

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Note

Weather

Uluru is in the semi arid zone of Central Australia at 131 degrees east and 25 degrees south and is 500 metres above sea level. The weather is extreme, rainfall is difficult to predict and the seasons are diverse.

Temperature

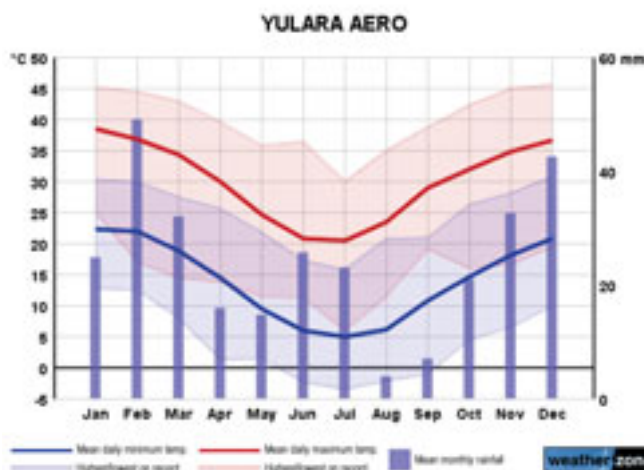
The ocean, which is over 1000 kilometres away in any direction, does not influence the temperature nor is it moderated by clouds. This results in considerable heating of the earth's surface during the day and considerable cooling at night. As a result, this area experiences significant daily temperature ranges. The highest temperature recorded by the weather station was 45.5 degrees Celsius on 17 February 1992 and between October and April, there is an average of 43 days above 40 degrees Celsius. High temperatures in summer often cause considerable stress to those visiting the park therefore activity is better in the early morning or late afternoon. In winter, the overnight minimum often falls below zero degrees Celsius and the average temperature range is between 14 to 30 degrees Celsius.

Rainfall

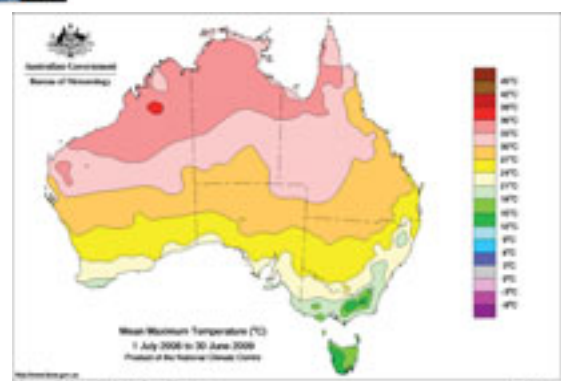
About 70 per cent of the Australian continent is arid and Uluru is located roughly near the middle of the semi arid centre. The driest region in the arid zone surrounds Lake Eyre, further to the south, where the annual rainfall is only 12 centimetres. The long-term average annual rainfall at Uluru is about 291 millimetres, yet seasonal and annual rainfalls are extremely variable. Rain may fall at any time of the year, however heavy rains are more likely between November and March. At this time of year, large tropical depressions may move across the continent causing heavy rains to sweep inland across the arid zone.

The average annual evaporation rate is high at approximately 280 centimetres. In such a dry environment prolonged droughts may be frequent and extreme. The longest drought on record ended in 1965 and lasted six and a half years. The lowest recorded annual rainfall is 82 millimetres in 1965 and the highest 935 millimetres in 1974.

Below - Annual Rain and Temperature Graph for Yulara (Weather Zone)



Right - a graph showing the average maximum temperatures for Australia (Bureau of Meteorology)





Frosts

Frosts are common during winter when high pressure systems move through the area combining cooler dry air with nocturnal radiation. The frosts cure the grasses, drying and preserving them and this dry fuel feeds fires ignited during the early summer.

Humidity

The average relative humidity throughout the region is markedly lower than in coastal zones. Seasonally, humidity recordings are almost the inverse of temperature and are highest in winter and lowest in summer. The air is usually very dry and the humidity normally drops as the temperature rises. This contributes to an efficient cooling of the body but requires the body to use a great deal of fluid. Visitors need to drink enough water to replace fluid used when walking, one litre per hour is recommended.

Winds

Cool winds at Uluru come predominantly from the southeast and the north easterly flows are at their strongest during September to November. At the top of Uluru winds are invariably much stronger than at ground level. Wind speeds of up to 90 kilometres per hour have been recorded in the region.

Storms

The general flow of the weather is from west to east, though storms can come in from other directions, frequently steering from the northwest with an approaching change. Puffy stratocumulus clouds appear on the western horizon and move east quickly covering the sky. About 10 minutes before a storm hits, the wind picks up and the temperature drops. Storm conditions and lightning are most common from October to February and stormy weather is often preceded by strong, dry and dusty winds. The daily weather forecast is available at the Cultural Centre.



Waterfalls on Uluru (left) are a visitor's delight after rain



Uluru shrouded in cloud (right) makes for a great photo opportunity



Uluru at sunrise (left) and a typical afternoon in summer (right)



Australian Government
Director of National Parks

