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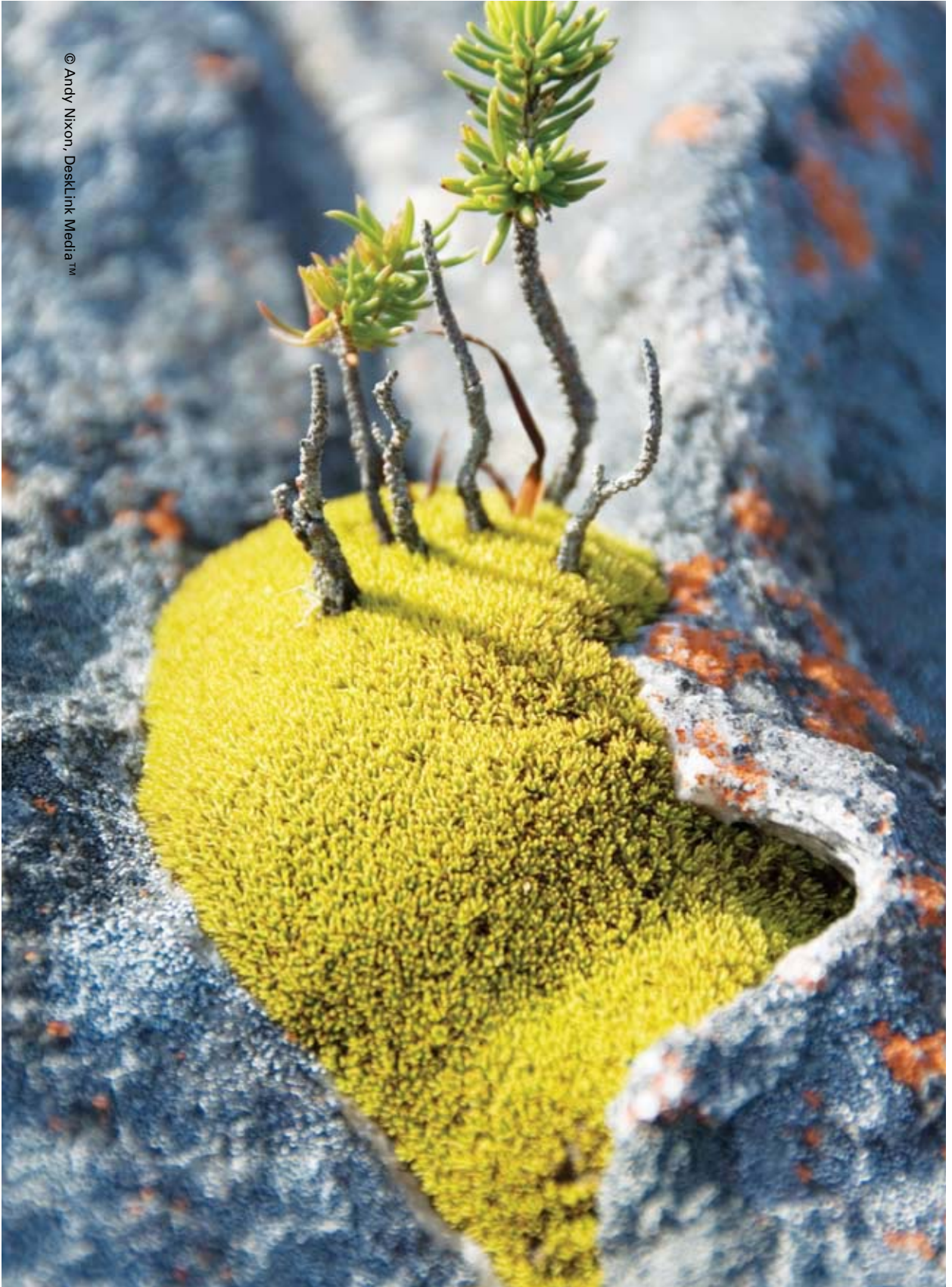
# South Africa's World Heritage Sites



## Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape

The 160,000 ha Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape of dramatic mountainous desert in north-western South Africa constitutes a cultural landscape communally owned and managed. This site sustains the semi-nomadic pastoral livelihood of the Nama people, reflecting seasonal patterns that may have persisted for as long as two millennia in southern Africa. It is the only area where the Nama still construct portable rush-mat houses (haru om) and includes seasonal migrations and grazing grounds, together with stock posts. The pastoralists collect medicinal and other plants and have a strong oral tradition associated with different places and attributes of the landscape.





