

History of Uluru Kata-Tjuṯa



Aṅangu have always been on this land now known as Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa National Park.

European exploration

Much of the early European exploration of Central Australia occurred as a result of expeditions staged for scientific and agricultural reasons – among others. The impact of early European exploration on Aṅangu life was both significant and diverse.



Explorer John McDouall Stuart

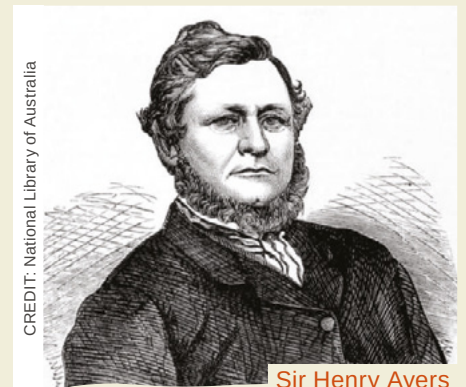
In 1862, John McDouall Stuart completed the first return south-north crossing of Australia. He assessed the possible pastoral value of the land and paved the way for the construction of the Adelaide to Darwin Overland Telegraph Line between 1871 and 1872.

William Earnest Giles first saw Kata Tjuṯa in 1872 while exploring near Watarrka (Kings Canyon). He named the largest dome at Kata Tjuṯa 'Mount Olga' but he was unable to reach it due to an inability to cross Pantu (the salt lake – Lake Amadeus). Giles tried again in 1873 and this time succeeded, but he had been beaten to it by a man named Gosse.

In 1873, William Christie Gosse became the first non-Aboriginal visitor on record to reach this area, naming Uluru 'Ayers Rock' after the then Chief Secretary of South Australia (SA), Sir Henry Ayers.

The Horn Expedition of 1894 was financed by W.A Horn, a wealthy SA pastoralist and businessman.

The expedition was primarily a scientific endeavour, intended to examine the geology, mineral resources, plants, animals and Aboriginal cultures of Central Australia. The expedition provided non-Aboriginal people with valuable knowledge of the natural history of the region. However, the land proved too harsh for the pastoral industry.



Sir Henry Ayers

Instead, Uluru and Kata Tjuṯa were included in the South West Reserve, declared in 1920, as part of a larger system of reserves set aside as sanctuaries for Aboriginal people. The result was that few non-Aboriginal people visited the area until the 1940s – apart from a few prospectors, missionaries and Native Welfare patrol officers.

In 1928, the missionary E.E Kramer, guided by 'Tiger' Tjalkalyiri, gave a Christian service south of Uluru. He was the first non-Aboriginal person to record Uluru as a sacred place: 'the most sacred spot in all the country around where natives come for their ceremonies'.

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT) 1976 gave Anangu a powerful voice to protect sacred sites and an opportunity to regain control of the land

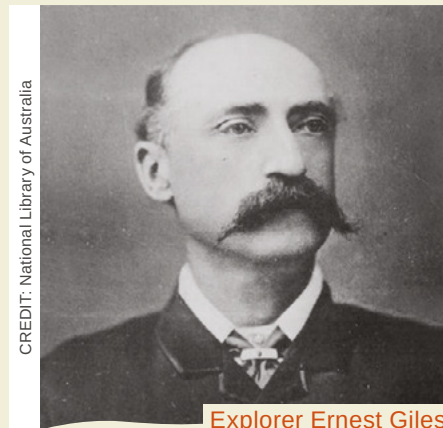


Timeline

- 1872** – Ernest Giles sighted Mt Olga from near Kings Canyon.
- 1873** – Gosse becomes the first European to visit Uluru.
- 1920** – The Peterman Ranges, Ayers Rock and the Olgas are gazetted as Aboriginal Reserve.
- 1930s** – Anangu become involved in dingo scalping and are introduced to European food.
- 1940** – Loss of full traditional pattern of land use, but Anangu maintain strong ties with the land.
- Mid 1940s** – Tourists begin to arrive.
- 1958** – Uluru and Kata Tjuta are taken out of the Aboriginal Reserve and declared a tourist and wildlife reserve.
- 1971** – Federal and SA Government officers meet with Traditional Owners at Ernabella.
- 1973** – Federal House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment visits Uluru.
- 1974** – Ayers Rock Advisory Committee meet for the first time.
- 1976** – Northern Territory Land Rights Act passes.
- 1979** – Katiti Land Claim is presented.
- 1983** – Aboriginal title to Uluru is acknowledged.
- 1984** – Yulara Tourist Village, now Ayers Rock Resort opens.
- 1985** – Title deeds are handed back to Traditional Owners.
- 1987** – The park secures a *natural* World Heritage listing.
- 1994** – The park secures a *cultural landscape* World Heritage listing.
- 1995** – The Cultural Centre opens.

Tourism and mining

In the 1930s, gold prospector H.B Lasseter claimed to have found a 'reef of gold of untold wealth', thus sparking the interest of many prospecting parties who came to the area in pursuit of mineral wealth.



Explorer Ernest Giles

The magic and wonder as described by explorers such as Gosse and Giles then ensured the inevitable development of tourism in the area, with visitation increasing from 1947 through to 1950.

After a tour in 1950 with a party from Sydney's Knox Grammar School, Len Tuit began to offer regular tours in 1955. The earliest tours from Alice Springs to Uluru took 20 passengers and were rough – with accommodation being a tent camp. By 1958, Tuit had constructed a galvanised shed but the supply of water remained the main concern for the venture. Tuit started by carting water from Curtin Springs then arranged for a drilling rig to be brought in. Using his bush knowledge, he struck good fresh water at a depth of 26 metres with a flow.

The first lodge was built at Uluru in 1958 by Alice Springs Tours Ltd. It was a corrugated iron building with a dining room, six bedrooms, two bathrooms and a hot water service.

Land rights

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT) 1976 and the formation of the interim Central Land Council in 1974 gave Anangu a powerful voice to protect sacred sites and an opportunity to regain control of the land.

As a result of the 1979 Katiti Land Claim, Commissioner Justice Toohey accepted that 104 traditional owners had been formally identified for Uluru and 57 for Kata Tjuta. Anangu were given title to the Katiti Land Trust north and east of the park.

However, they were unable to claim Uluru and Kata Tjuta as it was crown land, alienated as a national park.



In 1977, the park was declared Uluru and Kata Tjuta (Ayers Rock-Mt Olga) National Park under the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975. At the same time, an agreement was made between the Commonwealth and the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory to manage the park.

Finally, in 1983, Prime Minister Bob Hawke promised the return of the land to the traditional owners under the Land Rights Act.

On 26 October, 1985, Governor-General Sir Ninian Stephen presented Anangu with the title deeds to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. In return, Anangu leased the lands to the then Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (now Parks Australia) for a period of ninety-nine years.

In 1993, at the request of Anangu, the park's official name changed to its present name Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park, recognising the traditional names.

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