

Cultural Centre



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 10 years of working together under joint management. The building represents a blend of the needs of Anangu culture and the demands of more than 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 design process

In September 1990, Gregory Burgess Architects were commissioned to produce a design brief for a new cultural centre. The architects set up a work studio in Mutitjulu 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 creation period).

The final concept for the new centre 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 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 from Alice Springs were selected as the building contractors.

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 Nintiringkupai Room (information desk). The aspirations of Anangu are presented in owned and operated businesses including Maruku Arts, Walkatjara Arts, Ininti Café and Souvenirs.

Cultural Centre logo

The Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre logo (pictured above), represents four major Tjukurpa stories. Kuniya, Liru, Kurpany, and Mala are all ancestral beings who help form the basis of traditional law and custom. They connect Anangu with country in all directions around Uluru.

From the east near Eridunda, Kuniya is still present at Uluru. From the southwest, Liru returned to country after a battle with Kuniya's nephew. From the north near Yuendumu, the Mala people arrived for ceremonies from Mawulyarungu. Kurpany was sent from the west near Kaltukatjara (Dockers River) and chased the Mala people through Uluru itself and then into South Australia.

“This building is for all of us. Our beautiful Cultural Centre has Kuniya, the woma python woman, built within its shape. Her body is made of mud and the roof is her spine.” © Traditional Owner



Features of the Cultural Centre building

- Compacted earth foundations 90,000 mud bricks made of local soil. The bricks were built on-site using local Aboriginal labour – 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 ironbark floorboards in Walkatjara Art
- Grey ironbark bearers and joists
- Copper roof shingles which slowly colour through the oxidation process as they age, and
- External paths of compacted gravel overlaid with consolidated sand.

The Cultural Centre experience

To fully appreciate the Cultural Centre, visitors should allow at least two to three hours for their visit.

The Cultural Centre has a deep spiritual nature and visitors are asked not to film or video inside the building or precinct. This is to respect the wishes of the Traditional Owners and protect Anangu cultural and intellectual property.

The park has continued to add to the displays. Today you can hire bikes from outside the Cultural Centre.

Opening day

After four years of planning and an 18-month 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 (NT Branch) annual awards.

Other awards received by Gregory Burgess 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.

Ka wali nyangatja mulapa Ananguku munu Anangu uwankarangku pitjala nyakunytyaku

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

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