



# Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park Note

## Anangu language

We, the traditional land owners of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, call ourselves Anangu (pronounced arn-ahng-oo), and would like you to use this term for us. Very few of us speak English as a first language.

### Aboriginal languages

It is estimated that prior to European colonisation, there were about 700 dialects spoken by Indigenous Australians. These languages are as different and distinct from each other as is English to Russian and Italian. Many of these languages are no longer used or are under threat of disappearing. It is estimated that there are only 20 to 50 languages still described as ‘healthy’, that is, they are spoken to and used by children.

### Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara

Anangu mainly speak Pitjantjatjara (pronounced as pit-jan-jah-jarra) and Yankunytjatjara (pronounced as yan-kun-ja-jarra) and some people speak up to six Aboriginal languages. These are all dialects of the Western Desert Language, the largest language group of Aboriginal Australia. The group includes about 4000 speakers, and stretches northwest to Balgo, west to Port Headland, south to Kalgoorlie, Yalata and Oodnadatta and northeast to Alice Springs.

Pitjantjatjara literally means the people who use ‘pitjantja’ when they say ‘coming’. Yankunytjatjara are the people who use ‘yankunytja’ to say ‘going’. Anangu means ‘people’ in Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara. The grammar and structure of Western Desert languages are very different to English. There are 17 consonants, some of which non-Pitjantjatjara speakers find difficult. There are three vowels, a, i and u, each of which may sound long or short. Sounds such as s, z, v, sh or th do not exist. Some ‘old’ words are adapted for new situations such as the word for tourists, ‘minga’, literally means ‘ants’ because the lines of visitors climbing Uluru look like lines of ants. Anangu also incorporate English words such as ‘mutuka’ for ‘motor car’.

### Pronunciation

There is always stress on the first syllable of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara words.

The letters t, n, l and r can be written with a line underneath, called a retroflex. A retroflexed letter is pronounced a different way to the same letter without the line. A retroflex on an ‘n’, ‘l’, or ‘t’ tells us to curl the tongue back slightly in the mouth before pronouncing the letter. This produces a sound similar to an ‘r’ sound, for example ‘walpa’ is pronounced ‘warlpa’. A retroflex on an ‘r’ tells us this is like the normal English ‘r’ sound. An ‘r’ without a retroflex has a rolled ‘rrrr’ sound, like some European languages.

### SOME PITJANTJATJARA WORDS

Note: The ‘oo’ sound is the same as in ‘look.’

#### FAMILY

Tjitji (chee-chee) Child

Mama (mah-mah) Father

Tjamu (jah-moo) Grandfather

Kuṯa (koo-tah) Big Brother

Kamuṯu (kum-moo-roo) Uncle

Ngunytju Mother

Kami (kah-mee) Grandmother

Kangkuru (kan-kooroo) Big Sister

Kuntili (koo-tu-lee) Auntie

#### NUMBERS

Kutju (koot-choo) One (1)

Kutjara (koot-char-rrah) Two (2)

Manṯurpa (mahn-koorr-pah) Three (3)

Kutjara-kutjara Four (4)

Kutjara-manṯurpa Five (5)



## OTHER WORDS

*Tjukurpa* (chook-orr-pa) *Anangu* Law/Story

*Kapi* (cuppy) Water

*Waru* (wah-roo) Fire

*Kuli* (koo-lee) Hot weather, summer

*Uwa* (oo-wah) Yes

*Wiya* (wee-ah) No

*Palya* (pahl-yah) OK, good, hello, bye

*Pulka* (pool-kah) Big

*Tjuta* (joo-tah) Many

*Wiru* (wi-roo) Beautiful

## PLACES

- *Ininti* (in-in-tee)

Red seeds of the bean tree often used in making necklaces and other decorations. It is also the name of the café at the Cultural Centre.

- *Kata Tjuta* (kah-tah choor-tar)

*Kata* - 'head', *tjuta* - 'many'

- *Maruku* (mah-roo-koo)

It literally means belonging to 'dark' or Aboriginal people. It is also the name of the Arts and Crafts shop located at the Cultural Centre

- *Muġitjulu* (moor-ti-choo-loo )

The name of the *Anangu* community situated on the eastern side of *Uluru* and the name of one of the major waterholes at the base of *Uluru*

- *Uluru* (oo-loo-roo)

There is no literal translation of *Uluru*, it is a name only, like Sydney, Paris, Rome or Berlin.



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## FAUNA

*Itjaritjari* (it-cha-ree-cha-ree) marsupial mole, an ancestral creature yet rarely seen as it lives almost entirely underground.

*Kalaya* (kah-lay-ah) emu, the feathers and meat are used by *Anangu*.

*Kuniya* (koon-e-ya) woma python is a non-venomous, edible snake that is an important ancestral being.

*Liru* (lear-oo) king brown snake, highly venomous and not eaten, also an important ancestral being.

*Lungkata* (loong-cart-ah) Centralian blue-tongued lizard, an ancestral being.

*Mala* (mahr-la) rufous hare-wallaby. A small wallaby with big ears and ginger fur. *Mala* are one of the most important ancestral creatures associated with *Uluru*.

*Malu* (mar-loo) red plains kangaroo. An important food and material source (rear leg sinew used as binding for spears).

*Mingkiri* (ming-keer-ree) spinifex mouse, a small nocturnal marsupial.

*Ngintaka* (nin-tar-ka) perentie, the largest monitor lizard, a good food source.

*Ngiyari* (nee-ah-ree) thorny devil.

*Papa* (pah-pah) dog/dingo.

*Rapita* is rabbit.

*Wanampi* (wahr-nahm-pee) watersnake. A *wanampi* lives in a waterhole and guards it against strangers. When approaching a waterhole traditionally you would alert the *wanampi* by making noise or lighting a small fire and announcing who you are. This is considered appropriate and necessary behaviour when not in your own country. *Muġitjulu* waterhole has a resident *wanampi*.

## FOR REFERENCE

*Anangu* and non-*Anangu* linguists have produced a *Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara* to English Dictionary. It is available from Yulara Newsagency and several bookshops in Alice Springs.

