



Australian Government  
Director of National Parks

Tourism Australia



# The Red Centre

Enrich yourself in the physical and spiritual heart of Australia's outback.

With ancient mountain ranges, rich Indigenous culture and world famous rock art, the Red Centre's timeless rugged multicolour landscapes offer experiences like nowhere else on earth.

It is a land of arid beauty, endless plains and stunning natural monuments including the MacDonnell Ranges, Watarrka (Kings Canyon) and the World Heritage-listed Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

The stunning landscapes are full of rare plants and animals that have adapted for survival in the arid environment. Indigenous Australians see themselves as part of the land and for tens of thousands of years they have lived in a sustainable way, surviving on the resources of the land while caring for their country and maintaining a balance with nature.

The Red Centre provides the ultimate space to see, feel and learn.

## **AN ANCIENT LANDSCAPE - MONOLITHS, MOUNTAINS, SAND DUNES AND DESERT PLAINS**

As you travel through the Red Centre, you will be amazed by the transformation of the landscape. From the ancient rocky and rugged MacDonnell Ranges to the vivid red sandstone of the James Ranges, and on to the awe-inspiring rock formations of Uluru and Kata Tjuta. As the soils change, sand dune and desert oak country gives way to mulga and spinifex. Species of animals and birds also change with the vegetation. The changes are beautiful and dramatic.

The extraordinary landforms of Uluru and Kata Tjuta rise dramatically hundreds of metres above the sandy desert plain and are the visible tips of huge rock slabs that extend far beneath the ground. Geologists believe that 500 million years ago, these huge rocks were part of the sea floor. Over time, the earth buckled, mountain ranges were uplifted, tilted and eroded, and the sea evaporated leaving these fantastic rock formations. The traditional owners, Anangu,

see Uluru and Kata Tjuta as the work of their creation ancestors, who journeyed across the land creating the landscapes, plants and animals we see today.

At Watarrka (Kings Canyon) sheer sandstone walls carved out by the elements more than 350 million years ago, rise up over 100 metres all around you. Here the ancestors created deep gorges, and ancient cycad ferns, as old as the dinosaurs. Closer to Alice Springs, explore the East and West MacDonnell Ranges, believed by the Arrernte, the traditional owners, to be made by the caterpillar ancestors, and discover a trail of gorges, chasms and waterholes.

## **A UNIQUE NATURAL WORLD**

The spectacular geology and climate of the Red Centre has given rise to a surprising range of ecosystems, plants and animals, including the southern marsupial mole, the legless lizard, the black footed rock wallaby and the great desert skink. Significant efforts are being made to recover

numbers of mala or rufous hare wallaby, an important creation ancestor, now extinct in the wild. Regeneration paddocks have been established by Indigenous rangers and wildlife scientists, at Uluru, Watarrka and Alice Springs Desert Park, to build up numbers.

#### *A secret life*

The tiny 10 centimetre long southern marsupial mole (Itjari-itjari) lives a reclusive, solitary life below the spiky spinifex and burning sands of central Australia. So little is known about these secretive blind creatures, it is unclear how males find females for reproduction.

Scientists are now working with Anangu traditional owners to gather more information about the mole. Anangu are teaching western scientists their tracking skills and giving them an insight into their traditional ecological knowledge to help study the species.

#### *Master of the underground*

Anangu call the great desert skink Tjakura. These large burrowing lizards grow up to 44 centimetres long and weigh up to 350 grams. They look similar to a blue-tongued lizard – but are slightly larger with pink skin and a yellow underbelly. These skinks construct large burrows over one metre deep and up to five metres wide, with up to 10 different entrances.

### THE WORLD'S FIRST LAND MANAGERS

Indigenous Australians of the Red Centre have a long history of caring for the land, knowing what is in season and taking only the bush tucker and materials they need for survival. Their traditional fire management, burning a mosaic of land in the cool season to prevent wildfire, has helped create the diverse habitats for the huge array of plants and animals. Throughout the Red Centre, traditional ecological knowledge and western scientific methods manage the landscapes today.

### EXPERIENCE THIS ANCIENT CULTURE

Explore the Red Centre Way and learn about the oldest culture on earth. See the landscape through Aboriginal eyes. At World-Heritage listed Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park hear the creation stories told through traditional song, dance and art.

To learn more about this environment, visit the Red Centre Way Discovery Centre located at the Alice Springs Desert Park.



### HELP PROTECT THIS IMPORTANT DESERT ENVIRONMENT

Biodiversity is life – conserving our natural world means clean water, clean air and fertile soil for us all. You make your own contribution to conserving our natural world when you visit the Red Centre. Low-impact activities such as bushwalking and cycling provide fantastic opportunities to get off the beaten track and discover new worlds that are like nothing else on earth.

Experience Australia's world-class natural sites, connect with people and landscapes and tread lightly to contribute to a sustainable future. Get more out of your Red Centre experience and help protect this unique landscape:

- Take part in a one or two week adventure to rid Uluru-Kata Tjuta of invasive buffel-grass, or contact Conservation Volunteers Australia at [www.conservationvolunteers.com.au](http://www.conservationvolunteers.com.au) to explore the many volunteering options available.
- Try your hand at protecting native habitat – for more information go to [www.alicespringslandcare.com](http://www.alicespringslandcare.com)

Remember – waterholes are an important source of life in a desert. Help keep waterholes pure - be mindful of the impact of sunscreen and insect repellent on water reliant life, avoid camping near waterholes, take your rubbish with you and only swim in designated spots. Don't feed the native animals and leave flowers, plants, rocks and sticks where they are as they provide important wildlife habitat.



*Mala – rufous hare wallaby*



*The Great Desert Skink*

For more information on this landscape or to learn about other naturally beautiful places which offer a different but uniquely Australian experience. Visit [www.australia.com/nl](http://www.australia.com/nl)