

A person is seen from the back, wearing a backpack-mounted camera rig. The rig includes a large lens and a spherical sensor unit. They are standing on a dirt path in front of the massive, reddish-brown rock formation of Uluru. The sky is a mix of orange and blue, indicating sunset or sunrise. The foreground has some dry grass and a low wooden fence.

Inside Google Marketing: Using technology to preserve and celebrate Australian culture

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Here, Google product marketer Maura Halpin explores her team's two-year journey collaborating with the Anangu traditional owners of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park to record and share indigenous culture via Street View and Story Spheres.

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At the heart of Australia's red centre lies the dual UNESCO World Heritage site [Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park](#), an area deeply sacred to the Anangu people who have lived there for more than 30,000 years. Beyond its picturesque appearance, the land's physical features hold spiritual significance for the Anangu people as they carry sacred "songlines," or creation stories about the journeys, battles, and adventures of their ancestral beings.

As part of our efforts to make the world's diverse heritage and beauty accessible to everyone through Google Maps, we set out to convey the cultural significance of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in Street View. For two years, we worked closely with the Anangu traditional owners and our partners [Parks Australia](#) and [Northern Territory Government](#) to capture the area in a way that documented the Anangu's heritage and rich oral tradition and, more importantly, respected their laws and landscape.

To record and preserve the rich oral traditions of the Anangu, we leveraged the Story Spheres platform to layer immersive audio stories and songs onto the 360-degree Street View imagery.

The project kicked off in 2015 when the Northern Territory Government applied to our [Street View Trekker Loan](#) program, which allows individuals and organisations to request to have their locations mapped for Google Street View. From there, we worked closely with Parks Australia to capture the national park in accordance with Tjukurpa law—which guides all traditions and practices connected to the landscape—and with close guidance and input from Anangu traditional owners.

Preserving Anangu oral traditions with Story Spheres

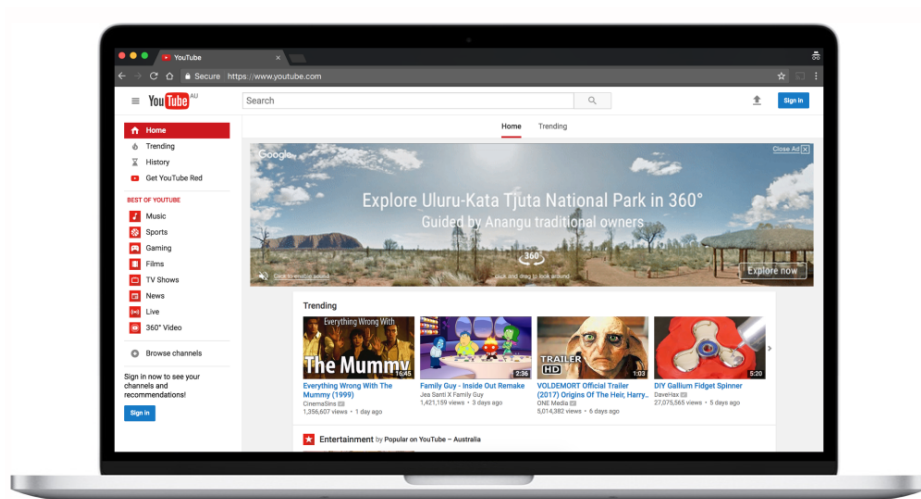
One key tenet of Anangu culture posed a unique challenge: Anangu make no distinction between the physical and metaphysical or the animate and inanimate. For them, people, the earth, plants, and animals are inextricably connected. This means that Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park can never be truly represented or understood without the presence and voices of its people. Street View, however, is typically a silent viewing experience.

To record and preserve the rich oral traditions of the Anangu, we used [Story Spheres](#), a platform that lets users position audio elements within a 360-degree visual scene. Doing so allowed us to layer immersive stories and songs onto the Street View imagery. The result was an interactive, audio-visual guided tour narrated by traditional owner Sammy Wilson and featuring music by Anangu elder Reggie Uluru.



Story Spheres viewers can click the audio icons to hear the stories and songs of Anangu traditional owners.

To showcase the experience, we hosted a launch event at Uluru for media outlets as well as six content creators and social influencers, offering them the opportunity to take guided tours with Anangu traditional owners. We also promoted Story Spheres on the Google and YouTube homepages, using animated mastheads to drive engagement among a wider audience.



After the launch, we were thrilled to learn that the bilingual English-Pitjantjatjara schools in Watarrka were interested in having us develop versions of the Story Spheres experience exclusively in Pitjantjatjara. Our doing so would give their students the opportunity to hear sacred Uluru songlines and creation [stories](#) told by senior community elders and to experience the viewing area at [Talinguru Nyakunytjaku](#), where one can see the [Kuniya Walk](#) and [kulpi mutitjulu](#) ("family cave").

Looking to the future

We hope this project is just the first of many. Ultimately, we'd love to continue to leverage our technology and digital platforms to help share more of Australia's unique stories, cultures, and sites; educate people around the world; and instill greater value and respect for the land—sentiments echoed by our partners on this project:

"Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is such a special place, World Heritage-listed for both its natural and cultural values. I hope the material we've created with Google will help inspire many more people to visit and learn more about Anangu culture and our park."

—**Miranda Schooneveldt**, *Media Manager Communications, Innovation and Partnership Branch, Department of the Environment and Energy, Parks Australia*



"Through Google's Street View technology, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park can now be absorbed in an entirely new, proudly authentic, and immersive way."

—**Lindsey Dixon**, *Brand Marketing Coordinator, Tourism Northern Territory*



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