

**Introduction**

There are very few places on Earth where such a range of world-class climbing lies within and around the boundaries of a huge city. The entire Cape Peninsula is dominated by the majestic Table Mountain chain that starts in the north with the front faces of Table Mountain itself overlooking the bustling city of Cape Town, and runs south along the backbone for 60 kilometres, culminating in the wild, unspoilt Cape Point Reserve on the extreme southern tip.

Climbing anywhere on the Peninsula, the climber is almost always rewarded with stupendous mountain scenery and glorious sweeping views of the mighty oceans that surround the bony Table Mountain chain.

If it is wild exposed climbing in a high mountain setting you are looking for, then The Ledge on Table Mountain is where you want to be. This is the showcase of trad climbing on the Peninsula and here you will find excellent climbing on bullet-hard sandstone that will rival routes anywhere in the world. For less 'out there' routes, the Lower Buttresses (a few hundred metres below The Ledge) offer great climbing of a slightly friendlier nature. On the Apostle Buttresses running along the western side overlooking the Camps Bay Riviera, the climbing takes on another mood altogether – beautiful crags nestled between deep ravines, each exuding their own individual character, giving routes from four to ten pitches in length.

If the weather is a little turbulent for the main massif, then you will often find that Lion's Head and also the crags on the southern Peninsula (Muizenberg Crag and Elsie's Peak) are unaffected by the threatening frontal weather systems. Here you will find a plethora of short multi-pitch routes of all grades with Elsie's Peak a real gem if you are looking for steep hard climbing.

The Cape Peninsula is a veritable paradise in many ways, and climbing is certainly one of them. The choice of routes is almost limitless and you will often find yourself climbing on perfect rock, high above the boundless seas with not another human in sight. Just you, the smell of the fynbos in your nostrils and, if you are lucky, the company of the magnificent Black Eagle.

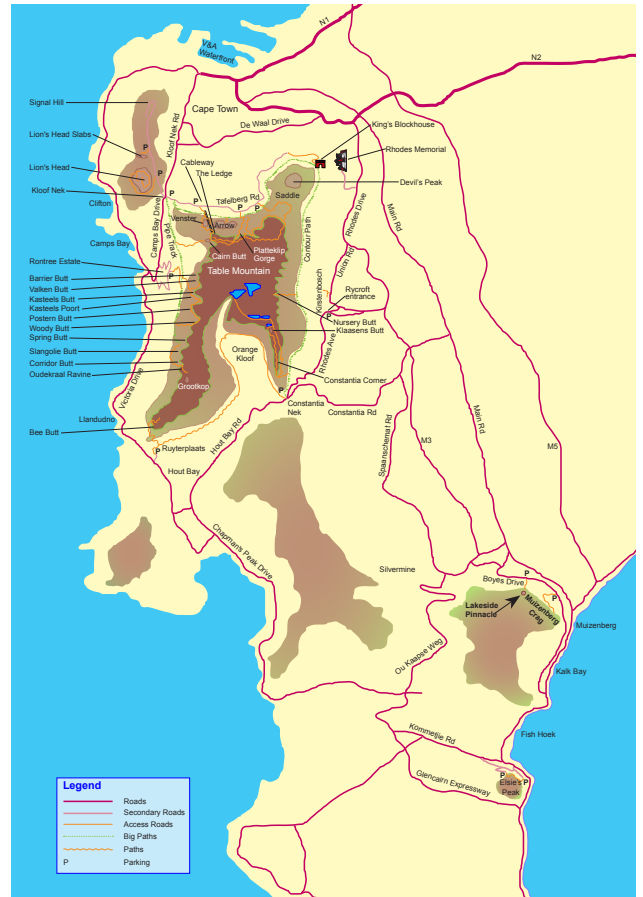
Then, what better way to finish off a day at the crag, than at one of the many sidewalk cafes, or cosy pubs, having a cold beer and reflecting on a perfect day on the rock?

