

Sacred Aboriginal Sites Around Australia

A sacred site is a place that is sacred to Aboriginal Australians or significant according to Aboriginal tradition. Aboriginal cultural heritage is based around a deep connection with the land, which, in turn, connects the people with cultural values and spiritual beliefs. Sacred sites are often linked to Aboriginal mythology and spirituality, which is referred to as 'Dreaming'. These sites usually have a story about their creation relating to an ancestral spirit or human energy.

You can find sacred sites all over Australia, even in built up city environments. Some sites are only for men or only for women, and are forbidden to the other gender.

Examples of Sacred Sites

Quarry

Where Aboriginal Australians sourced their rock for tools and paint.

Rock Art

These can include rock engravings, paintings, drawings or stencils.

Natural Site of Significance

Can be any natural formation, such as mountains, creeks, waterfalls or rock formations.

Ceremonial Grounds

Sometimes referred to as Bora rings, these are two circles made of earth or rocks with a connecting pathway, where Aboriginal Australians held important meetings, rituals and ceremonies.

Rock Shelter

A cave or rock overhang used for shelter. May contain rock art or artefacts. Rock shelters may also be close to reliable water sources.

Open Camp Site (occupation site)

Where Aboriginal Australians lived and made use of the local resources.

Scarred Trees

Trees that have had their bark removed to be used as carrying containers, shields, shelters or canoes.

Midden

A place where Aboriginal Australians left the remains of their meals.

Burial Site/Ground

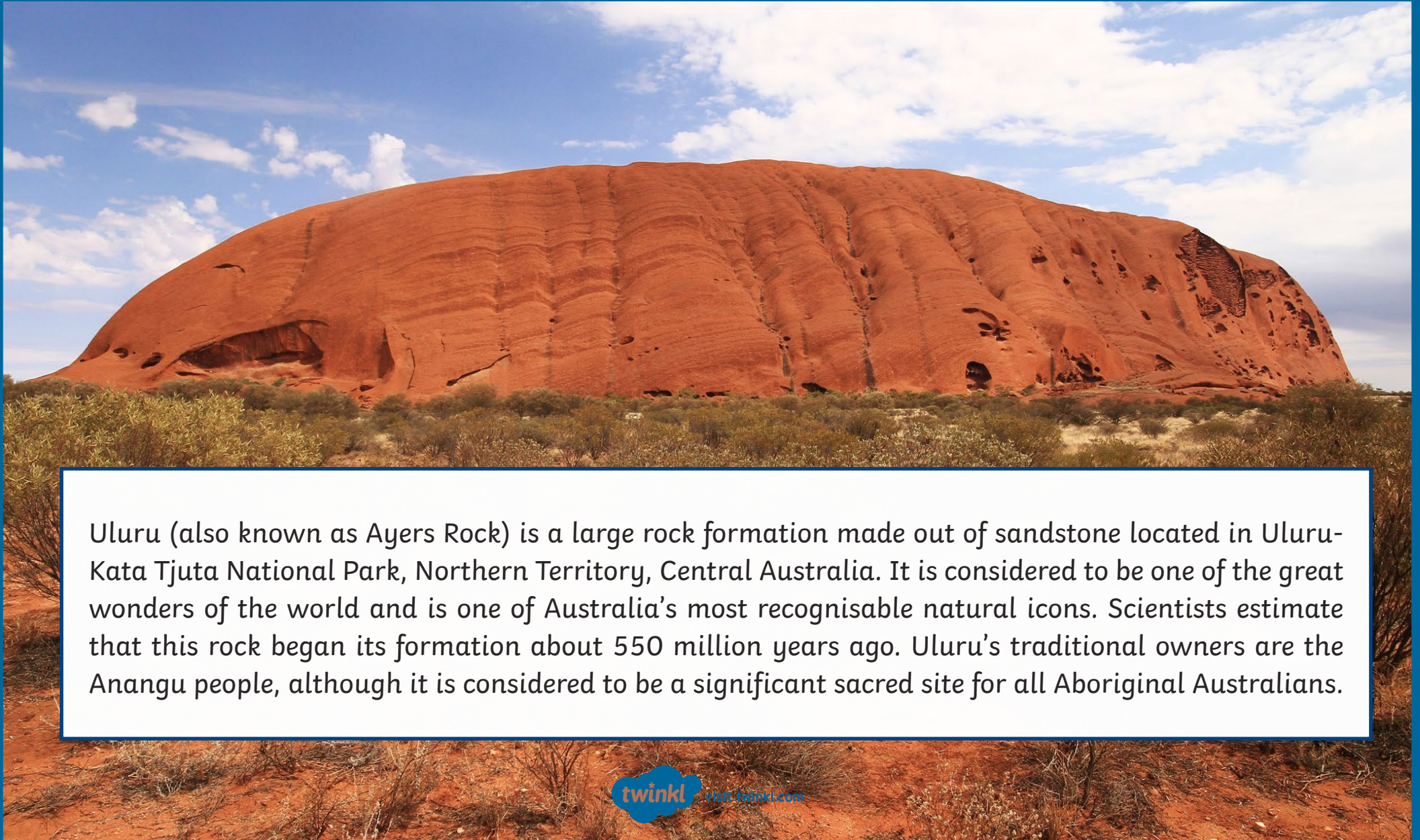
An important place for burying the remains of people who had died, sometimes in specially made mounds.

