



Photo Adam Harrower



The Kirstenbosch Tree Canopy Walkway is a 130 m long sculptural footbridge which winds through and over the tree canopy of the Enchanted Forest at Kirstenbosch.

Designed for low visual and physical impact and efficient use of materials, this light, lively steel structure blends unobtrusively into the forest.

Named the Boomslang for its shape, the walkway is up to 12 m high, 130 m long, and generally 2 m wide, providing a new experience to visitors including the wheelchair-bound.

Two wider portions provide rest and viewing areas.

The walkway was to be built in an existing forest with a requirement to minimise disruption and damage to the vegetation.

Aesthetic, environment, economy, fabrication processes and on site handling of components were all considered in the design.

Columns were located in relation to trees, and not necessarily placed at the most efficient structural support positions.

To create a light structure, components were designed to perform multiple functions. The deck, hand-rail and safety mesh all contribute to the primary structure.

The Boomslang has proven to be a popular visitor experience and a sound investment for the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI).

#### Project Information

Client: SANBI  
Architect: Mark Thomas Architects

#### Awards

- 2015 SAICE Western Cape National award for technical excellence
- 2015 SA Institute of Steel Construction bridge category award
- 2014 SAICE W.Cape Regional award for technical excellence
- 2015 CESA commendation for excellence in Engineering
- 2015 Silver Loerie
- 2014 World Design Capital project
- 2015 SAIA Western Cape Award

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