

A wide-angle landscape photograph of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. The foreground is filled with low-lying, scrubby vegetation in shades of green and brown. In the middle ground, the massive, rounded, orange-red rock formation of Uluru dominates the horizon. The sky is a deep blue, filled with soft, white clouds, suggesting a clear day. The overall lighting is bright and natural.

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park was inscribed
on the World Heritage List in 1987 (Stage 1)
and 1994 (Stage 2)

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park



The Uluru-Kata Tjuta World Heritage Area features two of the world's most spectacular geological formations.

Uluru, an immense rock formation, and Kata Tjuta, the rock domes located west of Uluru, form a fundamental part of the traditional belief system of one of the oldest human societies in the world.

The enormous rock formations dominate the surrounding vast red sandy plain of central Australia, which provides habitat for an incredible variety of rare or threatened plants and animals.

The traditional owners of Uluru-Kata Tjuta are known as Anangu.

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park was inscribed on the World Heritage List in two stages, initially for its outstanding universal natural values (1987) and then for its outstanding universal cultural values (1994).

Natural

- as an example of ongoing geological processes
- as an example of exceptional natural beauty and combination of natural and cultural elements.

Cultural

- as an outstanding example of traditional human land use
- being directly associated with living traditions and beliefs of outstanding universal significance.

The park covers 1,325 km² of arid ecosystems and is located close to the centre of Australia in the traditional lands of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal people (locally known as Anangu).

The huge rock formations of Uluru and Kata Tjuta are remarkable geological and landform features, set in a contrasting, relatively flat, sand-plain environment. They are a part of an important cultural landscape and have special significance to Anangu.

The features of Uluru, Kata Tjuta and the surrounding landscape are physical evidence of the actions, artefacts and bodies of the ancestral heroes (*Tjukuritja*) who travelled the earth in creation times. These heroic beings, who combined the attributes of humans and animals, journeyed across the landscape creating not only its features, but

also *Tjukurpa* (the law) – the code of behaviour followed by Anangu today.

Tjukurpa regulates all aspects of life, from foraging behaviour and management of the landscape to social relationships and personal identity. It is expressed in verbal narratives, through lengthy *inma* (song cycles and associated ritual), art and the landscape itself. For Anangu the landscape is the narratives, songs and art of *Tjukurpa*.

Anangu learned how to patch burn the country from *Tjukurpa* of *lungkata*, the blue tongued lizard. Now, in conjunction with modern methods, the cool season practice of lighting small fires close together leaves burnt and unburnt areas in a pattern like a mosaic. This traditional knowledge is adopted as a major ecological management tool in the park. *Tjukurpa* also teaches about the location and care of rock holes and other water sources.

Uluru is a huge, rounded, red sandstone monolith 9.4 kilometres in circumference rising from the plain to a height of over 340 metres. Rock art in the caves around its base provides further evidence of the enduring cultural traditions of Anangu.

About 32 kilometres to the west of Uluru lie the 36 steep-sided domes of Kata Tjuta. The domes cover an area of 35 square kilometres, with the highest rising to 500 metres above the plain. This area is sacred under Anangu men's law and detailed knowledge is restricted.

These huge rock formations, their creek lines, waterholes and the surrounding sand country vegetation is an arid environment of enormous diversity.



The landscape is dominated by spinifex and low shrubs, with large desert oaks dotted on the sand dunes and plains. Sizeable areas of mulga woodland and other low shrubs also occur on dunes and swales. The alluvial flow areas at the base of the major rock formations support large bloodwoods, acacias and native grasses. Water holes and soaks provide restricted habitats for a number of rare and unique plant species. Larger stands of mulga and other acacias dominate the harder, wide, sand plain surrounding Uluru and Kata Tjuta.

Anangu's traditional ecological knowledge is critical to the ongoing scientific management of the species found in these habitats.

The park is home to more than 150 species of birds and many reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates adapted to arid environments.

A number of rare mammals are found here, including the hairy-footed dunnart, the sandhill dunnart and the mulgara. The mala, a significant *Tjukurpa* species, has recently been re-introduced.

Reptile species are well adapted to this arid environment and are found in numbers unparalleled anywhere else in the world. Lizard species include the rare giant desert skink and Australia's largest lizard, the perentie, which can grow to a length of 2.5 metres.

The inalienable freehold title to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park was handed back to the traditional owners in 1985 and is held by the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Aboriginal Land Trust. The park is leased back to the Director of National Parks and is jointly managed under the direction of a Board of Management which has an Aboriginal majority representing the traditional owners. Day-to-day management is carried out by Parks Australia, a division of the Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.



title page: Uluru at sunset, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. The huge rock formations of Uluru and Kata Tjuta are remarkable geological and landform features, set in a contrasting, relatively flat, sand-plain environment

Michael Nelson

top strip: Kata Tjuta, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park - A Living Cultural Landscape. This area is sacred under Anangu men's law and, as such, detailed knowledge is restricted. Michael Nelson

top: Anangu artist, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Michael Nelson

above: Elsie Wanatjura digging for honey ants. Parks Australia, DEWHA