

World Heritage

Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park is world heritage listed for both natural and cultural values. In 1994 the Park became the second national park in the world to be listed as a cultural landscape.

What is World Heritage?

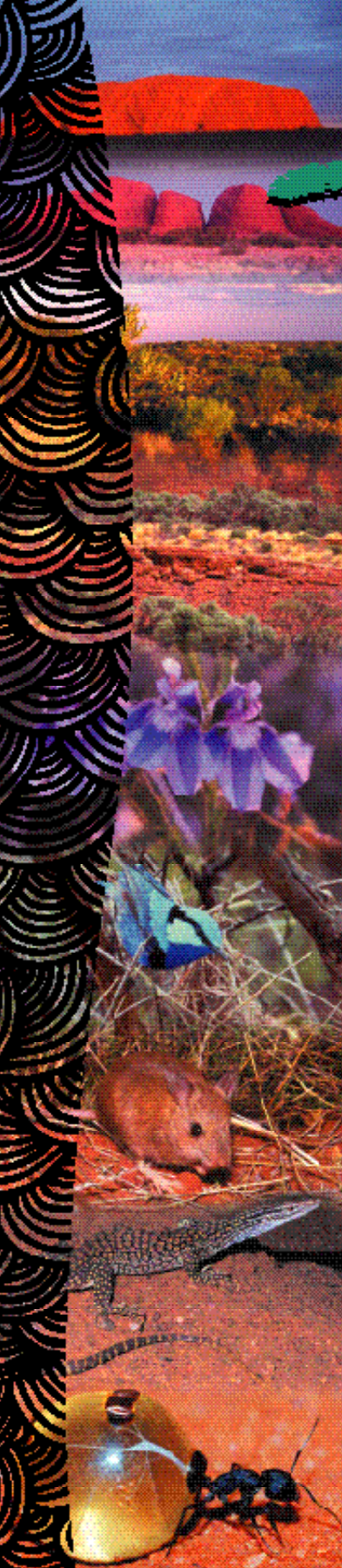
World heritage sites are places of outstanding universal value. Australia was one of the first countries in the world to sign the World Heritage Convention, which came into force in 1975. Over 100 countries are now signatories to the Convention, with over 440 sites around the world listed as World Heritage Areas.

The World Heritage Convention aims to:

- promote cooperation among nations to protect world wide heritage which is of such international value that its conservation is a concern for all people,
- commit signatory nations to help in the identification, protection, conservation and presentation of World Heritage properties,
- encourage signatory nations, with international assistance where appropriate, to 'adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programs'
- oblige signatory nations to refrain from 'any deliberate measures which might damage directly or indirectly the cultural and natural heritage' and to 'take the appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures' necessary for its protection.

Australia, with its *World Heritage Conservation Act 1983*, is the only nation to have enacted specific legislation to protect World Heritage Areas. World Heritage Listing does not affect property rights. Ownership remains as it was before listing, and state and local laws still apply to the listed properties. The areas do not become government property, nor does control pass into the hands of any international body or foreign power.

The Australian Government makes nominations for the World Heritage List in consultation with state and territory governments.



The nominations are considered by the World Heritage Committee, on which Australia has served regularly since 1976.

Natural Landscape

In 1987 Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park received World Heritage listing as a natural property representing ongoing geological, biological and ecological processes as well as exhibiting ‘natural beauty with an exceptional combination of natural and cultural elements.’ This recognized the western scientific value of the Park.

Cultural Landscape

In 1994 the Park was successfully nominated as a World Heritage property under this category because it is:

- a cultural landscape representing the combined work of nature and of man, manifesting the interaction between humankind and its natural environment; and,
- an associative landscape having powerful religious, artistic and cultural associations of the natural element.

The nomination highlighted those parts of the Park’s Plan of Management which emphasised the centrality of Anangu scientific knowledge and traditional land management practices. The nomination noted the fact that land degradation that has occurred in the Park over the last 50 years has begun to be reversed since these practices have been re-established.

Anangu view of World Heritage

The listing of Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park as a World Heritage Property for its natural and cultural values represents years of work by Anangu to assert their role as custodians of their traditional lands. This international recognition is a significant victory for the Traditional Owners because it confirms the validity of Tjukurpa and Anangu culture in all aspects of the Park’s Management.

The independent International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), which assessed the cultural values of Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park for the World Heritage Council, gave international recognition of:

- Tjukurpa as a religious philosophy linking Anangu to their environment;
- Anangu culture as an integral part of the landscape; and,
- Anangu perspective and interaction with the landscape.

This is one of the reasons Anangu want Australians to refer to the lands of the Park by their traditional names Uluru and Kata Tjuta rather than the non-Anangu names which have been given more recently.

Implications for the Park Management

The World Heritage listings of Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park emphasises the Park as a living culture as well as a unique ecosystem. This puts further pressure on all the joint management parties to ensure Tjukurpa remains a vital component of all aspects of Park management. The key objectives in the Park’s current Plan of Management with regard to the Park’s cultural resources are to:

- utilise Anangu scientific knowledge and land management practices in the Park;
- continue research into Anangu scientific knowledge;
- expand and develop the Park’s interpretation program of Anangu explanations of the landscape;
- ensure that Anangu knowledge is seen as the primary interpretation of the Park and ensure that non-Anangu interpretations complement Anangu interpretation;
- support and enforce existing policies and regulations regarding visitor management based on Anangu perceptions of appropriate visitor behaviour;
- work with Anangu to identify and conserve rock art and other archeological resources of the Park; and,
- record and interpret Anangu oral history.

Effects on Tourism

The listings ensure that the Park remains a world class destination for both its cultural and natural heritage. Visitors will continue to have an authentic cultural experience at the Park and leave knowing that the Park is managed according to cultural practices that date back tens of thousands of years. World Heritage listing helps maintain tourist numbers in Central Australia, providing various regional and national economic benefits.

Further information on the World Heritage Convention and World Heritage Properties can be obtained at the website www.unesco.org/whc or www.ea.gov.au/heritage/awh/worldheritage/