Artefact Ground/Scatter

A place frequently used by Aboriginal Australians, where there are many artefacts or evidence of the Aboriginal Australians' presence, including woodworking and cutting tools made of stone and bones.

Uluru

Northern Territory



Uluru (also known as Ayers Rock) is a large rock formation made out of sandstone located in Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Northern Territory, Central Australia. It is considered to be one of the great wonders of the world and is one of Australia's most recognisable natural icons. Scientists estimate that this rock began its formation about 550 million years ago. Uluru's traditional owners are the Anangu people, although it is considered to be a significant sacred site for all Aboriginal Australians.

Kata Tjuta

Northern Territory



Kata Tjuta (also known as the Olgas) is a group of large domed rock formations located in Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Northern Territory, Central Australia. The name 'Olgas' originates from the name of the tallest peak, Mount Olga. There are 36 domes over a stretch of 21 km. The highest dome, Mt. Olga, stands at 1,066m. This park is considered to be very sacred to the local Aboriginal Australian people. Kata Tjuta means 'many heads' and is of great tjukurpa significance, particularly for men. An important Dreaming story describes how Kata Tjuta is home to Wanambi, a snake with long teeth who lives in a gorge during the summer.

The Pinnacles

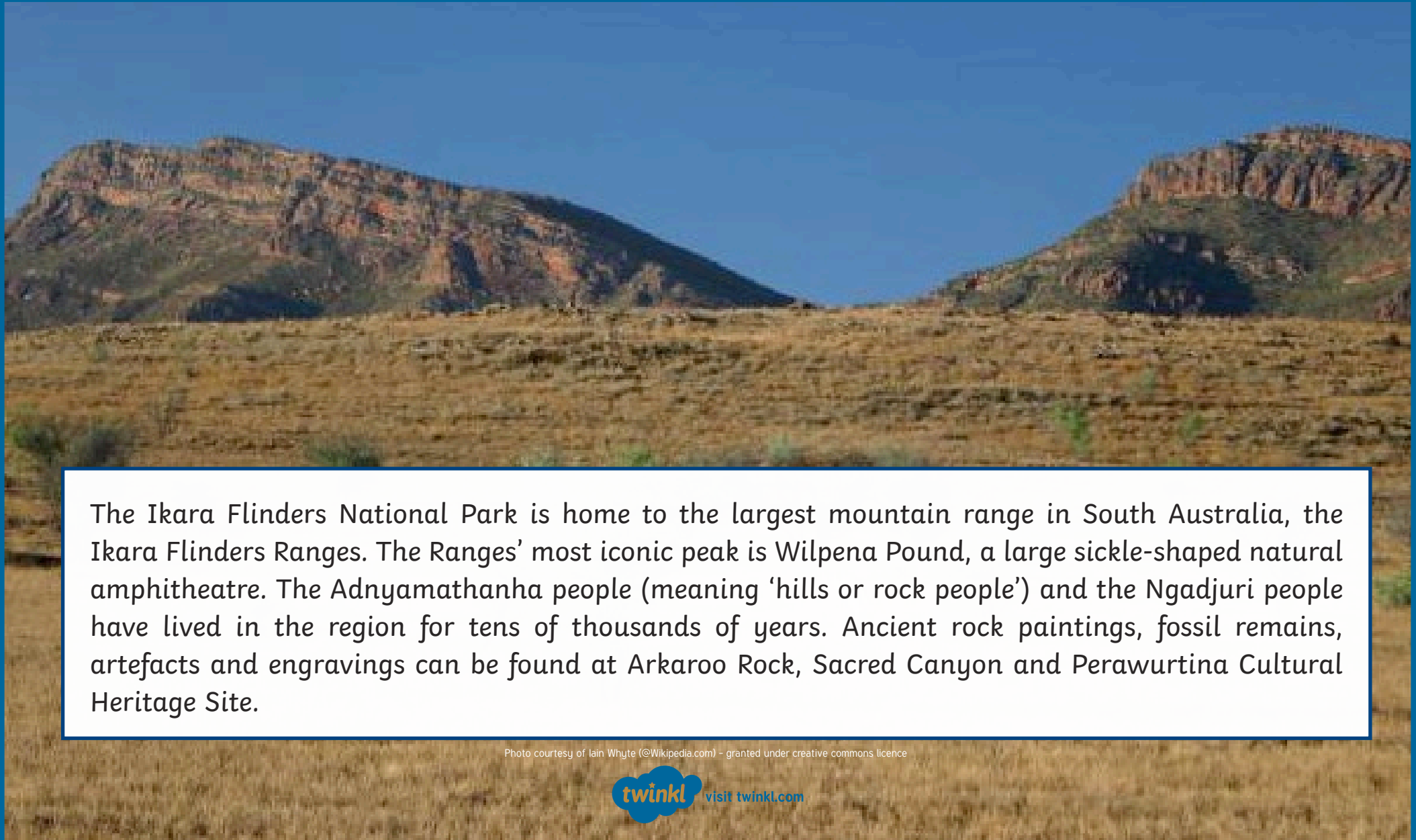
Western Australia



The Pinnacles is a group of limestone formations located in Nambung National Park, Cervantes, in Western Australia. These limestone pillars range in height; some are several metres tall. This is a sacred site to the Nyungar Aboriginal People, including Yuat and Wajuk language groups. The Nyungar people named the area 'Nambung', which means 'crooked', referring to the river that flows through the park in winter.

