Series Editor Preface

Landforms and landscapes vary enormously across the Earth, from high mountains to endless plains. At a smaller scale, nature often surprises us creating shapes which look improbable. Many physical landscapes are so immensely beautiful that they received the highest possible recognition—they hold the status of World Heritage Sites. Apart from often being immensely scenic, landscapes tell stories which not uncommonly can be traced back in time for tens of million years and include unique geological events such as meteorite impacts. In addition, many landscapes owe their appearance and harmony not solely to the natural forces. For centuries, and even millennia, they have been shaped by humans who have modified hillslopes, river courses, and coastlines, and erected structures which often blend with the natural landforms to form inseparable entities.

These landscapes are studied by geomorphology—'the science of scenery'—a part of Earth Sciences that focuses on landforms, their assemblages, surface, and subsurface processes that molded them in the past and that change them today. To show the importance of geomorphology in understanding the landscape, and to present the beauty and diversity of the geomorphological sceneries across the world, we have launched a book series *World Geomorphological Landscapes*. It aims to be a scientific library of monographs that present and explain physical landscapes, focusing on both representative and uniquely spectacular examples. Each book will contain details on geomorphology of a particular country or a geographically coherent region. This volume presents the geomorphology of South Africa—a country that not only hosts superb and highly diverse landforms and landscapes—basaltic plateaus, imposing escarpments, inselbergs, intriguing sandstone formations, waterfalls, pans, and dunes, but can also be considered as one of the inspirations for modern geomorphological studies, especially that focus on long-term landform evolution. Landscape evolution models associated with workers such as Lester King, which profoundly influenced the thinking of many mid-twentieth century geomorphologists, have been developed in South Africa. In more recent times, since the 1990s, it was South Africa where their reappraisal has been attempted through cosmogenic dating.

The World Geomorphological Landscapes series is produced under the scientific patronage of the International Association of Geomorphologists (IAG)—a society that brings together geomorphologists from around the world. The IAG was established in 1989 and is an independent scientific association affiliated with the International Geographical Union (IGU) and the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS). Among its main aims are to promote geomorphology and to foster dissemination of geomorphological knowledge. I believe that this lavishly illustrated series, which keeps to the scientific rigor, is the most appropriate means to fulfill these aims and to serve the geoscientific community. To this end, my great thanks go to Profs. Stefan Grab and Jasper Knight for adding this book to their agenda, successfully

coordinating the large team of authors, and delivering such an exciting illustrated story to read and admire. I hope they are as pleased with the final outcome as I am. I also acknowledge the excellent work of all individual authors who accepted to share their expert knowledge of the country with the global geomorphological community. I once happened to spend a day at the foot of the Drakensberg Escarpment, which was an unforgettable experience. Now I have nearly 20 other places in South Africa to visit. I am sure readers of this volume will be equally tempted to see these marvels for themselves.

Piotr Migoń

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