

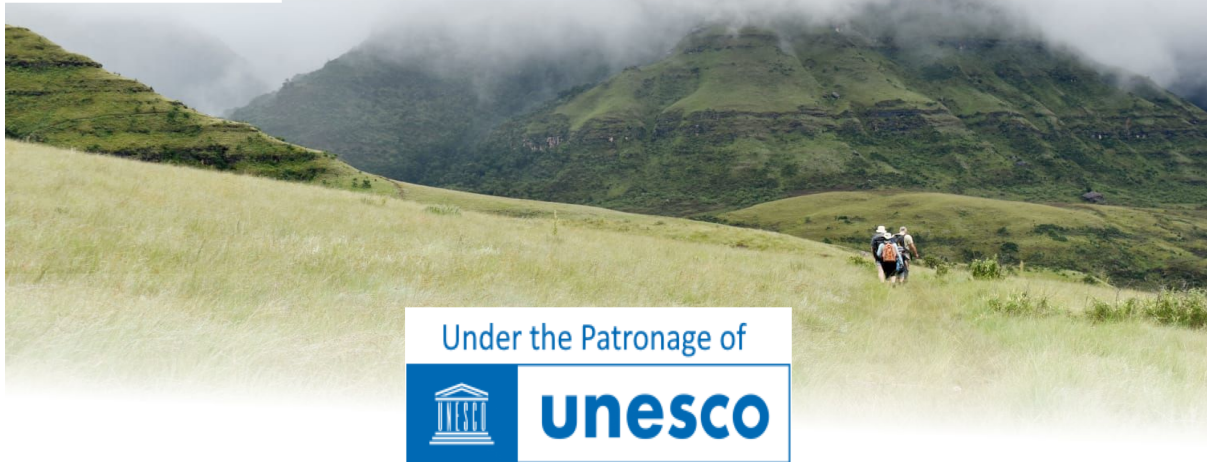


## Second Southern African Mountain Conference

17-20 March 2025

Champagne Sports Resort, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

*Southern African Mountains – Overcoming Boundaries and Barriers*



## Provisional Programme

***Southern African Mountains: Overcoming Boundaries and Barriers***

### MAIN SPONSORS



# SAMC2025

## Provisional Conference Programme

Sunday, 16 March 2025

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

08:00	Registration continues	
09:00-10:30	<b>Official Opening</b> Welcome Statements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SAMC (Prof Ralph Clark, SAMC2025 Conference Chair)</li> <li>Eurac Research (Prof Roland Psenner, President), on behalf of the Global Mountain Safeguard Programme (GLOMOS)</li> <li>African Mountain Research Foundation (AMRF) (Mr Alex Hickman, Chairman)</li> <li>Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex</li> <li>University of the Free State (UFS) (Prof Hester Klopper, Vice-Chancellor), on behalf of the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU) <i>[TBC]</i></li> <li>The Mountain Partnership (Ms Sara Manuelli)</li> <li>UNESCO <i>[TBC]</i></li> <li>Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat <i>[TBC]</i></li> <li>Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Ms Ndapanda Kanime <i>[TBC]</i>)</li> </ul> Official Opening: Department of Science and Innovation (Minister Blade Nzimande) <i>[TBC]</i>	Venue: Sentinel
10:30-11:30	Refreshments and Photographs	
11:30-12:30	<b>Plenary Keynote Address:</b> Dr Steve Boyes, National Geographic Explorer and Founder of the Wild Bird Trust	Venue: Sentinel
12:30-13:00	Book launches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Sustainable Futures in Southern Africa's Mountains</i> (2023) – ARU and GLOMOS</li> <li><i>Safeguarding Mountain Social-Ecological Systems</i> (Vols 1 &amp; 2; 2023 &amp; 2024) – GLOMOS</li> <li><i>A scientific bibliography of the Waterberg, Makgabeng plateau, Blouberg, Soutpansberg and adjacent areas</i> (2025) – ARU</li> <li><i>Environment, Knowledge , and Injustice in Lesotho: The Poverty of Progress</i> (2024) – Christopher R Konz</li> </ul>	Venue: Sentinel
13:00-14:00	Lunch	
14:00-14:40	Prèmiere screening of <i>“Qwaqwa: Place of Barriers and Bridges”</i> (Executive Producer: Prof Vasu Reddy, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Internationalisation, UFS)	Venue: Sentinel

14:40	Break into Parallel Sessions							
	<i><b>Sentinel</b></i>	<i><b>Monks Cowl</b></i>	<i><b>Ondini</b></i>	<i><b>Zunckels</b></i>	<i><b>Turret</b></i>	<i><b>Amphlett</b></i>	<i><b>Ithaba</b></i>	<i><b>Injasuti</b></i>
14:45-18:15	Special Session: African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene (UFS)	Mountains & Climate Change	Mountain Communities	Mountain Biodiversity – Animals	Mountain People’s Livelihoods	Mountain Biodiversity – Vegetation	Special Session: Southern African Transboundary Water Management	Environmental Management of Mountain Areas
18:30	Meet & Greet (Hosted by the UFS Office for International Affairs) (Venue: Poolside)							