Ikara Flinders Ranges

South Australia

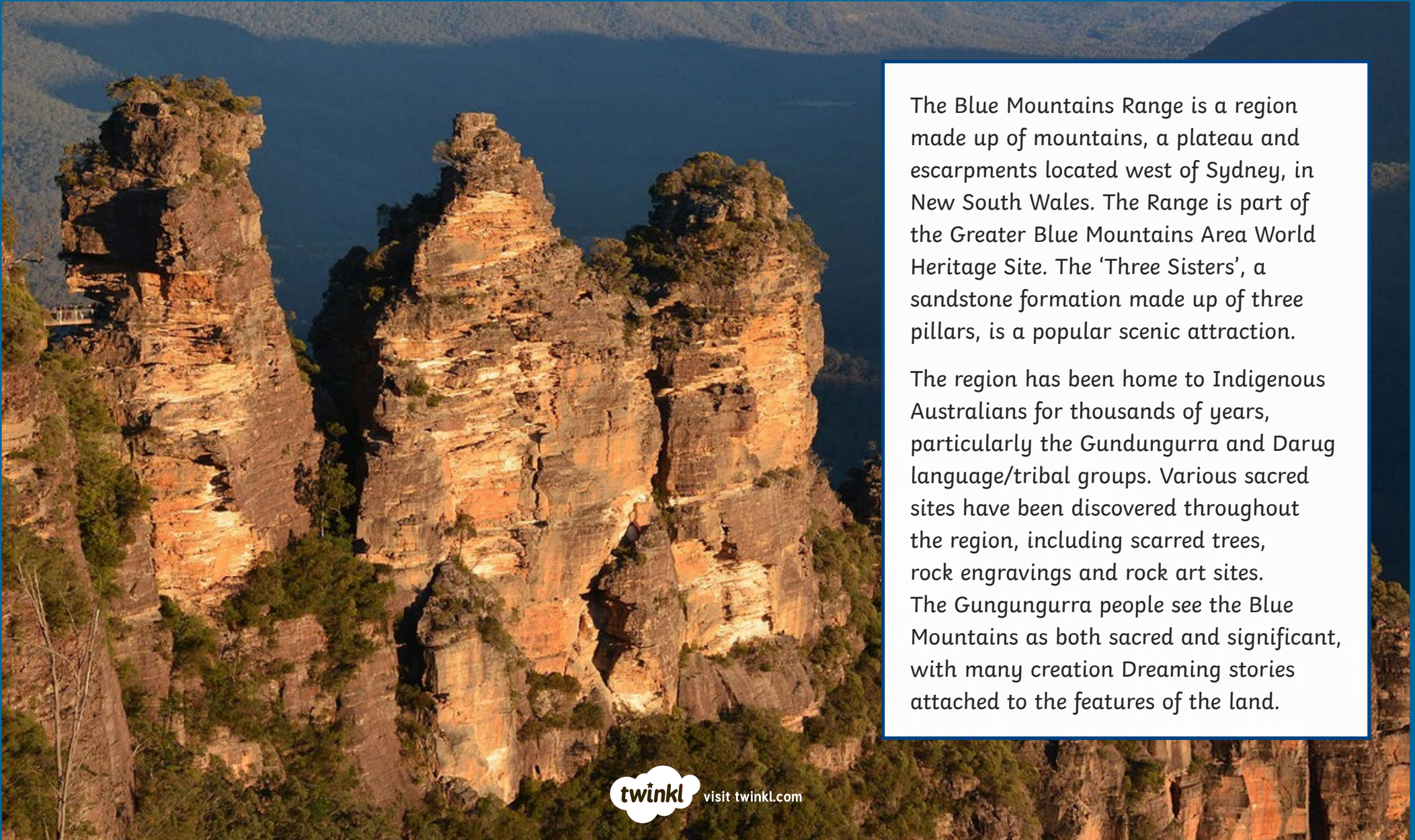


The Ikara Flinders National Park is home to the largest mountain range in South Australia, the Ikara Flinders Ranges. The Ranges' most iconic peak is Wilpena Pound, a large sickle-shaped natural amphitheatre. The Adnyamathanha people (meaning 'hills or rock people') and the Ngadjuri people have lived in the region for tens of thousands of years. Ancient rock paintings, fossil remains, artefacts and engravings can be found at Arkaroo Rock, Sacred Canyon and Perawurtina Cultural Heritage Site.

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The Blue Mountains

New South Wales



The Blue Mountains Range is a region made up of mountains, a plateau and escarpments located west of Sydney, in New South Wales. The Range is part of the Greater Blue Mountains Area World Heritage Site. The 'Three Sisters', a sandstone formation made up of three pillars, is a popular scenic attraction.

The region has been home to Indigenous Australians for thousands of years, particularly the Gundungurra and Darug language/tribal groups. Various sacred sites have been discovered throughout the region, including scarred trees, rock engravings and rock art sites. The Gundungurra people see the Blue Mountains as both sacred and significant, with many creation Dreaming stories attached to the features of the land.

Ban Ban Springs

Queensland

Ban Ban Springs is a series of springs located in the Burnett region of Queensland. The springs provide a fresh water source for the Wakka Wakka people of the region and flow into nearby Barambah Creek. Ban Ban Springs is an important spiritual place, where the Wakka Wakka people would meet, marry and trade. It is believed that the Rainbow Serpent surfaced through the springs and spoke about the sacred waters to the local tribal elders.