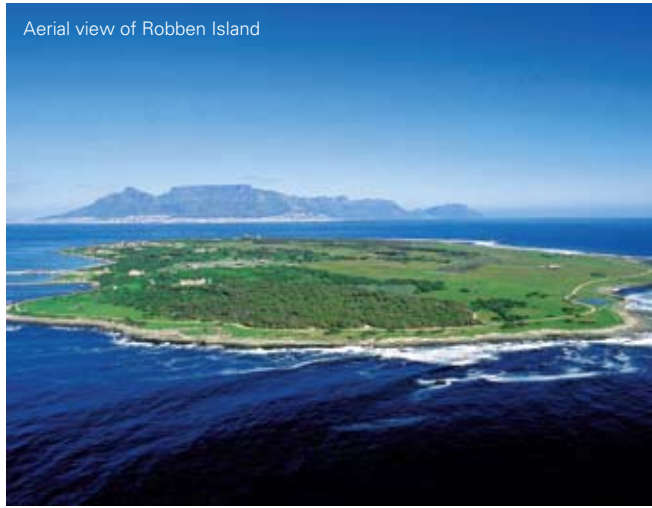
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Entrance to Robben Island



© SA World Heritage site



Aerial view of Robben Island



Prison cell in Robben Island

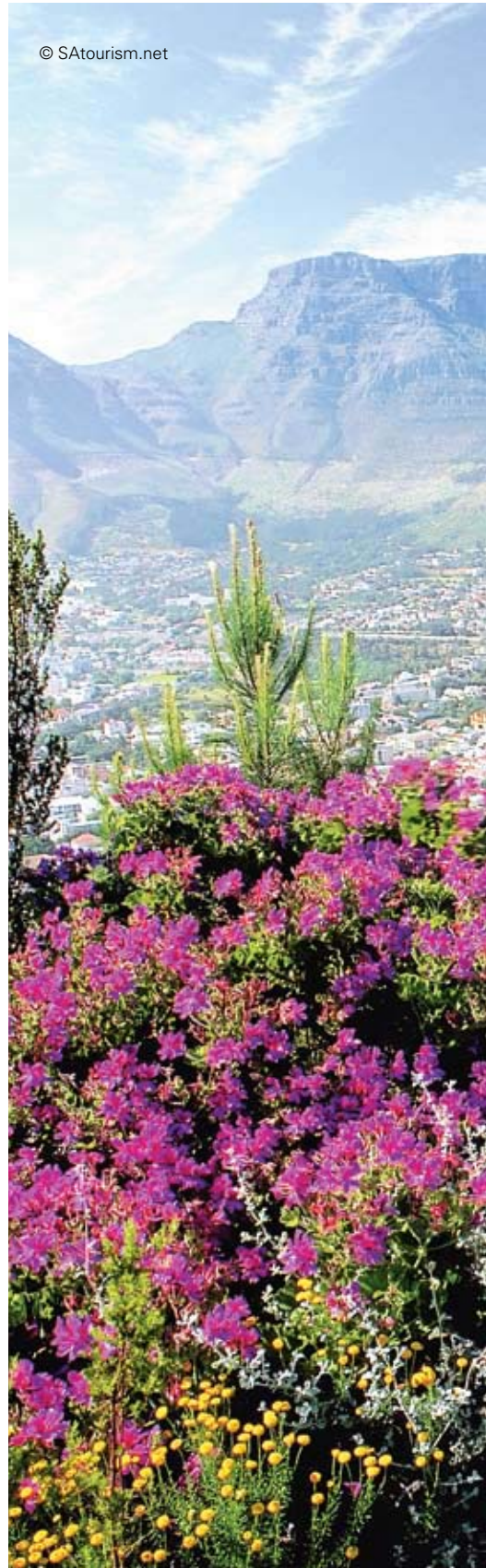
## Robben Island

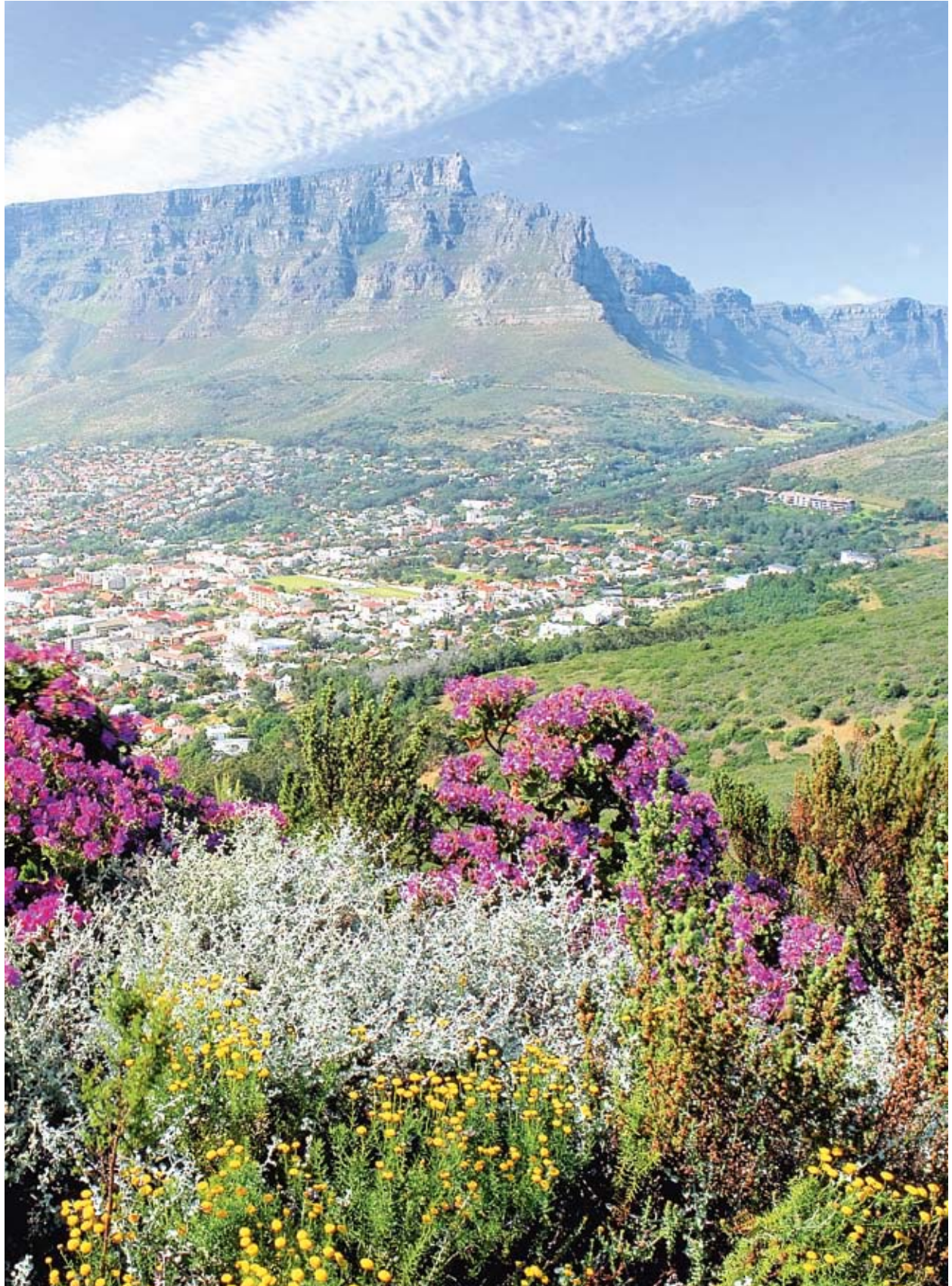
Robben Island was used at various times between the 17th and 20th centuries as a prison, a hospital for socially unacceptable groups and a military base. Its buildings, particularly those of the late 20th century such as the maximum security prison for political prisoners, witness the triumph of democracy and freedom over oppression and racism.



