

Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park: Australia's most controversial national park



Why is it controversial?

Many Australians view the World Heritage listed Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park as one of the most expensive and over-controlled national parks in the nation.

As the park is home to Australian icons, Ayers Rock (Uluru) and Mt Olga (Kata Tjuta), many Australians believe that the fees and the strict rules imposed by the park managers are an impost on their national and cultural identity.

However, don't let the controversy deter you. Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park is worth a visit.

On this page, we'll tell you everything you need to know to visit this very special park: how long you'll need to visit, fees, facilities, where you can stay, and what not to miss whilst you're there.

How to Get There:

Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park is located approximately 470 km from Alice Springs.

You can drive there from Alice Springs via the Stuart and Lasseter Highways.

These are excellent bitumen highways and you WILL NOT need to hire a 4WD to travel on them.

View [Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park](#) in a larger map

For a comprehensive driving itinerary, check our [driving from Alice Springs to Ayers Rock page](#).

If you're driving from Sydney or Melbourne allow 3 days (yes, you read that correctly THREE days) to drive to Uluru.

You can learn much more about travelling to Ayers Rock/Uluru via plane, bus or even tour on our [Travel to Ayers Rock page](#).

Fees and Facilities:

Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park is quite large. It covers about 1,325 square kilometres.

The Park is also home to Ayers Rock. For many people, that is the one and only reason to visit.



The park's entry fees (along with the infamous closures of the Uluru climb) are the most hotly debated topic for many visitors to the park.

We'd like to point out something very important here:

- Although the Park is located in the Northern Territory, it is not managed by the Northern Territory's Parks and Wildlife Service.
- It is managed by Parks Australia, which is the Australian Commonwealth Government's conservation agency

This means that, although all other Northern Territory parks are free to enter, Uluru is not.

(The other exception is Kakadu National Park, which is also managed by Parks Australia).

It also means: user-pays fees.

Fees

A visit to the Park will cost you \$25 if you are over 16 years old. This will buy you a 3 day pass.

Even if you are visiting for only one day, you will have to pay \$25 to enter.

Entry is free to children under 16 years.

To purchase an entry pass, you simply drive up to the park entrance gate.

Opening Hours

Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park is open all year round – even in the middle of summer.

Opening hours vary depending on the time of year, and are as follows:

- 5.00 am – 9.00 pm during December, January, February
- 5.30 am – 8.30 pm during March
- 6.00 am – 8.00 pm during April
- 6.00 am – 7.30 pm during May
- 6.30 am – 7.30 pm during June, July
- 6.00 am – 7.30 pm during August
- 5.30 am – 7.30 pm during September
- 5.00 am – 8.00 pm during October
- 5.00 am – 8.00 pm during November

Facilities

Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park has no accommodation or camping areas. The closest nearby accommodation is at Yulara (Ayers Rock Resort), 18 km (11mi) away.

We've written extensive reviews of all of Uluru's accommodation, which you can read [here](#).

To get the best value for the money you'll pay in entry fees and transport costs to get to Uluru, we recommend that you should spend at least 2 days here.

Any less than 2 days, and you're not going to get much of a return on your travel dollar investment.

It's an expensive place to get to, so you might as well do as much as you can whilst you're here. Save money by doing all the free walks and activities inside the national park.

To get the most out of your visit to Uluru, you should stop at the Cultural Centre before you walk around or climb the Rock.

We recommend this because the Cultural Centre has loads of great interactive information about Aboriginal culture, Tjukurpa (law, knowledge, religion, philosophy), the park's history, geology, flora and fauna.



A visit to Uluru's Cultural Centre will enrich your understanding of the park ten-fold.

At certain times of the day, you'll also be able to meet local Anangu and participate in basketweaving or dot-painting lessons, and also try bush tucker with rangers and Anangu. (The honey ants are yum!).

You'll also find short ranger and Anangu-guided walks which focus on culture, plants and animals.

The park's Cultural Centre, which is inside the Park on the main road to Uluru, is a must-see when you visit. Entry is free, and there is also a cafe and rest rooms.

There's also the Walkatjara Art Centre at the Cultural Centre, which is owned and operated by the local Aboriginal artists from the Mutitjulu Community. If you're visiting during the week, you'll be able to meet some of the artists and chat to them about their paintings and their lives

(Hint: a good icebreaker with Aboriginal people is to talk about Aussie Rules football with men, and children or grandchildren with women.)



Other facilities within the park include several sunrise and sunset viewing platforms.

The recently opened Talinguru Nyakunytjaku (means ‘to look from the sand dunes’), on the south western side of Uluru, is well worth a visit – even if it’s just for the stunning drive through the desert oaks.

[Download a guide to the sunset and sunrise viewing areas here.](#)

[Download a guide to Talinguru Nyakunytjaku here.](#)

Besides watching the sunrise and sunset on Ayers Rock and Kata Tjuta, there’s a number of short walks in the Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park. These vary from the 10km walk right around the base of Uluru itself, to the short stroll to the Mututjulu Waterhole (the Kuniya walk).

[Read more about walks at Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park here.](#)

What to See and Do:

Obviously, the big things to see and do at when visiting the Park are to see Uluru (Ayers Rock) and Kata Tjuta (Mt Olga). No surprises here!

Everyone raves about the Uluru sunset, but there’s a hell of a lot more to do in the park than sit in an overcrowded car park with a gazillion other tourists.

Given that you've probably spent a lot of time sitting in a car or bus, why not try something a bit more active?

The park has plenty of hiking (short walks only), photography and birdwatching opportunities. In fact, it's damn near impossible to take a bad photograph at Ayers Rock.



Something else not to miss is the 100 km round trip to Kata Tjuta, and the Valley of the Winds walk.

The Valley of the Winds walk is the best walk in the national park. You'll see waterholes, shady, narrow gorges, tree lined creeks and you'll get away from most of the Uluru crowds.

Don't let the 8km walk deter you. Unless you have a serious health problem, any normal person can do this beautiful walk.

If you've got children, then try some geocaching. There are several geocaches hidden at various locations around the park, and none are too hard to find.

Like birdwatching, geocaching is an addictive and low cost activity.

Lastly, there's no end of paid tours and activities to do whilst you're at Uluru. See our Ayers Rock attractions page for a comprehensive review of tours and cultural activities.

Best time to Visit Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park:

We've been to Uluru Kata Tjuta in all seasons: in the stinking hot middle of summer and in the freezing cold, wet middle of winter.

Really, the best time to go depends upon what you want to see and do.

No matter what time of the year you go, you'll always be able to see Uluru and view the sunrise and sunset.

What you won't be able to do in the summer is climb Uluru or do the Valley of the Winds walk at Kata Tjuta. These are closed when it's either too hot (over 36 degrees Celcius) or too windy.

From time to time, these walks are also closed for Aboriginal cultural reasons as well.

Keep in mind other factors: it's much, much cheaper to get accommodation at Ayers Rock resort in the summer months.

If you hate crowds, avoid July and August, as that's peak tourist season.

However, if your heart is set on climbing the Rock, then you're best to go between June-September.

To help you learn more about Uluru's climate, visit our [Ayers Rock weather page](#).

Have you visited Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park?

If so, let us know what you liked or didn't like about the Park by leaving a comment below. Also, if you've got any tips or useful info, please share that as well.