BAN BAN SPRINGS
SACRED SITE OF THE WAKKA WAKKA'S.
GUARDED BY THE RAINBOW SERPENT
MEETING PLACE FOR ALL.
A BICENTENNIAL PROJECT

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Murujuga National Park Western Australia

Murujuga National Park, also known as the Burrup Peninsula, is located in the Pilbara region of Western Australia and has the largest collection of rock art (petroglyphs) in the world. In fact, it is estimated that there are tens of thousands of rock engravings here, depicting images of local animals (including Tasmanian tigers), plants, human figures, Aboriginal ceremonies and geometric designs in the park, over an area of around 88 square kilometres. To the the Jacburara people of the region, murujuga means 'hip bone sticking out', and refers to the shape of the peninsula. The park is protected and maintained by the traditional custodians of the land, the Ngarluma-Yindjibarndi, the Yaburara-Mardudhunera and the Woon-goo-tt-oo people.

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Kakadu National Park

Northern Territory

Kakadu National Park, located south-east of Darwin, is the largest national park in Australia and has been home to Indigenous Australians for more than 50,000 years. The park is jointly managed by its traditional Aboriginal owners and Parks Australia, a government agency. This ensures that the Bininj people are still able to live, hunt, forage and take care of the park as their ancestors did. The park is not only known for its biodiversity but also for its extensive historic Aboriginal artwork. The detailed paintings in various styles give a snapshot of what life was like for the civilisations, as far back as before the last Ice Age.



