

AYERS ROCK/ ULURU

Uluru/ Ayers Rock, a huge, oval, pink rock formation lies in the Australian Outback in the Northern Territory. The Outback is hot dry land and covers 70 percent of Australia. The nearest large town is Alice Spring, 450 km by road. People in the Outback often live far from other people. Kids cannot go to school because there are no schools nearby. They have to listen to lessons on the radio. Visiting the Outback can be dangerous. It is easy to get lost because there are not many people, cars or buildings. It is usually very hot so you must also take lots of water with you, too.

Uluru is 3, 6 km long and 348m high. It is sacred to the Aboriginal people of the area. It has many springs, waterholes, rock caves and ancient paintings in them. Uluru is listed as a World Heritage Site. The name Uluru has no particular meaning in Aboriginal language. In 1873, the surveyor William Gosse visited Uluru and named it Ayers Rock in honour of the chief Secretary of South Australia, Sir Henry Ayers. Since that, both names have been used. In 1993 Ayers/ Uluru became the first officially dual named feature in the Northern Territory. The order of the dual names was officially reversed to "Uluru/ Ayers Rock" in 2002. Uluru changes colour at different times of the day and year. At the sunset glows red, during wet periods, which is very short the rock gets a silver- grey colour with black forming on the areas that serve as channels for water flow.

Uluru is an island mountain left after the slow erosion of an original mountain range. It is homogeneous. Uluru is composed of coarse-grained arkose, which is a type of sandstone. When it is fresh, the rock has a red-brown rusty colour.

The rock was originally sand. The arkose sandstone, which makes up the formation, is composed of grains. The park receives an average rainfall 307mm per year. An average temperature is 37, 8°C in the summer and 4,7°C in the winter.

The Aboriginal people request that visitors not climb the rock, partly due to the path crossing a sacred traditional Dreamtime track and also due to a sense of responsibility for the safety of visitors to their land. The local people also request that visitors do not photograph certain sections of Uluru because of traditional beliefs. Most tourists are unaware of the sacred land that lies below the rock. For Aboriginals, whose paintings decorate its caves, the rock has deep significance and it is an important holy site.

Aborigines are the original people of Australia. Some tribes are over 60.000 years old. The Outback is their traditional home, but today many Aborigines live in towns and cities. They play the didgeridoo, a long wooden pip that makes a strange sound. Boomerangs are also Aboriginal. Aborigines hunt with them.