

# The Red Centre

## Uluru, Kata Tjuta & Kings Canyon

**Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in the Northern Territory, central Australia, is a hugely popular tourist destination and a significant part of Australia's iconic Red Centre. Uluru, also known as Ayers Rock, and Kata Tjuta, also known as The Olgas, are the famous attractions of the spectacular Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park.**

Uluru is a massive sandstone rock formation located 335 kilometres directly south west of Alice Springs; however it is 450 kilometres to travel to via road. Kata Tjuta is another peculiar rock formation approximately just 25 kilometres from Uluru. Uluru is listed as an important World Heritage Site and the area features many unique springs, waterholes, rock caves and ancient paintings.

To visit this natural Australian wonder you need to have either access to a car, campervan, or take one of the many tours that visit the area. There is no public transport to Uluru from Alice Springs. To get to the area there are several options including flying (only Qantas services Alice Springs and Uluru), bus travel, or train travel from Adelaide or Darwin (twice per week). You may be required to spend a night or two in Alice Springs or Uluru on either side of your chosen tour.

Travel Forever strongly advises booking a tour in advance as it is a very popular tourist destination. Many of the tours are of 2 or 3 day length (or longer) as there are large travelling distances to cover. The 3 day tours are most popular and allow visitors enough time to see the spectacular landscape and the most famous attractions of Uluru, Kata Tjuta and Kings Canyon. Alternatively there are some great tours that include transport and other sightseeing opportunities between Darwin and Adelaide that incorporate the red centre highlights. Please contact us for information regarding the tours available.

When visiting the isolated central Australian desert, avoid walking during the middle of the day when the temperature is the highest. It is also strongly advised that you take sunscreen, a hat, drink plenty of water (about 1 litre per hour at the hottest time), and carry a fly net (in the hotter months). There is camping, budget, and standard hotel room accommodation available close to Uluru and Kings Canyon. Many of the tours will include camping style accommodation.

### Uluru

The world-renowned sandstone formation stands 348 metres high with most of its bulk below the ground, and measures 9.4 kilometres in circumference. At different times of the year and day Uluru appears to change colour dramatically as the different light strikes it. Sunset offers a particularly beautiful sight when Uluru glows a vivid red colour.

There are a number of walks that offer spectacular views of Uluru. These include the Base of Uluru, the Liru Walk, the Mala Walk and Kantju Gorge - North-West side of Uluru, the Kuniya Walk and Mutitjulu Waterhole - Southern side of Uluru, and the Dune Walk - Bus sunset car park. The Base Walk follows the footsteps of the spiritual ancestors and is rich in culture and beauty, while also respecting the wishes of the Tjukurpa and

Anangu people by not climbing Uluru. The Liru Walk passes between the base of Uluru and the cultural centre and, following rainfall, past an abundance of blooming desert flowers. The Mala Walk and Kantju Gorge - North-West side of Uluru is awe-inspiring with its depth of cultural history and significance, combined with excellent Aboriginal rock art examples. The Kuniya Walk and Mutitjulu Waterhole - Southern side of Uluru passes a rock shelter, used until recently by the Aboriginal people, and visits the waterhole home of Wanampi, an ancestral watersnake. The Dune Walk – Bus sunset car park offers fantastic views of both Uluru and Kata Tjuta.

### Climbing Uluru

The Uluru climb is the traditional route taken by the ancestral Mala men upon their first arrival to Uluru. Therefore due to the spiritual significance of this magnificent landmark the Anangu Aboriginal people do not climb Uluru. For the sake of visitor safety the Anangu request that people do not climb the rock as they have a strong sense of responsibility if any mishaps occur on this difficult climb. The Anangu feel enormous sorrow when a visitor is injured or dies whilst climbing the rock. Another reason is that the Uluru climb crosses a sacred traditional Dreamtime path. However it is still a popular activity for visitors to climb Uluru; keep in mind it is a very steep and often windy 800 metre climb to the top. If you should attempt to climb Uluru, despite the cultural sensitivity around it, it is strongly recommended that you have an above-average level of fitness as well as high tolerance to the inhospitable desert conditions. The climb is closed to the public when weather conditions are predicted to exceed certain safety thresholds (wind, cloud, temperature, rain), during emergency situations, and for cultural reasons.

### Kata Tjuta

There are several walks of varying degrees of difficulty offering sensational views of the sheer dome formations of Kata Tjuta. These include the Kata Tjuta Dune Viewing area walk, the Walpa (meaning windy) Gorge Walk, and the Valley of the Winds Walk - Kata Tjuta. The Kata Tjuta Dune Viewing area walk provides panoramic views of the incredible landscape, especially magnificent at sunrise. The Walpa Gorge (formerly known as Olga Gorge) walk reveals a hidden oasis of rare desert plants and animals. The Valley of the Winds Walk - Kata Tjuta is more challenging and passes through a vast and stony landscape. This walk is closed during extreme weather conditions, such as high winds and high temperatures.

Both Uluru and Kata Tjuta have huge cultural significance for the Anangu Traditional Aboriginal landowners. The Anangu have looked after the

**web** [www.travelforever.com.au](http://www.travelforever.com.au) **email** [info@travelforever.com.au](mailto:info@travelforever.com.au)

**phone** +61 8 6267 0700 **address** 135 Barrack Street Perth Western Australia 6000

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landscape for thousands of years and lead educational walking tours to inform visitors about the bush foods, local flora and fauna, and the spiritual Aboriginal dreamtime stories of the area. Special viewing areas with road access and parking have been constructed to give visitors the best views of both Uluru and Kata Tjuta at sunrise and sunset.

### Kings Canyon

The breathtaking landmark of Kings Canyon is part of the Watarrka National Park located at the western end of the George Gill Range, it is 323 kilometres southwest of Alice Springs and 1316 kilometres south of Darwin. The sheer walls of Kings Canyon are over 300 metres high, with Kings Creek at the bottom. Visitors are discouraged from wandering off the designated walking tracks as part of the gorge is a sacred Aboriginal site. There are 2 stunning walks at Kings Canyon, the Kings Creek Walk and the Kings Canyon Rim Walk. The Kings Creek Walk follows the bottom of the gorge until you reach the end which features a viewing platform with fantastic views of the sheer canyon walls rising above. The Kings Canyon Rim Walk follows the top of the canyon, with a steep climb at the beginning, amazing views of the surrounding area and the deep gorge below, followed by passing through a tangle of large sandstone dome-like formations. A detour along this walk crosses down into a serene waterhole encircled by lush green plants, known as the Garden of Eden. For the more daring and adventurous hikers the Giles Track connects Kings Canyon to Kathleen Springs 22 kilometres away.

The Kings Canyon Resort operated by Voyages 6 kilometres to the west offers camping, budget rooms, and standard hotel rooms. Kings Creek Station, 38 kilometres to the east run and owned by Ian and Lyn Conway offers alternative accommodation, and also provides camel rides and quad bike tours.

### Climate

The Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park receives an average rainfall of 307.7 millimetres per year, and average temperatures are 37.8 °C (Degrees Celsius) in the summer and 4.7 °C in the winter. Temperature extremes in the park have been recorded at 45 °C during the summer and –5 °C during winter nights.

The local Aboriginal people recognise 5 seasons:

1. Mai Wiyaringkupai (November to December): The hot season, food is scarce.
2. Itjanu (January to March): Storms roll in quickly.
3. Wanitjukupai (April to May): Cool weather.
4. Wari (June to July): The cold season featuring chilly morning frosts.
5. Piriyakutu (August to September): Springtime when plants flower, animals breed, and food is plentiful.

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