Mungo National Park

New South Wales

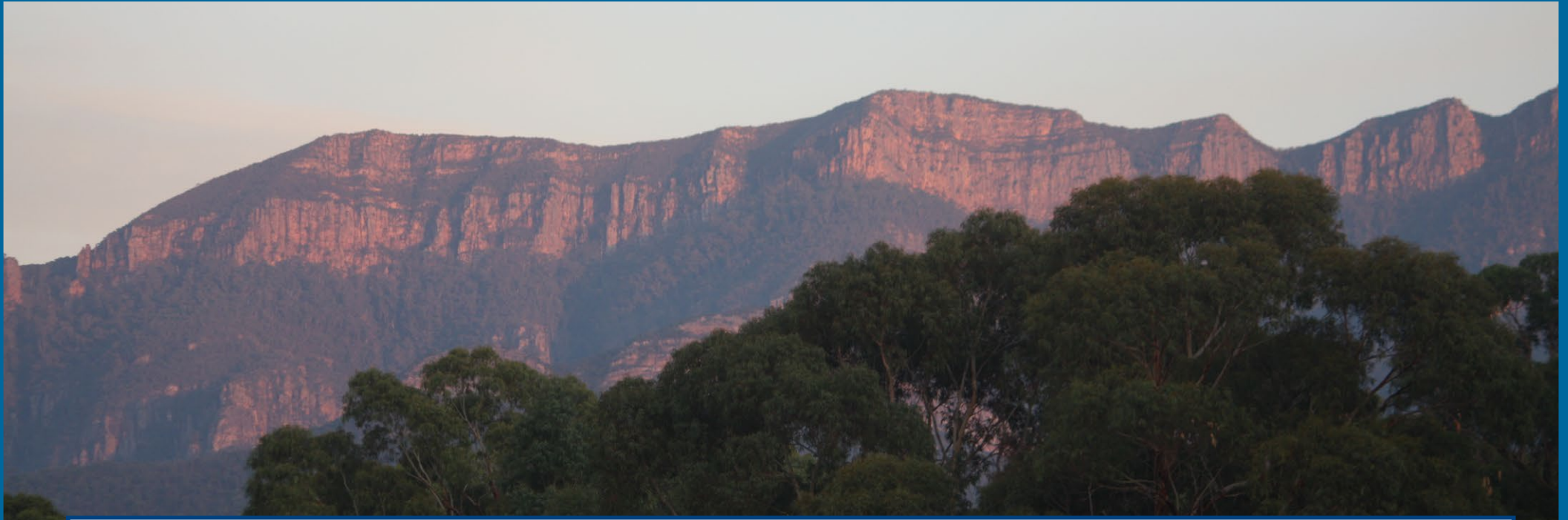


Mungo National Park is a protected park located in south-western New South Wales in the Banranald Shire. It is part of the UNESCO World Heritage listed Willandra Lakes region, which is made up of 17 dry lakes. These sites are meeting places for many Aboriginal tribes, such as the Muthi, Nyiampaar and Barkinji people. The remains of the Mungo man and lady, the oldest human remains ever found in Australia, were discovered along the shore of Lake Mungo. It is believed that the remains date back to the Pleistocene epoch, between 40,000 and 68,000 years ago.

