

Photograph Courtesy of Enslin Gardiner



2nd Southern African Mountain Conference

SAMC2025



The [2nd Southern African Mountain Conference \(SAMC2025\)](#) will be held from 17 to 20 March 2025 at Champagne Sports Resort, in the breathtaking Maloti-Drakensberg. The theme of SAMC2025 is: ***“Southern African Mountains – Overcoming Boundaries and Barriers”***.

SAMC2025 will be a fully face-to-face event, bringing together academics, researchers, early career professionals, practitioners, policymakers, postgraduate students and government officials, amongst others, to engage and exchange experiences, research findings, problem-solve and foster partnerships toward the transboundary and transdisciplinary sustainability of southern African mountains.

SAMC2025 will build on the highly successful 1st Southern African Mountain Conference (SAMC2022) held in March 2022 and the subsequent “Maloti-Drakensberg – Safeguarding and Preservation of the Dragon Heritage” Workshop, held in December of the same year. SAMC2022 was first of its kind in southern Africa, attracted 259 participants from 21 countries, with 168 papers delivered and four sponsored special sessions.

The Southern African Mountain Conference ([SAMC](#)) series is unique as it seeks to integrate science, policy and practitioner sectors for sustainable interventions in southern African mountains. The conferences are purposefully multi- and trans-disciplinary, with a strong impetus to link science, policy and practitioner realms, and thus all approaches are encouraged.

Southern African mountains comprise those situated south of the Congo Rainforest and Lake Rukwa and include the mountainous islands of the western Indian Ocean. Thus, SAMC2025 is targeting Angola, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo [southern mountains], Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, La Réunion, South Africa, southern Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The SAMC series is conceptualised by the [Afromontane Research Unit \(ARU\)](#) of the University of the Free State (UFS), in partnership with the [African Mountain Research Foundation \(AMRF\)](#) and [Global Mountain Safeguard Research \(GLOMOS\)](#); a joint initiative between EURAC Research and the United Nations University (UNU) Institute for Environment and Human Security), and implemented by the non-profit company, [The Peaks Foundation](#). UNESCO was the official Patron of SAMC2022 and will be approached in the same role for SAMC2025.

The programme

SAMC2025 will include plenary sessions with keynote addresses from leaders in the relevant sectors, parallel oral paper presentation sessions, poster sessions, panel discussions, sessions for special interest groups, and an exhibit area. The programme is structured in such a way as to encourage participation and presentations from science, policy and practitioner (including business and industry) sectors, accommodating these sectors to the best of their advantage.

Within the overall theme of SAMC2025, the following sub-themes are planned:

- Agriculture and rural development
- Biodiversity
- Climate change
- Communities and livelihoods (including e.g. education and training, health, youth, services, crime)
- Economics and Investment
- Energy
- Geo-landscapes and geoscience
- Governance (including law and order)

- History, culture and heritage
- Indigenous knowledge
- International cooperation and inter-relations
- Natural and man-made risks
- Protected areas and conservation
- Social justice (including gender and inclusion)
- Tourism
- Water resources.

Proposed special sessions for interest groups include, *inter alia*:

- African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene
- Proposed Southern African Mountain Convention and Transboundary Cooperation
- Transboundary Water Management
- Mountain Carbon Sequestration
- Management of Alien Species
- South East African Montane Archipelago

Workshops will provide an opportunity for researchers, policy-makers and practitioners to engage on topics that require in-depth extended interaction, or which seek a particular outcome through extended engagement. Panel Discussions will provide an interactive forum for bringing together people with cutting-edge views on compelling issues and to stimulate wider collaboration.

Royal Mountain Indaba

The programme will include an exclusive [Royal Mountain Indaba](#)¹, aimed at fostering dialogue that links customary law + mountains + the Sustainable Development Goals.

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 (municipal, provincial, state, and the Southern African Development Community [SADC]), their involvement and influence is different and they are often much more influential in their contexts than elected systems. They also have strong transboundary relationships across the mountains that straddle international borders in the region. 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.

The **Royal Mountain Indaba** is a special event for and with Traditional Authorities in southern Africa that have customary law jurisdiction over mountain landscapes. This will comprise a focus on the Wednesday 19th March 2025 with key Traditional Authorities represented by invitation. The purpose of the day is to foster dialogue among Traditional Authorities on their role in (i) the sustainable development of southern African mountains; (ii) better and more effective transboundary relationships for sustainable development; and (iii) how to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for the benefit for their mountain communities. A further goal would be to encourage these Traditional Authorities to become Diplomatic Champions for southern African Mountains.

The Royal Mountain Indaba will necessarily require careful planning that respects protocols associated to each Traditional Authority, from invitation through to in-person attendance of

¹ Indaba is a widely recognised isiZulu word meaning an important meeting of leaders of a community to discuss matters of concern. It suggests 'deep talk' and a meeting of minds, acknowledging that all those present have something important to say.

representatives at the event. A dedicated sponsor of the Indaba, with a commitment and interest in these important issues, will be identified.

Other programme activities

A first comprehensive **Student and Early Career Academic's Summit** is planned, as a capacity development "boot camp" to contribute to strengthening a southern African mountain community of practice and help grow pipeline of future research expertise.

The **social programme** includes a "meet-and-greet", networking events, a gala dinner and mid-conference excursions, such as a hike to Monks Cowl, Golf Day and a Canopy Tour.

Venue

SAMC2025 will be held at the [Champagne Sports Resort](#), nestled in the picturesque Champagne Valley in the central Maloti-Drakensberg, in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This premier venue offers state-of-the-art conferencing facilities, a full range of accommodation options, a gorgeous golf course, and world-class leisure amenities. A block of rooms is reserved at a special conference rate. Additional details will be available soon.

For more information about SAMC2025,
visit www.2025.samc.africa
or contact the Conference Secretariat at
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