

# Uluru National Park

## A Pre-reading

1. Learn some new words before you read the text. Put these words into the sentences.  
according to / ancient / entitled / lack of / landmark / law / lease / reputation / request / sacred

- a) Temples, churches and mosques are \_\_\_\_\_ places for different religions.
- b) That actor has got a bad \_\_\_\_\_ for being very hard to work with.
- c) Those fossils aren't just old, they're \_\_\_\_\_
- d) \_\_\_\_\_ to the weather report, it's going to rain tomorrow.
- e) Sydney's most famous \_\_\_\_\_ is the Opera House.
- f) They haven't told us enough about it. We have a \_\_\_\_\_ information.
- g) We own the land, but we \_\_\_\_\_ it to a farmer for his sheep for € 100.
- h) I have a \_\_\_\_\_. Will you please take this letter to the post office for me?
- i) It is against the \_\_\_\_\_ to buy cigarettes if you are under 16.
- j) As a citizen I have rights. For example, I am \_\_\_\_\_ to vote.

2. When you skim a text, you are looking only for general or main ideas.

- a) Read the first sentence of each paragraph and mark a word or phrase that seems important to you.
- b) Write in 2-3 sentences what you think the text will be about.

## B What is Uluru to you?

A big piece of rock in the middle of Australia has got two names: Ayers Rock and Uluru. It is a popular tourist destination and a sacred place for the Aboriginals. Some people climb it and others worship it. How did this big rock get two names, two reputations, two personalities? A look at the rock from the ancient past to the near future can answer these questions.



The rock was first known by its Aboriginal name Uluru, and its history goes back at least 20,000 years, according to archeologists and historians. Because they have found cave and rock paintings near there, this is when they think the first humans settled in the area. These were the Anangu people, who explain Uluru's history like this: In the beginning the world did not have any special characteristics. Creatures came out of this empty place and traveled far. They created all living things and the desert landscape. This time of creation is known as dreamtime (*tjukurpa*). The Anangu people are direct descendants of these creatures and are responsible for the land.

In 1873 the big rock, which is higher than the Eiffel Tower, was given the name Ayers Rock. This was the year when explorer

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William Gosse, a Briton who emigrated to Australia when he was eight, saw the landmark. He named it after an Australian politician of the time. After the “discovery”, European immigrants (*piranpa*) tried to settle in the area and start ranches, but life was too hard in the dry, desert landscape. Most of them gave up because of the lack of water and because there were many conflicts between the settlers and the Anangu, most often about land rights. The Europeans did, however, return later to make the rock into a tourist attraction.

Although tourism in the area started as early as the 1930s and the first road from Alice Springs, which is about 450 km away, was made in the early 1940s, the site didn't become an Australian National Park until 1950. In the early 1950s bus service to the site began and by the end of the decade the first hotels had been built. During this time the wishes of the Anangu were mostly ignored.

It was not until 1985 that the land around Uluru was officially returned to its traditional owners - the Anangu people. However, the deal with the Australian government stated that the Anangu would immediately lease the land to the National Parks and Wildlife Agency for 99 years so that it could remain a national park. The Anangu play a big role in managing the park. Today its official name is Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and hundreds of thousands of tourists visit it every year.

From all of those visitors over the years, more than 35 of them have died while climbing Uluru, and that is a big part of the controversy surrounding the big rock. Although it is sometimes closed because of the extreme heat (it can reach 47° C in December) or strong winds, it has never been illegal to climb Uluru. In fact, in 1964 a chain was attached to the rock to make the climb easier.



However, the Anangu people request tourists not climb it and they've got good reasons. A sign in front of Uluru politely reads: “We, the traditional Anangu owners, have this to say. Uluru is sacred in our culture, a place of great knowledge. Under our traditional law, climbing is not permitted. This is our home. Please don't climb.” All of the climbing is changing Uluru. There is erosion and the path has become smooth and slippery from the thousands of shoes walking on it every year. Another reason

for their request is that, as its owners, the Anangu people feel responsible for anyone who climbs the rock. It is a 1.6-km climb and very steep at the beginning before you reach the flat top. If an accident or death happens on their property, they take it very seriously. In addition, the Anangu have questions for people who might climb: What would you say if we climbed on a Buddhist temple, or touched the *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre, or took flash pictures during a Christian church service? Those are all things that show disrespect, according to Anangu cultural law (*tjukurpa*).

Some tourists, on the other hand, believe that as long as climbing Uluru isn't banned, it is their right to do it. They want to have this unique experience like many tourists before them. They say that they paid to get into the park but don't realize that their entrance fee is used for things like

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roads and the visitor centre. Many of them don't even know about the Anangu's opinion on the subject - until they read their entry ticket to the national park. If they have driven hundreds of miles or flown for hours and spent lots of money to get there, they feel they are entitled to the climb. Some think visiting isn't worth it if they can't climb. And if the Aboriginal people and the national park are so serious about it, why don't they simply ban it?



This ban is, in fact, what has happened. Although in the 1985 agreement between the Anangu and Parks Australia, climbing was to be allowed, later three criteria were listed for closing the Uluru climb. Only one of the criteria has to be fulfilled. The criteria are: if there are other activities and experiences available to visitors; if the number of visitors who actually climb is below 20%; or if the other experiences that are offered become the main reasons people

decide to visit. The number of climbers has been below 20% for several years already. The park rangers and the Anangu offer many other kinds of activities within the park. Some examples include a 3.5-hour guided ranger walk around the base of Uluru, which is about 9.4 km; there are walks with information on Anangu culture; you can go bird watching (there are 178 kinds of birds in the park); and there's the Cultural Centre where you can watch Aboriginal artists at work. Companies outside the park even offer helicopter rides.

This is why the decision has been made to ban all climbing of Uluru starting in October 2019. So until that time tourists must decide what Uluru is to them. Simply a tourist destination or a place to show respect?

### C Post reading

3. When you scan a text, you are looking for specific ideas and information. Try moving your finger over the text while you are scanning.
  - a) Find words in the text that you understood because they are similar to German words.
  - b) Find words that you understand because of the context.
  - c) Find five Aboriginal words in the text and their meaning if it is given.
  - d) Find facts about the rock Uluru.
  - e) Find arguments for and against climbing on Uluru.
4. Divide the text into sections and write a title for each one.
5. Work in small groups. One group represents the Anangu and Parks Australia and the other group the tourists who want to climb. Use the arguments from the text and find some of your own arguments. Have a discussion.
6. What is your opinion on the use of Uluru? Write a short paragraph.