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Grampians National Park

Victoria

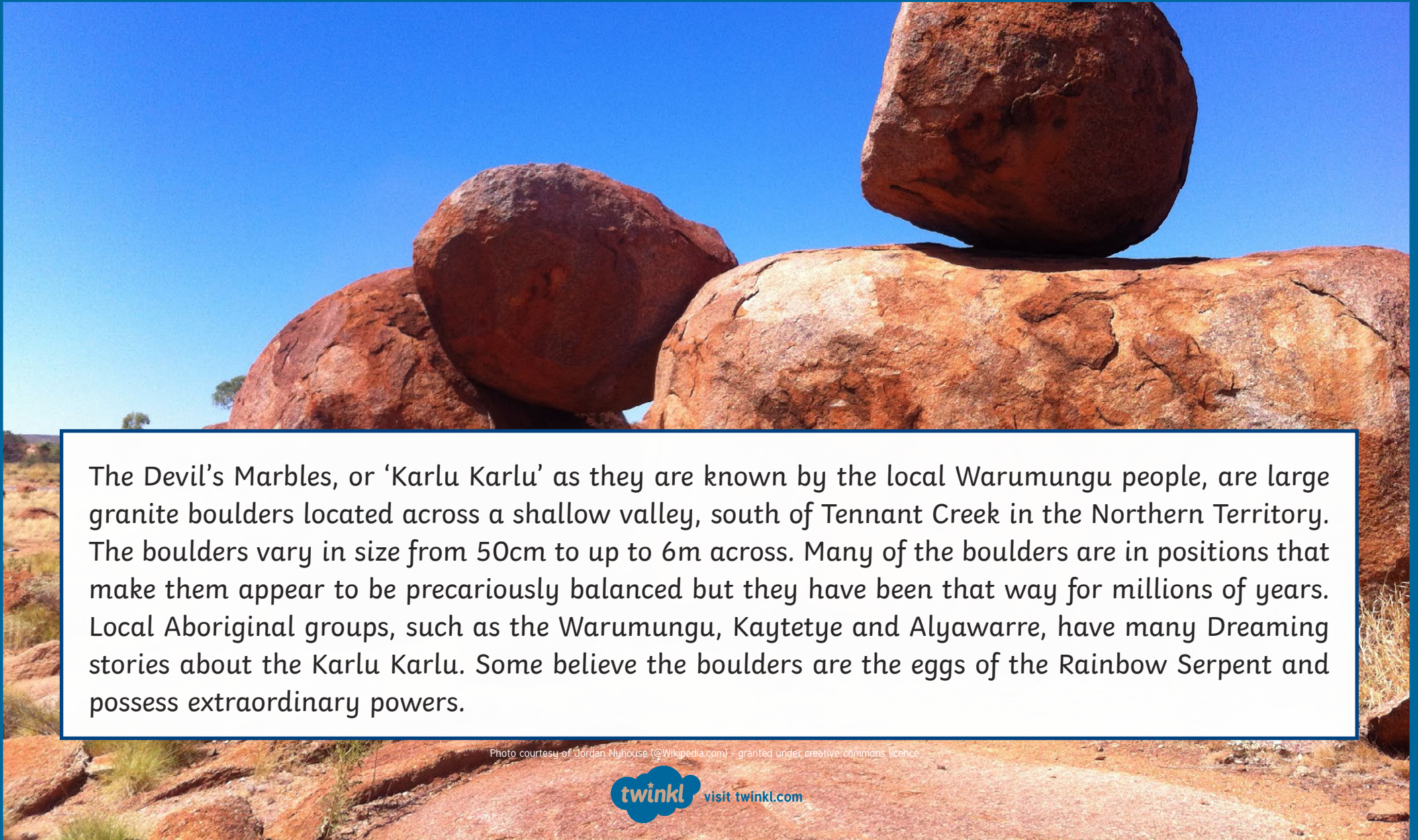


The Grampians, or Gariwerd (traditional name), is a national park located in south-western Victoria. There have been many discoveries of Aboriginal artefacts, ancient oven mounds, ancient rock art shelters and scatterings of stone from tool making found at sites across the region. In fact, the region has the largest number of rock art sites (approximately 60) in southern Australia. With many Dreaming stories, this is a spiritual place for Aboriginal Australians, particularly Djab Wurrung and the Jardwadjali, the traditional people of this area.

