

Kogelberg Nature Reserve is often considered the heart of the Cape Floral Kingdom because of the exceptional quality of its fynbos. The reserve lies within the southern stretch of the rugged

Hottentots Holland mountain range and has remained isolated and remarkably unspoilt. Its high mountain peaks, steep kloofs, valleys and several tributaries of the pristine Palmiet River create a sense of remote wilderness.



Kogelberg is situated about 90km south-east of Cape Town and comprises a core area of 18 000ha and several smaller fragments. The Reserve is signposted from the coastal road (R44) where a gravel road leads for 3km through private property to the office. The coastal town of Kleinmond is about 8km south-east of the reserve.

## History

The Kogelberg area shows evidence of early Stone Age hunters who probably lived off game, shellfish and edible plants. Khoi people inhabited the area from about 100 000 years ago until modern times and their middens and burial sites can be found along the coast. Eighteenth century European explorers described the beauty of the area and the plentiful game but early farmers found the area too rugged for agriculture. Hence, the Kogelberg was left practically untouched over the years, unlike many other areas of the Cape.

In 1810 the government of the Cape demarcated certain Crown Lands, including the Kogelberg area. Access was extremely difficult until a road was built in 1935. In 1937 the Department of Forestry became responsible for the area and declared it a State Forest. During World War II, a military road was built around the coast and the peripheral coastal area slowly became more developed. Kogelberg was transferred to CapeNature in 1987 and managed as a nature reserve.

## Conservation

Kogelberg Nature Reserve is managed according to the internationally accepted principles of a biosphere reserve. This implies that the sensitive core area of 18 000ha remains pristine and essentially wild, with a high level of biological diversity, and is buffered by a more resilient area. Beyond the Reserve's borders, agriculture and commercial pine plantations form a transitional zone. The biosphere concept accommodates conservation and development, ensuring that sensitive areas and biological diversity are adequately protected.

## Climate

The climate of the Kogelberg is fairly typical of the Western Cape. Winters are cold and very wet, and snow may fall on the higher peaks. The summer months are hot, dry and often very windy. Hikers should note that the weather conditions are variable and unpredictable.

## Vegetation

The historical isolation of the Kogelberg area has helped to protect its floral wealth, keeping it relatively clear of alien vegetation, and today the Reserve presents perhaps the finest example of mountain fynbos in the Western Cape. It has approximately 1650 plant species of which about 150 are endemic and noteworthy. Many spectacular members of the protea family occur in the reserve. These include the endangered marsh rose, *Orothamnus zeyheri* - once on the brink of extinction and now known to occur on a few inaccessible peaks. The Reserve also has the highest concentration of Mimetes species in the Cape, most notably the endangered *M. hottentoticus* and *M. capitulatus*.

