

## Uluru climb in Northern Territory should be banned, some tourists say

### Key points:

- 35 people have died climbing up Uluru
- For safety reasons and because it has spiritual significance, Anangu ask people to not climb it
- National Park management have a number of criteria before they will consider a ban

As tourists visiting Uluru learn that climbing the iconic rock is considered disrespectful by traditional owners, they question why it has not yet been banned. The perennial debate about whether scaling the rock should be allowed may not be new, but it is a discussion that continues to upset the Anangu people and divides tourists. While there have been talks to close the climb when the number of climbers fall below 20 per cent, authorities say that number is hard to determine.

In 1964, during a camping holiday with friends, Penny Campbell from Victoria climbed the rock.

"[The climb] was very, very dramatic... absolutely frightening, so steep. It was terrifying coming back down as well. It's undulating and you could get lost so easily, and you could fall over the side into a cavern inside. It's very dangerous."

Ms Campbell returned to Uluru this week, but with a very different outlook.

"When I read the final noticeboard there my main thought was yes, they should close it," she said. "I'm glad to hear that is the ultimate goal, in fact I had thought it would have already started. [To see people climbing it] upsets me, I just think they're being very thoughtless. It was considered OK back then, personally I didn't have the knowledge I have now. But we know enough now to realise it's not a fair thing to do. If it's forbidden, why don't they close it?"

Darrell Graham travelled to Uluru from Kalgoorlie with his family.

He said it was a special moment seeing the rock for the first time and touching it, somewhat of a spiritual experience.

"We're all connected in this country, but we've got different tribes all around. We are happy we're here, we've travelled far to come here," Mr Graham said.

He climbed a couple of metres up the rock, but due to his health could not make it the whole way. But despite that, Mr Graham said he supported the climb being closed.

"This land is not my part of the land, I think it's up to the people of this land," he said. "I feel they should close it down because this is a special place, it's walking over a sacred site, it hurts them."

Swiss tourist Christine Franks said she respected the request, but wondered why the climb remained open.

"It's not important to climb, you can see Uluru from down here and walk around," she said. "So for us that's a bit strange, and in our guide book we read that if they close the climb they're afraid to lose tourists."

Mike Miso, manager of Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park, said questions about why the climb remained open were "fair".

"Look, it's a really good question, and really it's up to our management board, through our management plan, to make these sorts of decisions," he said.

He said three criteria had to be met before the board would consider banning the climb.

Those were that; new visitor experiences were successfully established; cultural and natural experiences on offer were why tourists visited the park. And lastly, that the number of visitors climbing fell below 20 per cent.

Mr Miso said while climb numbers had fallen over the years, they were unable to say how many there were currently.

"Look with visitor monitoring across the world, it's very difficult to get exact figures," Mr Miso said. "Even with the best technologies, it's really hard to get the exact figure of the 20 per cent — so that's where we need to get more accurate data."

Despite concerns by some, Mr Miso said he did not believe closing the climb would dent the 300,000 visitors to the park each year. He said it would be good to setup over time more Anangu tourism ventures, to allow people to experience a true connection with Anangu, and learn about country and culture.

"Those attractions, the visual beauty of itself, the walking trips, I agree there are enough other attractions than the climb to come to Uluru," he said.