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Devil's Marbles

Northern Territory

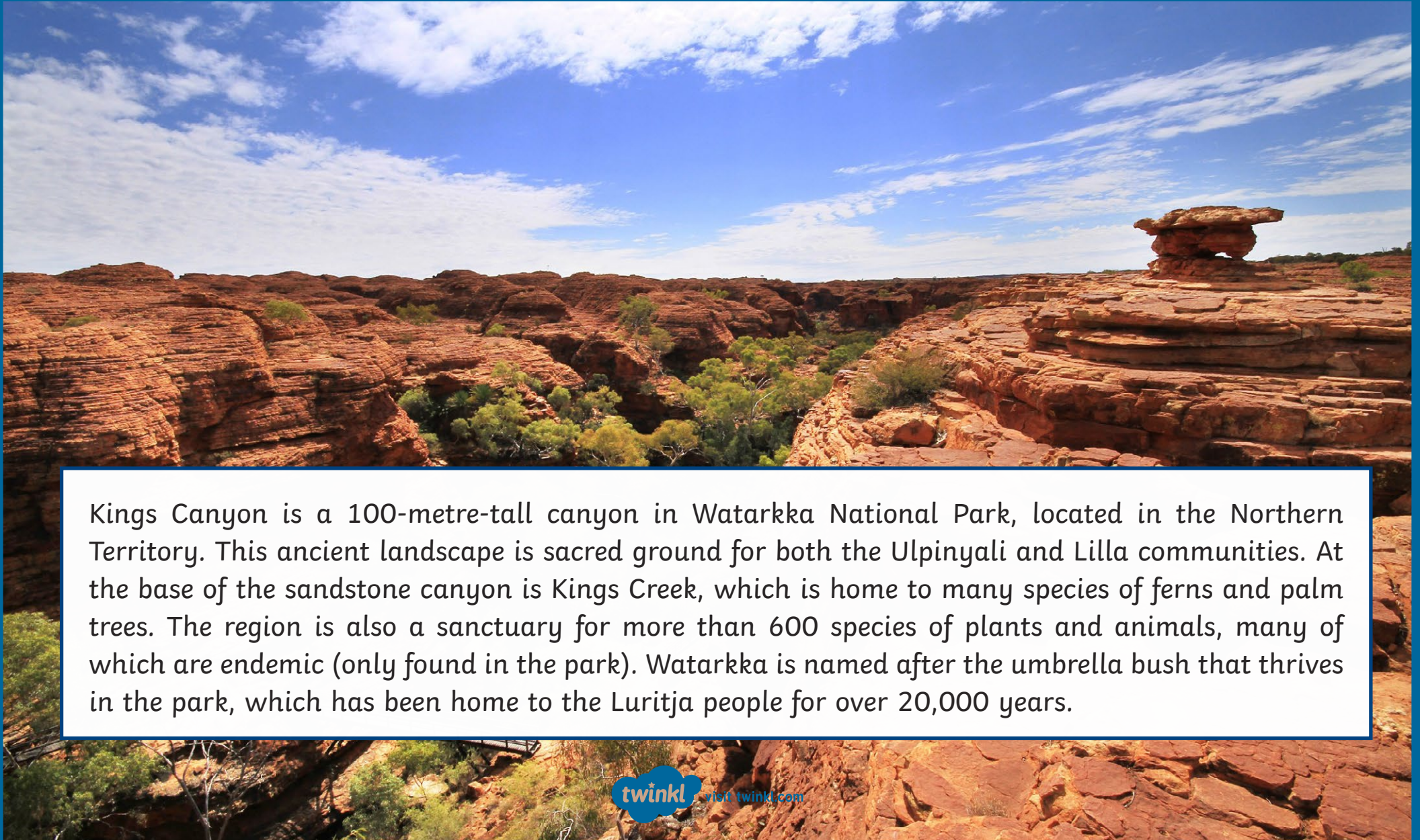


The Devil's Marbles, or 'Karlukarlu' as they are known by the local Warumungu people, are large granite boulders located across a shallow valley, south of Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory. The boulders vary in size from 50cm to up to 6m across. Many of the boulders are in positions that make them appear to be precariously balanced but they have been that way for millions of years. Local Aboriginal groups, such as the Warumungu, Kaytetye and Alyawarre, have many Dreaming stories about the Karlukarlu. Some believe the boulders are the eggs of the Rainbow Serpent and possess extraordinary powers.

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Kings Canyon

Northern Territory



Kings Canyon is a 100-metre-tall canyon in Watarkka National Park, located in the Northern Territory. This ancient landscape is sacred ground for both the Ulpinyali and Lilla communities. At the base of the sandstone canyon is Kings Creek, which is home to many species of ferns and palm trees. The region is also a sanctuary for more than 600 species of plants and animals, many of which are endemic (only found in the park). Watarkka is named after the umbrella bush that thrives in the park, which has been home to the Luritja people for over 20,000 years.

Ubirr Rock

Northern Territory

Ubirr is a set of rocky outcrops located in the East Alligator region of Kakadu National Park, in the Northern Territory. These rocks display ancient Aboriginal art created by those sheltering in the rocks around 2,000 years ago. The Main Gallery houses 'x-ray' paintings depicting local food (including fish, waterfowl, mussels, goannas, echidnas and yams) and a painting of a Tasmanian tiger, which is believed to have become extinct on the mainland about 2,000 to 3,000 years ago. There is also 'contact artwork' depicting the first meetings with white men.

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Wolfe Creek Crater

Western Australia



Wolfe Creek Crater is a large cavity in the ground that measures around 900 metres in diameter and 150 metres deep. Astronomers estimate that it was formed by a meteorite crashing to Earth approximately 300 000 years ago. Located in the Wolfe Creek National Park in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, it is the second largest meteor impact site in the world and scientists have reported that meteorite fragments have been found in the crater. Up until 1947, when Europeans journeyed to the site during an aerial survey, Wolfe Creek Crater was only known to Indigenous Australian people. This sacred Aboriginal site is called Kandimalal by the Jaru people. It features in a Dreaming story about two rainbow snakes who create the Sturt and Wolfe Creeks as they moved across the desert. It is believed that one snake emerged from the ground, forming the crater.