Tuesday, 18 March 2025								
08:30-09:20	<b>Plenary Keynote Address: Building resilient communities through partnerships and healthy ecosystems</b> Ms Sissie Matela, Director of Environmental and Rural Solutions							Venue: 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	Special Session: African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene (UFS)	Mountains & Climate Change	Special Session: SADC/TFCA – Promoting Transboundary Ecosystem Linkages (GIZ)	Mountain Biodiversity – Animals	Mountain People’s Livelihoods	Mountain Biodiversity – Vegetation	Invasive Species in Mountains	Making a Difference through Partnerships & Platforms
11:00-11:30	Refreshments							
11:30-13:00	Special Session: African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene (UFS)	Mountains & Climate Change	Special Session: SADC/TFCA – Promoting Transboundary Ecosystem Linkages (GIZ)	Mountain Biodiversity – Animals	Mountain People’s Livelihoods	Mountain Biodiversity – Vegetation	Invasive Species in Mountains	Mountain Wetlands
13:00-14:00	Lunch							

14:00-14:45	Plenary Keynote Address: Minister Mohlomi Moleko, Minister of Natural Resources, Kingdom of Lesotho							Venue: Sentinel
14:50-17>00	Special Session: African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene (UFS)	Mountains & Climate Change	Special Session: Towards a Southern African Mountain Treaty/Convention (Eurac Research, Alpine Convention, ARU)	Mountain Biodiversity – Animals	Mountain People’s Livelihoods	Mountain Biodiversity – Vegetation	Land Use & Land Cover Change	Mountain Wetlands
					Special Session Measurements on Mountains (AMRF)			
16:30	Poster Session & Refreshments (Venue: Summit)							
18:00		Dignitary Reception (Hosted by AMRF, supported by Unesco) (by invitation only)						Venue: TBC

### Wednesday, 19 March 2025

	<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>
09:30-15:30			Royal Mountain Indaba (Unesco & UFS)			Early Career Summit (Centre for Development & Environment and others)		Workshop:: Automatic Weather Stations (Campbell Science, AMRF, UKZN))
All day	Excursions of choice							

### Thursday, 20 March 2025

08:30-09:20	<b>Plenary Keynote Address: A review of the high mountains of Madagascar: Ecology, biodiversity, and conservation status</b> Prof 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	Special Session: African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene (UFS_	Special Session: Towards an African Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA & ARU)	Mountain Communities	Special Session: Contextualising African Mountain Carbon (UFS)	Mountain People's Livelihoods	Mountain Water Resource Management	Invasive Species in Mountains	Land Use & Land Cover Change
11:00-11:30	Refreshments							
11:30-13:00	Special Session: African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene (UFS)	Special Session: Towards an African Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA & ARU)	Mountain Communities	Special Session: Contextualising African Mountain Carbon (UFS)	Mountain People's Livelihoods	Mountain Water Resource Management	Invasive Species in Mountains	Land Use & Land Cover Change
13:00-14:00	Lunch							
14:00-16:20	Special Session: African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene (UFS)	Special Session: Towards an African Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA & ARU)	Mountain Communities	Special Session: Contextualising African Mountain Carbon (UFS)	Mountain People's Livelihoods	Mountain Water Resource Management	Invasive Species in Mountains	Land Use & Land Change
16:20	Refreshments served in Summit							
16:30-17:00	Closing Session							Venue: Summit
18:30	Gala Dinner (Venue: 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:

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#### ***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 visuality 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.

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#### ***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.

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#### ***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.

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#### ***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.

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#### ***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.

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#### ***Management of Transboundary Water Resources: Perspectives from the Source – Mountains***

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.

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#### ***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.

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## 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

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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

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## 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 & Maqhing, who are sure to get everyone mingling, moving, and relaxing.

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- ***Gala Dinner***

The Conference will conclude with the Gala Dinner on Thursday, 20 March. Entertainment will be provided by the world-renowned *Drakensberg Boys’ Choir*, and Saray Khumalo, adventurer supreme and the first black African woman to summit Everest, as our guest speaker. This will undoubtedly be an inspiring and memorable event to close off what will have been an epic conference.

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- ***Dignitaries Reception***

A reception for invited dignitaries, hosted by AMRF and UNESCO, will be held on Tuesday evening 18 March, and will serve as a bridge event between the Southern African Mountain Treaty/Convention session and the Royal Mountain Indaba.

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## 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.

- Kearsland 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.

#### **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.

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#### ***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 21<sup>st</sup> highest mountain hut in Africa. Details to follow.

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#### ***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. Cost: R4 250 pps. Equipment available for hire. Bookings to be made directly with [geoff@intotheberg.co.za](mailto:geoff@intotheberg.co.za)