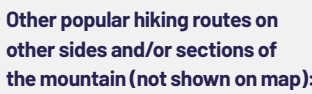




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(Please follow the basic safety rules on the back of this brochure, as the mountain can be dangerous to those who are unprepared or inexperienced.)



## HISTORY



Cape Town, South Africa: part of the city with Table Mountain and Lion's Head. Woodburytype, 1888, after a photograph by Robert Harris. Wellcome Collection. Source: Wellcome Collection.

Did you know?

Table Mountain is one of the oldest mountains in the world. It is 6 times older than the Himalayas.



Cape of Good Hope, South Africa: houses and Table Mountain. Photograph by Dr Tempest Anderson, 1905. Wellcome Collection. Source: Wellcome Collection.



Credit: Table Mountain Aerial Cableway (<https://www.tablemountain.net/>)

## Wires to the Summit

Getting into a strange-looking car hanging from large wired cables to be swiftly transported hundreds of metres to the tabletop of the famous mountain was not everyone's idea of fun. On the contrary, thrill-seeking hikers and climbers were keen to stop along the way to take in the breathtaking views we now know so well.

It wasn't until the late 1870s that locals began looking into easier, quicker and more accessible routes to reach the top of Table Mountain. Financial constraints, uncertainty, and major wars set back the progress of this solution. South Africa was a British colony, and therefore negatively affected by World War I, which ended in 1918. If not for these setbacks, old railway tracks might have been laid into the slopes of Table Mountain. Fortunately, this plan had to be shelved. After the war, a group of wealthy and influential businessmen implemented plans proposed by the esteemed Norwegian engineer Trygve Stromsoe. In 1926, the groundwork for the present-day Table Mountain Cableway was laid.

In 1927, an erection ropeway on the west side of the cable stations was constructed. It had an open box carrier nicknamed the "soapbox," a fearfully swaying means of travel for heavy materials and construction staff. Three years later, on October 4, 1929, the first passengers were transported to the summit. The cable car weighed about three tons, could carry 23 passengers at a time, and carried 2 million people in total before it finally retired in 1974.

The second upgrade was a lighter car that allowed for 28 passengers and new safety features.

At first, steam engines powered the cableway, but electric motors later replaced them in the 1950s. In 1997, significant upgrades were implemented—a new cable car that could accommodate 65 passengers and a 360-degree revolving floor. Today's cable cars are swift, secure, and boast impressive rotating features, carrying hundreds of thousands of visitors to the summit of Table Mountain each year in a spectacular manner.

## GEOLOGY

## The Geological Evolution of Table Mountain

Table Mountain is more than just a silhouette; it is a geological marvel that has captivated the imaginations of scientists, nature enthusiasts, and tourists alike. Comprising a unique blend of ancient rocks, diverse formations, and a rich geological history, Table Mountain is a testament to the dynamic forces that have shaped the Earth over millions of years.

The geological story of Table Mountain begins approximately **600 million years ago** during the Precambrian era. This area was the edge of an ancient continent meeting an ancient sea. The mud and muddy sands deposited on the bed of this ancient sea eventually solidified into the Malmesbury shales, the foundational bedrock of the area. About 540 million years ago, the movement of continents forced molten rock from the Earth's crust into the Malmesbury shales, giving rise to the Cape granite that underlies parts of the region. Over the next several million years, tectonic forces and continental collisions led to the uplift of the Malmesbury shales and Cape granite, forming a flat plain that evolved into an inland sea and river delta. The sedimentation process continued, resulting in the Cape Supergroup, a sequence of nearly horizontal layers of shale and sandstone. Table Mountain itself is composed of the bottom layers of the Cape Supergroup. Subsequent geological events, including the folding and uplifting caused by the collisions that formed Pangaea, shaped the landscape into the iconic mountain we see today.

One of Table Mountain's distinctive features is its flat-topped summit, which results from a combination of geological processes. The primary force behind this unique shape is believed to be the erosion of softer rocks surrounding the mountain, leaving behind the more resistant sandstone layers of the Table Mountain Group. Over time, weathering and erosion sculpted the mountain into its characteristic plateau, providing a dramatic contrast to the surrounding landscape.

The Cape Peninsula showcases a diverse geological history through its three main rock formations, each with distinct characteristics and ages. **The Malmesbury Group**, approximately 540 million years old, comprises dark grey mudstones and lighter-coloured sandstones visible on Signal Hill and the lower slopes of Devil's Peak. **The Cape Granite**, also around 540 million years old, stands out with its hardness and coarse-grained texture, featuring large white feldspar crystals, shimmering flakes of black mica, and grey glassy quartz. Serving as the foundation for much of the Table Mountain Chain, notable granite outcrops can be observed at Boulders, Chapman's Peak, and Lion's Head. **The Table Mountain Group**, a younger formation at 520 million years old, is further divided into the **Graafwater Formation**, characterised by red and purple-hued sandstone



A view of Camps Bay and the 12 Apostles.



The 2 cable cars appearing from the mist.



The classic Table Mountain view from Blouberg.

and mudstone; the **Peninsula Formation**, consisting of light grey, pebbly sandstones and forming the bulk of Table Mountain; and the **Pakhuis Formation**, found at the summit of Table Mountain and recognised by glacially deposited pebbles of sandstone. This geological diversity on the Cape Peninsula provides a fascinating glimpse into the Earth's intricate and dynamic history.

