

Uluru

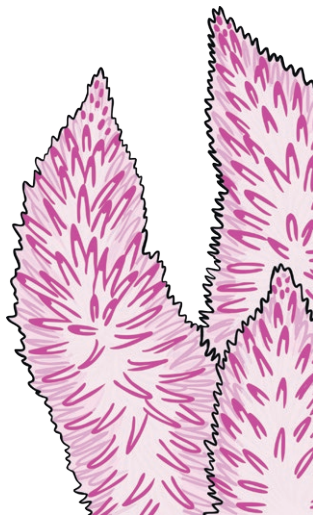
Location

Uluru is one of Australia's most iconic landmarks. It is located in the 'Red Centre' in the Northern Territory, Australia. Uluru is located in the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, in the middle of a typical Australian desert landscape of red dirt, plants and animals.



Description

Uluru is one of the greatest rock formations in the world. It is 1.6km high and 1.9km wide. It is almost as high as the Empire State Building! Uluru's total area covers almost 33.3 square kilometres. Uluru is comprised of sandstone and its colour usually appears dusty red but it can vary in colour with the ever-changing angle of the sunlight over the course of a day. This aspect makes Uluru a popular tourist site at dusk. Although Uluru's surface is covered in crevices, caves and valleys, it is straight and smooth enough for some people to attempt to climb to the top. However, this is strongly discouraged.



Plants

There are countless plants growing near Uluru - 400 different species to be exact! These plants are an important part of the life of the local people as they are used for food, clothing, shelter, medicine and weapons. One of these plants is called the 'Kaliny—kalinypa' or 'Honey Grevillea'. It has very bright green blossom with orange and yellow flowers that look like spikes. These flowers contain a very sweet, honey-like nectar, which is eaten by the Indigenous children. It is also soaked in water to make a sweet drink.

Animals

Animals play a significant role in the culture of the Aboriginal people. Many native animals can be found near Uluru including bats, frogs, kangaroos, wallabies, goannas, dingoes and emus. One of the most common animals found at Uluru is the red kangaroo or 'malu'.



The male red kangaroo can grow up to 1.6m - 2.4m high and weighs between 22kg to 85kg. The female red kangaroo can grow up to 1.3m to 2m and it can weigh between 17kg to 35kg. They can survive in many climates and are very adaptable. Their strong legs and tails make them a powerful hunter. Red kangaroos are quicker when they hop on their two hind legs but can also walk and crawl on all fours. They are hunted by the Anangu people for their meat to eat and skin to wear.

Indigenous Australians

Uluru is a site of great spirituality to Indigenous Australians. It is over 600 million years old and it is a significant aspect of the Aboriginal land, culture and history. The Indigenous people living on the land around Uluru are the Pitjantjatjara Anangu. They have many Dreamtime stories about the rock and today, it is considered a sacred site by many Indigenous people. They also prefer tourists to not climb Uluru out of respect for their culture, although many still do. Aboriginal Dreamtime teaches that Uluru was formed by ancestral beings during the Dreamtime. The rock's many caves and fissures are believed to be evidence of this, and some of the formations around Uluru are believed to represent ancestral spirits. Rituals are still often held today in the caves around the base of Uluru. Areas where these rituals take place are so sacred that photography is forbidden.

The Central Australian landscape, where Uluru is located, is believed to have been created at the beginning of time.

The Anangu people hold responsibility for the protection and appropriate management of these sacred ancestral lands. The knowledge required to fulfil these responsibilities is invaluable and it has been passed down from generation to generation over many thousands of years.

European Discovery

During the 1870s, William Giles and William Gosse were the first white explorers in this region. Gosse was the first to reach Uluru and named it 'Ayers Rock' after his superior, Sir Henry Ayers, who was the Chief Secretary of South Australia. In the 1990s, its traditional name of Uluru was reinstated and it is now considered disrespectful to refer to Uluru as 'Ayers Rock'.



In the early twentieth century, the Australian government took ownership of the land. By the 1950s, tourists and land developers began to make tracks to Uluru and Kata Tjuta. Tourist numbers steadily grew and, by the early 1970s, the impact of tourism was having detrimental effects on Uluru and its surroundings. In 1973, the government agreed to relocate accommodation facilities to a new site in order to protect and preserve Uluru. At the time, only a few Anangu were living at Uluru. Most of the Anangu there scattered into other regions within Central Australia.

It was not until 1979 that Uluru and the area around it became a national park. This was done to recognise the traditional owners of Uluru. In 1983, Prime Minister Hawke announced the government's intention of granting the land around Uluru back to the traditional owners.

