

# The Red Center: A treasure trove of surface protection lessons.



We firmly believe that if you want to get to better know the natural stone in your home, you have to look at what the name implies – nature. The stone surfaces in your property – whether it's the granite of your kitchen countertop or the **terracotta of your floor tiles** – began their lives as one part of the many wondrous natural stone formations you can find all around the world.

We've talked many times about the various incredible stone landmarks that can be found across the United States, from **Monument Valley** to man-made structures like the **Lincoln Memorial** and the **Tribune Tower**. But there are also plenty of breathtaking examples of the majesty of natural stone in other parts of the world.

Take the sunny shores of Australia. In the south of the Northern Territory, one of the country's six states and territories, you can find the Red Center, home to some of the most gasp-inducing rock formations in the world.

## Uluru

When thousands of tourists come to the Red Center to marvel at their surroundings, this is the headline act. Uluru is proof you don't have to go into space to get a sense of your own insignificance – this colossal 1,141 foot high, 2.2 mile long and 1.2 mile wide sandstone monolith will do that just as well on its own, and save you an expensive trip via rocket.

Perhaps better known as Ayers Rock (named after Sir Henry Ayers, seven-time premier of South Australia), Uluru is the name given to the rock by the Aboriginal people of Australia, and its official designation. Its history is a good reminder of the importance of **surface protection for sensitive materials** like sandstone.

The formation of Uluru was a fascinating process, because it is actually a conglomerate of a number of different rocks, like granite and limestone. More than 500 million years ago, when central Australia was simply a massive basin, sediments shed from mountain formations gathered at the bottom and fused together. When a mountain-building event

folded the rock, turning its horizontal layers of rock into vertical ones, resulting in a degree of incredible hardness.

One of the interesting things about Uluru is the craters and ridges that define its surface, which are not visible from further away. After its formation, hundreds of millions of years of erosion have carved out these valleys, showing that even the toughest stones will succumb to surface damage over time. Meanwhile, oxidation of its iron-bearing minerals has given it the red glow which stuns visitors to this day.

### **The Devil's Marbles**

Uluru isn't the only natural stone attraction to be found in the Red Center. There are also the ironically named Devil's Marbles, located around 60 miles south of the Northern Territory's Tennant Creek. The irony lies in the fact that these mammoth boulders – also known as Karlu Karlu in the Aboriginal language – are actually made from red granite.

The round stones, ranging in size from anywhere between two and 20 feet, lie littered throughout the conservation reserve that is their home, a number of them perched precariously on top of each other. Their formation is also connected to the power of the elements to erode stone.

Originally the rectangular products of a cooled upsurge of molten rock covered with sandstone, as water infiltrated the cracks and **caused freeze-thaw spalling**, the sandstone broke down. What was left were the round granite boulders we see today.

### **Kata Tjuta**

Last but not least is Kata Tjuta, also known as Mt. Olga or the Olgas. Although considered one formation, it's really around 36 different formations, giving it its Aboriginal name that means "many heads".

Kata Tjuta was formed as part of the same process that sculpted Uluru, which it lies around 20 miles west of. While starting out as one large slab of rock, as it folded and faulted, large cracks formed in the sandstone through which water entered. Over millions of years, those cracks became faults, which became valleys, which became gorges.

Most people don't **think of sandstone protection** when they look at Kata Tjuta – in fact, they're likely too busy admiring the other-worldly sunset which its known to produce. But it and the rest of the stone monuments of the Red Center, as beautiful as they are, should remind you that your sandstone features need to be sealed with **STAIN-PROOF Original™** lest they develop valleys themselves – far less attractive in the home than in the outback.