**The rock and the climbing**

With the exception of one granite intrusion on the slopes of Lion's Head, all the climbing on the Cape Peninsula is on Table Mountain Sandstone (TMS). TMS is, on the whole, a very hard rock type and lends itself brilliantly to climbing. Many of the routes on Table Mountain are on impeccable grey/white quartzitic sandstone that has excellent friction, making for climbing of a very high standard. However, having said that, TMS is also a very varied rock type and the quality of the rock does differ from area to area, crag to crag and even from route to route in the same area. Generally speaking, the rock on the southern Peninsula is not as good as say on The Ledge (the area beneath the upper cableway station), where the sandstone is of the very highest quality, but there are always exceptions to the rule. Elsie's Peak, for instance, in the very south of the Peninsula, has a steep amphitheatre of mostly very solid sandstone, with a deep brown colour that is completely different in character to the stone found on the Table Mountain massif. Muizenberg Crag, on the other hand, has good climbing, but the rock is just one notch down from the very best and needs to be treated with care in places. Wherever you climb, always treat the rock with care and test a hold if in any doubt.

Cape climbing is famous for its steep, exposed routes and the dynamic nature of the climbing. However, not all the climbing is steep, exposed or dynamic. There are many routes in all grades to suit any and every ability. The choice is yours.

The sandstone of the Cape Peninsula was laid down in layers (horizontal bedding planes) approximately 600 million years ago and was compressed by its own weight. Massive movements in the Earth's crust caused vertical and horizontal fractures in these horizontal beds, creating huge rectangular blocks. This process is responsible for the formation of the plethora of cracks, rails and roofs that adorn the walls of the Table Mountain chain, giving Cape climbing its unique dynamic character. See more information on the rock and climbing under the specific areas.



## Access issues

The Table Mountain chain running along the backbone of the Cape Peninsula falls wholly into the boundaries of the Table Mountain National Park. Therefore, when climbing on any of the crags in this book you will be climbing in a national park. However, at the time of writing, access regulations for trad climbing are not stringent and all the crags can be accessed without permit or payment. The Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA) has gone to great lengths to keep relations between climbers and park officials healthy and amicable, allowing climbers to enjoy unhindered climbing within the park boundaries. Please behave in a manner that does not threaten this arrangement in any way.

## No Bolting

Quite simply, NO BOLTING is allowed on any of the topos on this website. You may come across the odd bolt here and there, but these were placed in the days before the Table Mountain chain became a national park. There are also a few bolted abseil stations at strategic points. These were placed for safety reasons and with the permission from National Parks.

## Gear

On the whole, Table Mountain Sandstone (TMS) is very gear friendly and most routes can be adequately protected with a standard trad rack consisting of a set of cams (with some doubles), a good selection of nuts, eight to ten quick-draws and a few long slings. However there are routes that are run-out and some taking thin lines that may require micro cams and micro wires. Best to seek local knowledge of a test piece before casting off on the sharp end.

A few extra long slings for extending gear will also come in handy, as the roofo nature of some of the routes can create quite a bit of rope drag. A helmet is strongly recommended.

Although a lot of the routes in this guide can be climbed quite comfortably with a single rope, it is recommended and generally accepted to climb with double ropes (2 x 60-metre), particularly up on The Ledge, where abseil descents using two ropes are mandatory.

## Guidebooks

Cape Peninsula Select is the only guidebook for trad climbing in the Cape Peninsula. It has an exhaustive selection of excellent routes throughout the whole Peninsula. It is packed with all the info you need on approaches, the routes, descents, colour photo topos of all the crags and routes, and stacks more. It also has a selection of beautiful climbing images.

## Shopping for supplies

You will be able to buy all necessary food, fuel, climbing gear, mountain clothing, and whatever else you may need in the Peninsula. There is a variety of top class supermarkets like Pick n Pay, Spar and Woolworths (which can be a bit more expensive than the rest, but oh so worth it). And some smaller shops and grocers, some of which stay open late into the night. General shopping hours are from 9 am to 6 pm, with many shops staying open much later. Most shops also stay open on Saturday and Sunday. The V&A Waterfront shopping mall has almost every conceivable shop one can think of, including good restaurants and movie houses, and is open from 9 am to 9 pm (later for restaurants), seven days a week, 364 days a year (closed on Christmas Day).

## Climbing and camping shops

There are a number of companies based in Cape Town that manufacture specialist mountain apparel, sleeping bags, backpacks and other mountain-related equipment. You will be able to find their labels in a variety of outdoor stores scattered around Cape Town as well as the full range of imported climbing gear, mountain clothing and other related equipment. There quite a few outdoor chain stores in the Cape Peninsula, like Cape Union Mart and Outdoor Warehouse. But if you are looking for specialized climbing stores, try Mountain Mail Order, Drifters or Orca.