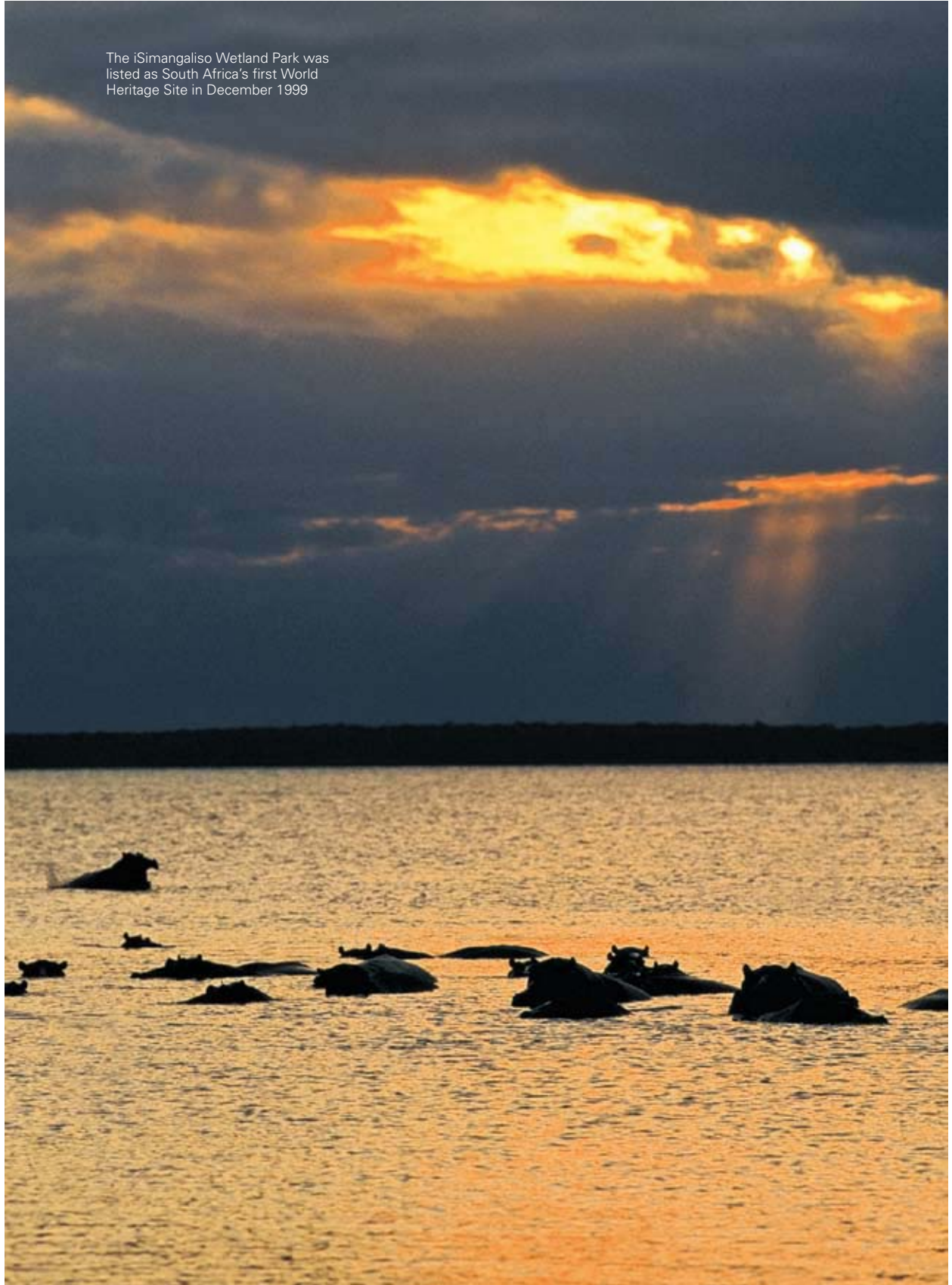
## Cape Floral Region Protected Areas

A serial site – in Cape Province, South Africa made up of eight protected areas and covering 553,000 ha, the Cape Floral Region is one of the richest areas for plants in the world. It represents less than 0.5% of the area of Africa but is home to nearly 20% of the continent's flora. The site displays outstanding ecological and biological processes associated with the Fynbos vegetation, which is unique to the Cape Floral Region. The outstanding diversity, density and endemism of the flora are among the highest worldwide. Unique plant reproductive strategies, adaptive to fire, patterns of seed dispersal by insects, as well as patterns of endemism and adaptive radiation found in the flora, are of outstanding value to science.





The iSimangaliso Wetland Park was listed as South Africa's first World Heritage Site in December 1999



Lake St Lucia is Africa's largest estuary



The iSimangaliso Wetland Park is home to the greatest congregation of hippo and crocodiles in South Africa

## iSimangaliso Wetland Park

The ongoing fluvial, marine and aeolian processes in the site have produced a variety of landforms, including coral reefs, long sandy beaches, coastal dunes, lake systems, swamps, and extensive reed and papyrus wetlands. The interplay of the park's environmental heterogeneity with major floods and coastal storms and a transitional geographic location between subtropical and tropical Africa has resulted in exceptional species diversity and ongoing speciation. The mosaic of landforms and habitat types creates breathtaking scenic vistas. The site contains critical habitats for a range of species from Africa's marine, wetland and savannah environments.



## Vredefort Dome

Vredefort Dome, approximately 120 km south-west of Johannesburg, is a representative part of a larger meteorite impact structure, or astrobleme. Dating back 2,023 million years, it is the oldest astrobleme yet found on Earth. With a radius of 190 km, it is also the largest and the most deeply eroded. Vredefort Dome bears witness to the world's greatest known single energy release event, which had devastating global effects including, according to some scientists, major evolutionary changes. It provides critical evidence of the Earth's geological history and is crucial to an understanding of the evolution of the planet. Despite the importance of impact sites to the planet's history, geological activity on the Earth's surface has led to the disappearance of evidence from most of them, and Vredefort is the only example to provide a full geological profile of an astrobleme below the crater floor.