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The Bungle Bungles

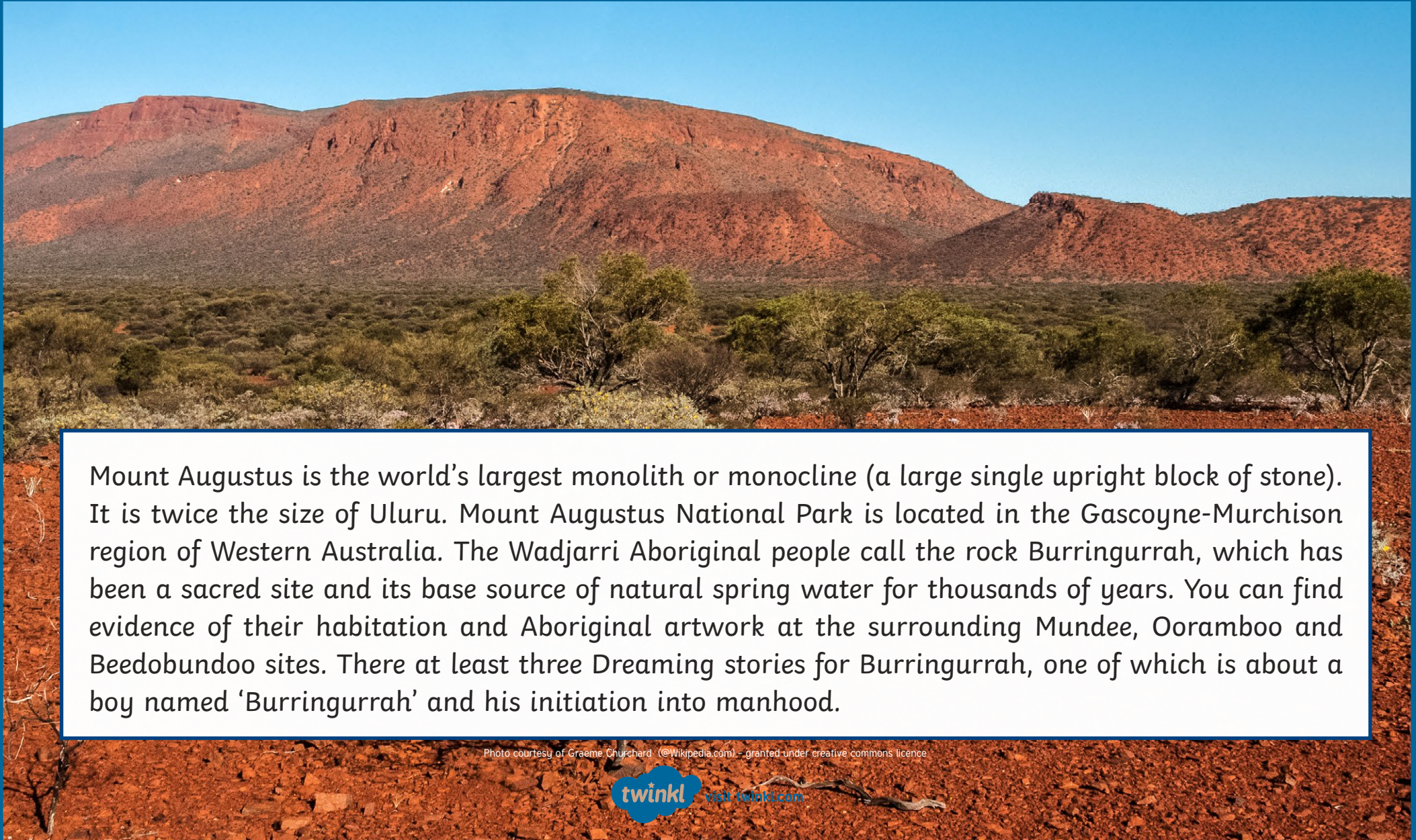
Western Australia

The Bungle Bungle Range is a group of large orange, black and grey rock formations located in the Purnululu National Park, in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Up until 1983, the Bungle Bungles were only known to local Aboriginal owners and farmers. Now, it is a World Heritage listed site. The Djaru and Kija people have lived in the region for more than 40,000 years and regard it as a very sacred place. Ancient rock art and burial sites can be found across the Purnululu National Park ('Purnululu' means 'sandstone', as named by the traditional Kija custodians).

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Mount Augustus

Western Australia



Mount Augustus is the world's largest monolith or monocline (a large single upright block of stone). It is twice the size of Uluru. Mount Augustus National Park is located in the Gascoyne-Murchison region of Western Australia. The Wadjjarri Aboriginal people call the rock Burringurrah, which has been a sacred site and its base source of natural spring water for thousands of years. You can find evidence of their habitation and Aboriginal artwork at the surrounding Mundee, Ooramboo and Beedobundoo sites. There are at least three Dreaming stories for Burringurrah, one of which is about a boy named 'Burringurrah' and his initiation into manhood.

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