## Abseil descents

Permission has been obtained from the authorities to place some strategic bolted anchors for abseil purposes on various parts of the mountain. These abseil stations are marked in the topos where applicable. There are also a bunch of 'trad' anchors that have been placed in other areas that can be used to get off certain routes. These are also marked in the topos where applicable. Please note that these anchors are not bolted and are built with slings and nuts, etc. They are therefore not 'permanent' and should be used at your discretion. All 'non-permanent' abseil stations should be checked carefully and backed up with new tat and/or gear before use.

## Weather

Unlike the rest of the country, the southwestern Cape has a Mediterranean climate, which means it experiences hot dry summers and cold wet winters. Although this is predominantly the case, and you can generally rely on the weather when planning a holiday, do not take it as a rule, as the weather patterns around the Peninsula and particularly Table Mountain can be very unpredictable and can change dramatically in a very short time. It is always prudent to check the forecast before venturing out and to keep a lookout for a change in the weather while out on the hill. These days weather forecasting is quite reliable and websites such as [yr.no](http://yr.no), [weathersa.co.za](http://weathersa.co.za), or [windguru.com](http://windguru.com) should be checked out before venturing up the hill.

There are two important weather systems that affect the Cape Peninsula. The first is the frontal system, which is brought in by the northwesterly and the southwesterly winds. These cold fronts can vary in size and intensity, bringing lashing rain, snow and very cold wind, particularly in the mountains, lasting anything from a few hours to several days. The second is the Southeaster, which is a strong wind coming from the southeast. Normally, this wind is accompanied by large banks of cloud that hit Table Mountain on the Kirstenbosch side, and are forced up and over the top of the mountain to come pouring over the front table as the famous Tablecloth. Sometimes these clouds are also laden with rain and this system is then referred to as a Black Southeaster. Either way, the Southeaster wind can be cuttlingly cold and the clouds normally carry a lot of moisture and sea air, which can render certain crags on the western side of the Peninsula rather unpleasant to climb on due to the salty deposits on the rock. This is called the 'shlawk factor.'

Being caught out high on Table Mountain, unprepared, in any of these weather systems can be desperately unpleasant. Always remember to pack something warm to wear and good rain gear, even if you start out on the hottest day of the year.

## Where to stay

Cape Town is a large and densely populated city, with literally thousands of places to stay. From hotels to guest houses to bed and breakfast establishments to backpacker lodges, there are way too many to publish any sort of list. Let Google search for you and I'm sure you will find the place that suits your location and pocket. Camping on the Peninsula is not very popular and there are not many campsites. However, there is some camping on the southern Peninsula. You will find all the information on Google.

## Side Attractions

Cape Town is one of the most beautiful places on Earth and the list of things to do in the city, along the Peninsula and surrounding areas on rest days are literally endless.

There are world-class beaches, fantastic sidewalk cafes and restaurants, quaint streets and alleys with interesting shops, buskers performing on street corners, a myriad of wine estates and so much more. Go to the Tourist Information Office in Burg Street in the centre of Cape Town and pick up some brochures and books. BEWARE! Many people have come to Cape Town on holiday and have stayed forever.

### Disclaimer

Rock climbing and mountaineering is a very dangerous activity, where you can get seriously injured or killed.

Mountains, by default, can be dangerous places and no guidebook or topo, no matter how flawlessly written, can remove the risks undertaken when venturing into mountainous terrain. Climbers should take responsibility for their own safety and for members of their party. Climbing is a high-risk sport and can cause severe injury or death. Blueline topos and its authors can in no way be held responsible or liable for death or injury resulting from the use of our topos, or the information contained on [www.bluelinetopos.co.za](http://www.bluelinetopos.co.za)

Blueline topos have been written and constructed so that climbers can share the superb trad climbing the Western Cape has to offer. Although every caution has been taken to ensure the topos are as accurate as possible, there will undoubtedly be errors. Please be mindful of this and use the written description in conjunction with the topo and your mountain savvy to decide the path of the climb. Users of these topos must rely on their own discretion and judgement before utilising any of the information therein. By downloading, purchasing or using any Blueline topo or utilising any information on [www.bluelinetopos.co.za](http://www.bluelinetopos.co.za), you automatically assume full responsibility for your own actions and life.

Blueline topos are essentially guides and in no way should it encourage people with little or no experience to attempt climbs that are out of their depth. Blueline topos are in no way instructional and inexperienced climbers are strongly advised to seek the guidance of experienced climbers, or hire a guide, before attempting any rock climb.

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