



One of the groups of geologists explores the variation of rare rock formations found in the Makhonjwa geological area. **Photos: Prof Christoph Heubeck**

Greenstone Belt rocks esteemed geologists' world

This past week Barberton was host to some of the world's most foremost geologists.

The wonders found in the Makhonjwa Greenstone area were of one of 34 important South African geological field trips offered prior to and following the International Geological Congress in Cape Town this week.

These international guests were highly impressed by unique details of rocks in the Barberton Greenstone Belt, says Prof Christoph Heubeck, a geologist from Germany and a driving force behind the development of the Barberton Makhonjwa Geotrail.

This excursion took place from August 22 to 28.

It focused on the geology of the Barberton Mountain Land. The trip was led by Profs Don Lowe (Stanford University, USA), Heubeck (Jena University, Germany) and Gary Byerly (Louisiana State University, USA).

Eighteen participants from China, Japan, Italy, Brazil, Belgium, the UK, and the

US learned about early life, the growth of continents, ultramafic magmatism, historical and active gold mining, and the many unusual factors which had shaped the surface conditions of early Earth.

Day-to-day organisation of the trip lay in the capable hands of Astrid Christianson from Barberton Community Tourism who had assembled seven bakkies and staffed them by experienced local drivers, all of

them active town members and involved either in the tourism industry, or in mining or geology. This proved ideal for both sides. The international guests, all of them

newcomers to greenstone-belt geology, not only learned about geology from the three field-trip leaders, but also about local history, botany, wildlife and culture from their drivers.

The drivers, in turn, experienced first-hand what attracted worldwide scientific attention to their region and also improved their own understanding of their home mountain range.

Two bakkies were sponsored by Duwies Duvenage from NTT Toyota Barberton.

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