

Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park Note

Cultural Centre

Pukul ngalya yanama Ananguku ngurakutu - Yankunytjatjara

Pukulpa pitjama Ananguku ngurakutu - Pitjantjatjara

Anangu traditional owners welcome you to Anangu land

The opening of the Uluru–Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre in 1995 celebrated ten years of working together under joint management. The building represents a blend of the needs of Anangu culture and the demands of over 300,000 visitors each year. Shortly after the handback of Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park to the traditional owners, discussions on building a Cultural Centre to share Anangu culture began.

The first Plan of Management for the park in 1986 recommended that a cultural centre be established for the following purposes:

- presentation of interpretive material relating to traditional culture
- display and sale of contemporary Aboriginal art and crafts
- display of historical contact and park history
- presentation of traditional song and dance, and
- the conduct of other appropriate Anangu controlled cultural and commercial activities.

The design process

In September 1990 Gregory Burgess Architects Pty Ltd were commissioned to produce a design brief. The architects set up a work studio in the Mutitjulu Community where Anangu and other interested parties could comment on the requirements of the proposed building. Anangu made sure that everyone involved in the process learned about Tjukurpa. The final concept was based on the Tjukurpa ancestors Kuniya (the woma python - southern building) and Liru (the poisonous snake - northern building). Traditional owners, Mutitjulu community members and design consultants worked together on the texts and concepts. Artists from Mutitjulu community worked on paintings, ceramics, glass, wood, video and audio-visual displays. The site was chosen with consideration of environmental impact, the aesthetics of the surrounding area and the wishes of Anangu. In early 1994, Sitzler Bros Pty Ltd from Alice Springs were selected as the building contractors.

There is a set route through the centre to provide a variety of experiences. By entering through the Tjukurpa Tunnel visitors learn about the traditional and ancient culture of the area. Joint Management and other topics of interest within the national park are presented in the Nintirngkupai Room (information desk). The aspirations of Anangu are presented in owned and operated businesses including Maruku Arts, Anangu Tours, Walkatjara Art and Ininti Cafe and Souvenirs.



The Cultural Centre building

Vital statistics include:

- compacted earth foundations
- 90,000 mud bricks made of local soil. The bricks were built on-site employing local *Anangu*
- a slurry of soil and water was bagged over the bricks to provide the finishing texture
- white cypress pine poles from southwest Queensland and northwest New South Wales
- cypress pine and stringy bark rafters
- Victorian yellow stringy bark cladding and panelling, radially-sawn allowing an efficient use of timber
- western red cedar door and window frames
- bloodwood roof shingles from New South Wales
- grey iron bark floorboards in Walkatjara Art
- grey iron bark bearers and joists
- copper roof shingles which slowly colour through the oxidisation process as they age, and
- external paths of compacted gravel overlain with consolidated sand.

The Cultural Centre experience

Cultural Centre logo

The logo for the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre represents four major *Tjukurpa* stories associated with Uluru. *Kuniya*, *Liru*, *Kurpany* and *Mala* are all ancestral beings who help form the basis of traditional Law and custom for *Anangu* today. They connect *Anangu* with country in all directions around Uluru. *Kuniya* came from the east near Erdunda and is still present at Uluru. *Liru* came from the southwest and returned to that country after the battle with *Kuniya's* nephew. The *Mala* people arrived for ceremonies from *Mawulyarungu* to the north near *Yuendumu*. *Kurpany* was sent in from the west near *Kaltukatjara* (Docke River) and chased the *Mala* people through Uluru itself and then into South Australia.

Opening day

After four years of planning and 18 months to build, the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre was officially opened on 26 October 1995. A year after opening, the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre design was recognised through the prestigious Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Northern Territory Branch) annual awards. Other awards received by Gregory Burgess Pty Ltd for the Cultural Centre were the 1996 Tracy Memorial Award for the best building in any category, the Institutional Architecture Award and the People's Choice Award.

To fully appreciate the Cultural Centre visitors should allow at least two to three hours. Because of the deep spiritual nature of the area and what is contained within the Cultural Centre, visitors are asked not to photograph or video inside the building or precinct. This is to respect the wishes of the traditional owners, and protect *Anangu's* cultural and intellectual property.

Kanyangatja mulapa wali nganampa - Anangu marutju takum, Anangu uwankaraku

This building truly represents us *Anangu* people, it is for all people to visit.



Left to right - the Cultural Centre and the Cultural Centre logo

