hike of some 12km with a total

elevation gain of just over 800m and a total duration of five to six hours.

- The Sterkspruit - Nandi’s Falls Loop will be available to a slower-paced group. This has a duration of three to four hours, and the elevation gain is minimal – less than 400m.

The estimated cost is R300 pp – to cover transport to the starting point (and return), entry fees, and a lunch pack.

2. Canopy Tour

Experience nature like never before as you slide through the forest canopy and enjoy a unique birds-eye view off the world around you. Set within the magnificent Blue Grotto forest, home to over 150 species of birds, including the rare Bush Blackcap, the Drakensberg Canopy Tour has Africa’s first elevated rock face walkway with a good mix of both cliff-face and treetop platforms, and cable slides over the forest up to 60m high. Estimated cost is R800 pp.

Pre-Conference Excursion

A pre-conference excursion is being organised to the Witsieshoek-ARU Alpine Base at the head of the Namahadi Pass from 13 to 16 March. The base is the highest-elevation research facility in Africa, the highest tourist mountain hut in southern Africa, and the 21st highest mountain hut in Africa. Details to follow.

Post-Conference Hike

A berg hike is an all-encompassing experience with the environment, the wildlife, and fellow hikers. There is no rush, and we need to take our time to soak it all in. The post-conference hike, organised by Into the Berg, allows for that. The two-and-a-half day hike (21 to 23 March), will take in Monks Cowl, Blind Man’s Corner, Sterkhorn, and Intunja. The hike will allow hikers to choose between participating in one or both of the summit hikes, or just remaining at the base camps and enjoying the scenery. The hike will be led by Geoff Brown, a registered mountain guide, who has had a close connection with the Drakensberg and its trails since he was a toddler, and is passionate about sharing its story and its captivating beauty with others. This goes hand in hand with involvement and supporting initiatives to raise awareness for the protection and ongoing conservation of its heritage. Cost: R4 250 pps. Equipment available for hire. Bookings to be made directly with

geoff@intotheberg.co.za

