

Scientific evidence of First Peoples in Australia

Lake Mungo

What is Lake Mungo?

Lake Mungo is a dry lake on the lands of the Paakantji/Barkindji, Mutthi Mutthi and Ngiyampaa peoples in New South Wales, Australia. It is part of the Willandra Lakes Region, a UNESCO World Heritage site.



What was found there?

Mungo Lady was discovered by geologist Jim Bowler in 1967 and excavated in 1968 by John Mulvaney and Rhys Jones, while Mungo Man was discovered 1974. Their discovery confirmed scientists' beliefs in the deep history of Australia, and solidified what the Paakantji/Barkindji, Mutthi Mutthi and Ngiyampaa people had known for generations, that their people have been there forever.

Their remains have been dated to 42,000 years old, making them the oldest human remains in Australia and some of the oldest modern humans outside of Africa. Mungo Lady is the oldest known cremation in the world.

Ancient artefacts and footprints were also uncovered such as tools made from stone, evidence of ancient fireplaces and animal bones.

Why is it important?

The discoveries at Lake Mungo provide scientific evidence that Aboriginal people have lived in Australia for millennia. Lady Mungo's remains showed the earliest known cremation, illustrating the complex burial and cultural practices of Aboriginal peoples.

For the Paakantji/Barkindji, Mutthi Mutthi, and Ngiyampaa people, Lake Mungo has been a part of their people's creation stories, and the discovery ensured the protection of this significant cultural site.

For First Nations peoples in Australia, this discovery helped place official dates on what Aboriginal people already knew, that they have existed for far longer than what most people understand.



Sources

- [ABC](#)
- [Deadly Story](#)
- [Visit Mungo](#)

Madjedbebe

What is Madjedbebe?

Madjedbebe is a sandstone rock shelter in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory. It is part of the lands of the Mirarr people, and it is the site of the oldest evidence of human habitation in Australia, indicating that Aboriginal peoples reached Australia at least 65,000 years ago.



What was found there?

Archaeological excavations of ancient artefacts found that Madjedbebe was first occupied by humans approximately 65,000 years ago.

In their discoveries that went 2.65 meters below the modern ground surface, they discovered objects such as ground stone axe heads, grinding stone slabs, flaked stone tools, animal bones, shellfish remains and different coloured ochres. Madjedbebe includes more than 1000 bims (pictures) on the walls of the shelter. These rock art motifs date back at least 1,500 years.

Australia's oldest known plant foods were discovered at this cultural site as researchers found preserved pieces of charcoal in the debris of ancient cooking hearths.

Why is it important?

Madjedbebe provides evidence of the earliest known human habitation in Australia and gives insight into how Aboriginal peoples lived 65,000 years ago.

The way that the local people cared for this sacred Country demonstrates the importance of its long-term protection and gives all Australians an understanding of how the First Australians lived, and cared for the land.

The ancient artefacts demonstrate the sophisticated technology of the local Aboriginal peoples and further justify the deep and ancient connection to the Country that First Nations people across Australia hold.



Sources

- [ABC](#)
- [Australian Research Council](#)
- [Marrawuddi Arts Centre](#)