Images: Green Vision Foundation in  
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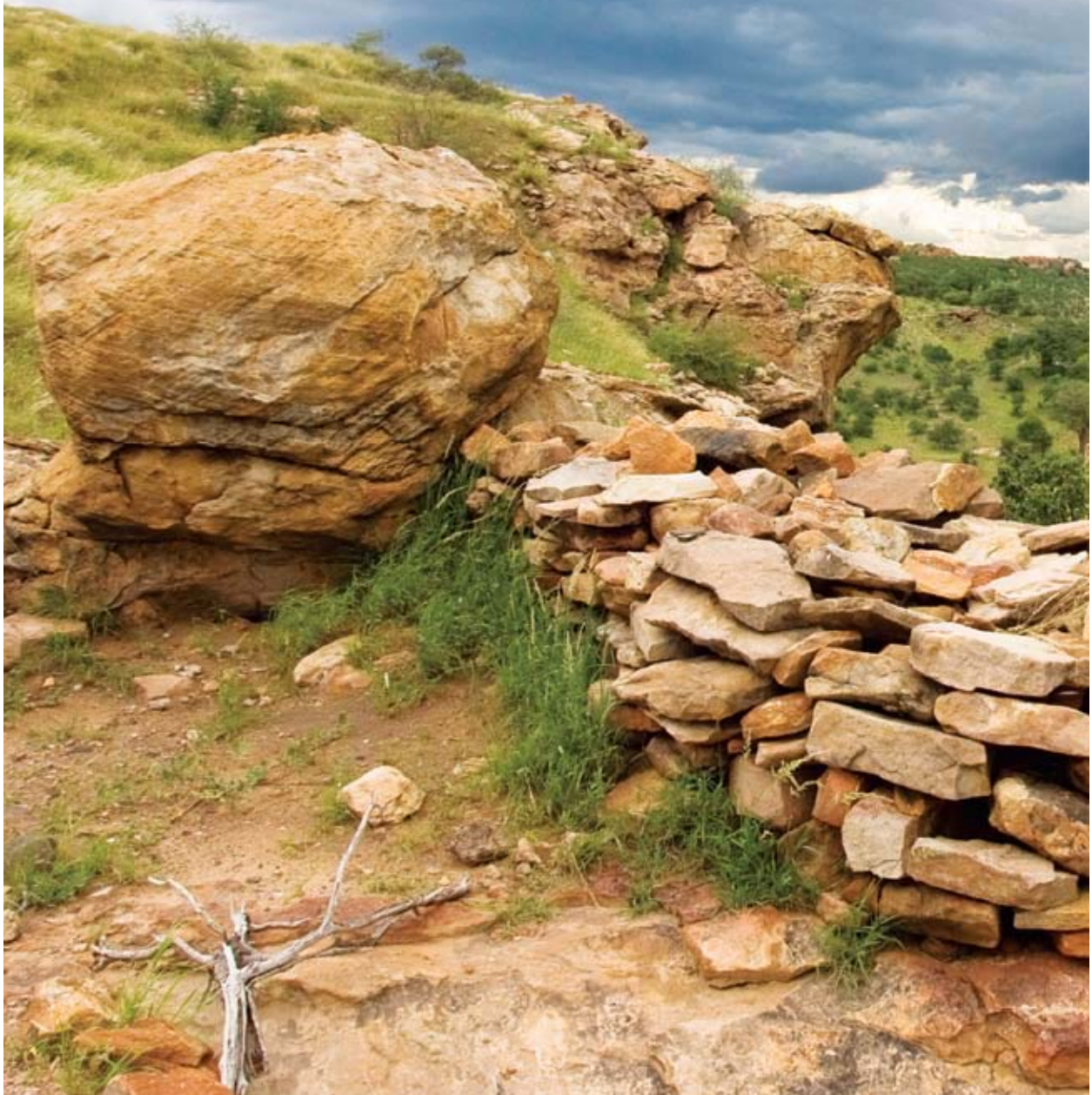


## Fossil Hominid Sites of Sterkfontein, Swartkrans, Kromdraai, and Environs

The Taung Skull Fossil Site, part of the extension to the site inscribed in 1999, is the place where in 1924 the celebrated Taung Skull – a specimen of the species *Australopithecus africanus* – was found. Makapan Valley, also in the site, features in its many archaeological caves traces of human occupation and evolution dating back some 3.3 million years. The area contains essential elements that define the origin and evolution of humanity. Fossils found there have enabled the identification of several specimens of early hominids, more particularly of *Paranthropus*, dating back between 4.5 million and 2.5 million years, as well as evidence of the domestication of fire 1 million to 1.8 million years ago.

## Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape

Mapungubwe is set hard against the northern border of South Africa, adjoining Zimbabwe and Botswana. It is an open, expansive savannah landscape at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe rivers. Mapungubwe developed into the largest kingdom in the sub-continent before it was abandoned in the 14th century. What survives are the almost untouched remains of the palace sites and also the entire settlement area dependent upon them, as well as two earlier capital sites, the whole presenting an unrivalled picture of the development of social and political structures over some 400 years.



From top to bottom:  
Artefacts discovered at the site;  
The women of Mapungubwe