The biodiversity of Table Mountain is closely linked to its geology. The nutrient-poor soils derived from the weathering of Table Mountain Sandstone create a challenging environment for plant life. As a result, the mountain is home to a unique array of flora, including the iconic fynbos vegetation, which has adapted to the harsh conditions and contributes to the rich ecological diversity of the **Cape Floral Kingdom**.

Table Mountain's geological significance extends beyond its natural beauty. The mountain is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, acknowledging its role as a geological and ecological treasure. Scientists continue to study its formations to unravel the mysteries of Earth's history and gain insights into the processes that have shaped landscapes across the globe.



1909, G.S. Smithard, J.S. Skelton, How Table Mountain got its Cloud

## Mist and Myth: Table Mountain's Tablecloth

**Table Mountain's distinctive tablecloth cloud formation results from orographic lift, a meteorological phenomenon closely tied to the mountain's unique topography. Here's a brief explanation of how the tablecloth cloud forms:**

### Moist Air from the Atlantic Ocean

The prevailing westerly winds carry moist air from the Atlantic Ocean toward the Cape Peninsula, where Table Mountain is located.

**Orographic Lift:** As this moist air encounters the elevated terrain of Table Mountain, it is forced to rise. This upward movement is known as orographic lift. The air is lifted along the windward side of the mountain, and as it ascends, it cools adiabatically.

**Condensation:** As moist air rises and cools, it reaches the dew point—the temperature at which it becomes saturated with moisture. At this point, water vapour in the air condenses into tiny water droplets or ice crystals, forming a cloud.

**Cloud Formation:** The cloud typically forms on the windward side of the mountain, shrouding it in a mist or cloud resembling a tablecloth draped over the flat summit. This phenomenon is particularly prominent when the wind is strong, and the air is laden with moisture.

**Dynamic Conditions:** The tablecloth cloud is a dynamic feature that can change rapidly. As air continues to flow over the mountain, it descends on the leeward side, creating drier and clearer conditions. On the other side, this descent is known as the rain shadow effect.

**Local Microclimates:** The tablecloth cloud formation creates unique microclimates on Table Mountain. The interaction between the mountainous terrain and atmospheric conditions leads to varying weather patterns and visibility at different altitudes.



## BASIC SAFETY RULES OF HIKING TABLE MOUNTAIN

- Don't hike alone;** four is the ideal number.
- Choose your route carefully and stick to it. Allow yourself enough time – start early. Inform someone of your route and what time you're expected back.
- Choose a hike leader and walk at the pace of the slowest member.
- If lost – **don't split up.** Rather try to retrace your steps. Remember that climbing down is more difficult than climbing up.
- Always take waterproof clothing, even in mid-summer, and wear walking shoes or hiking boots. Wear a hat or cap and sunblock in summer. **Weather changes rapidly.**
- If lost or forced to stop because of bad weather, stay together and remain in one place. Find the closest shelter from wind and rain.
- In case of injury, take time to assess the situation. Then send two people for help and let the third remain with the injured person. If possible, mark the position on a map and send it with those going for help.
- Stick to well-used paths,** which will be indicated on the Park's hiking map and read the warnings on this map. Don't take shortcuts and especially don't wander into ravines.
- Always take enough water,** especially in summer, and food in case of a delay. Watch the weather and time, and turn back before you start running late or if bad weather threatens.
- Take a fully-charged cellphone.** Some parts of the Park do not have cellphone reception, but you will always be able to reach a place where you can use a cellphone more quickly than you'll get to a landline.

### Three Rules for Personal Security

As Table Mountain is an urban park, please exercise the same common sense and security precautions that you would anywhere else in the world.

- Do not attract unwanted attention** by openly displaying cash, cameras or other valuables.
- If you are confronted by a criminal, **don't resist.** Hand over your goods as resistance might incite a mugger to violence.
- Program emergency numbers into your cellphone** before your hike.

### Emergency Numbers

**Main Emergency Telephone: 086 110 6417**  
SAPS (South African Police Service): 10111 (021 10111 on mobile)  
Cape Town Emergency Services: +27 (0)21 480 7700  
Cape Town Central OPS Centre: +27 (0)21 467 8002  
All of these call centres are primed to respond to incidents on TMNP and investigate suspicious activities.

### Other numbers which could come in handy:

NSRI (National Sea Rescue Institute): 082 911  
Table Mountain Cable Car Company: +27 (0)21 424 0015  
(This safety information is taken from the **South African National Parks** website)

## ANIMALS SIGHTINGS

Keep a keen eye out for the playful **dassies**, a common sight along the rocky slopes. Marvel at the aerial acrobatics of the majestic **Verreaux's eagles** as they gracefully soar above, their wings catching the thermals. Discover the vibrant hues of indigenous bird species, including the **Cape sugarbird** and the elusive **orange-breasted sunbird** in the fynbos-covered expanses.



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With special thanks to **Tony Lourens from Blue Mountain Adventures** on his expertise and love for hiking and climbing in the Cape mountains. For any guiding queries contact him on [www.bluemountainadventures.co.za](http://www.bluemountainadventures.co.za)

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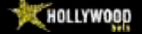
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