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One day in Uluru: How to spend 24 hours in the red centre

by [Rebecca Mitchell](#)



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It may take a while to get there, but if you're visiting Oz there's no need to skip the red centre.

The spellbinding secrets of Uluru are well known to locals, but it doesn't take long for newcomers to cotton-on to the region's magic.

The greatest story I heard during my weekend in Uluru was that of the "sorry rocks": pieces of rock and earth taken from Uluru by tourists, later brought back or returned to the site along with letters of apology.

One woman said she took a rock back home only to find herself besieged by a string of bad luck. She hoped returning the rock would rid her of the curse.

Others merely wanted to apologise for failing to grasp how sacred the land was to its Indigenous owners.

While people flock from all over the world to visit Uluru, many locals write-off this national gem as a site to visit once they're done yachting in Europe or hitting the beach in Bali.

Little do they know, it can be experienced in a mere weekend!

Here's everything I packed into 24 hours in Uluru:

Kata Tjuta

I recommend getting an early flight into Ayers Rock Airport to allow yourself the entire afternoon to explore your new destination!

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To start my adventure, I visited Uluru National Park's lesser-known attraction: Kata Tjuta or 'The Olgas'. The 36 domes of Kata Tjuta are as impressive as their more popular neighbour.

Enjoy a walk through the crevices and admire the colours and patterns of the oddly-formed rock structure, and learn about its history.

Tip: Knock on some of the rocks you stand on - you will find some sound hollow!

Sunset at Uluru

I participated in a tour, so my sunset experience of Uluru was accompanied by free drinks and nibbles! Sadly, it was cloudy that afternoon, which meant the sun's colours couldn't quite make the rock glow. Regardless, it's nice to spend an evening in the shadow of this gorgeous, hulking mountain.

A BBQ Under the Stars

For those unable to afford the much-hyped 'Sounds of Silence' dinner, the **Outback Barbecue Dinner** is another great experience. Dine under the starry sky and later have a quick astrological lesson.

Tip: While a BBQ is the ideal feast for meat-lovers, there are vegetarian options available!

Sunrise at Uluru

Don't fear the early wake-up call! This is when the magic happens...

Perhaps it's the unpolluted air, or maybe the astounding 348m high red rock, but whatever it is, caffeine doesn't feel necessary when you wake up at 5 AM in Uluru.

The sunrise experience is truly magical. The morning stillness is beautiful and the rock glows a stunning fluorescent red.

Viewing points are generally crowded with tourists, but that doesn't mean you can't find somewhere to take in the sight in solitude. (Just don't stray from the designated paths!)

Tip: I would encourage doing both the sunrise and sunset Uluru tours. Not only is the view different, but if, like me, one of your experiences is shrouded in cloud cover - you have a back-up!

Uluru Tour

Whether you choose to walk the entire 10km around the base or hitch a ride on an air-conditioned coach - I recommend you take a guide.

Learning about the region is vital - not only for your own knowledge bank but to properly respect and acknowledge the experiences and beliefs of the Indigenous people on whose land you're staying.

Hear Dreamtime stories about the rock, and see cave paintings that still exist in its caves.

I took the coach and did not regret it. Gotta love that air-con!

Fast tips:

- 1. Wear a hat.** Slip, slop, slap gains new meaning here. Remember, you're in a desert and shade is pretty much non-existent.
- 2. Buy a fly net.** Yes, they're dorky-looking. But you will be laughing when your fellow visitors are eating flies for lunch.
- 3. Kiss your white sneakers goodbye.** They don't call it the red centre for nothing. Most of your clothes will go home with a fine dusting of dirt.
- 4. Be respectful.** Don't photograph the Indigenous people without permission. Don't photograph their ultra sacred sites (ask your guide). Don't stray off tourist paths. Don't steal pieces of rock (what are you, a hoarder?!). Don't litter. Don't do things you're asked not to do.
- 5. Turn down the volume** on your camera or smartphone. Nothing ruins a magical Uluru sunrise like the obnoxious beeping of a digital camera.
- 6. Please, don't climb the rock.** I'm not sure why this "attraction" is still open to the public. Not only have 40 people died trying to climb it, Uluru is a sacred site and, to put it plainly, locals would appreciate it if you didn't put your feet all over it.

Editor's Note: Rebecca travelled on AAT Kings Uluru and Kings Canyon Unearthed 3-day short break. Prices start from \$925 per person, twin share. For further details please visit www.aatkings.com or call 1300 228 546.

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