



How do you make sure your vehicle is prepared for your next off-road adventure? The outback can be a harsh environment that is punishing and unforgiving to vehicles and their drivers.

So, what should you equip your vehicle with to make sure you return home safe and sound and full of adventurous stories? With so many modifications on the market it can be hard to know what you need and whose advice to take, especially when all some companies want is your money, so let's go through some of the basics in preparing your vehicle for your next off-road adventure.



*Make sure you prepare your vehicle before heading away so you and your family and friends have a safe journey.*

## 1. Mechanics

Whether you're going for 2 days or 2 weeks, you need to make sure your vehicle is in sound mechanical condition. Have your vehicle serviced regularly by a reliable mechanic. If you own a 4WD and are about to head on a big trip to remote areas, it can be a very good idea to get your vehicle checked by a mechanic who has a lot of experience with 4wd's. A 4wd mechanic will be able to look for things that a general mechanic may miss.

## 2. Tyres

Make sure you have the right tyres for the job. There is no point heading across the Simpson Desert on highway tyres. A good set of all terrain or mud terrain tyres is essential. Ensure you are using reputable and reliable brands and that you have plenty of tread remaining. For remote areas, take a minimum of 2 spare tyres and a puncture repair kit. For some trips, you may like to take an extra tyre carcass, tyre levers, bead breaker, tyre gaiter and spare inner tube.

## 3. Bull Bar

A Bull bar is a vital piece of protective equipment for your vehicle. An animal strike could result in expensive damage, the end of your trip or even worse. A good, strong, professionally fitted bull bar is a must for any vehicle heading out of the CBD.

## 4. Fuel

It is very important to know your vehicle's fuel consumption and plan ahead. It's no fun sitting on the side of the road waiting for help to come along if you run out of fuel. If you're heading off-road, your vehicle will use a lot more fuel in 4wd and even more if you're in the sand. A good rule to follow is that your vehicle will use 1.5 times its normal amount in 4wd, so take at least 20 litres more than you plan to use. It's better to come home with half a tank than run at any point!

Carrying a lot of fuel can be difficult. The safest way to do it is by having a long range tank fitted to your vehicle. Whilst diesel can be carried in jerry cans on the back of the vehicle or



inside, finding a place for petrol is hard. Petrol is not allowed to be carried on the back of a vehicle and, due to dangerous fumes, should not be carried inside. Be careful how much you carry on your roof as carrying a lot of weight on the roof will affect your vehicle's centre of gravity and change its handling.

## 5. Carrying your load

Packing a vehicle correctly is very important as you need to ensure your vehicle handles safely on the road and does not put undue stress on the vehicle.

As mentioned above, be very careful how much weight is put on the roof. Ensure your roof rack and roof weight restrictions are not exceeded and that weight is distributed evenly across the roof and tied down securely.

Heavy items should be placed as low as possible within the vehicle to keep the vehicle's centre of gravity low.

## 6. Suspension

Your suspension will get a severe workout when heading off-road. Aftermarket suspension is a good idea as long as you use reliable and reputable brands and preferably have it fitted by a professional. Shocks and springs in good working order will have a huge effect on how the vehicle handles both on and off the road. Ensure your suspension is adequate for carrying the extra load of your gear. Airbag suspension is a great addition to carrying heavy loads but, even with suspension upgrades, be careful not to go over your vehicles load carrying limit!

## 7. Driving Lights

If you're planning to drive after dark, a good set of driving lights is a valuable investment. Not only will they allow you to see further and wider along the road, they will help to stop your eyes from getting so tired. Squinting into the distance lit up by your standard high beams is not good for your eyes or your safety! Driving lights will help you to see animals before it's too late and to see upcoming road or track conditions.

## 8. Spare Parts

A good range of spares should be taken for your vehicle if you are going to be in remote areas. At a bare minimum, a full set of spare radiator hoses, belts and oil should be carried. Depending on where you are going, you may like to carry spare shocks and spring or even spare axels. Get to know your vehicle and talk to your mechanic about what items to take as spares. Of course, you should always take spare fuses, globes, electrical wire connectors and insulation tape, glue, wire, cable ties, duck tape, and a length of thin hose. Jumper leads or a jump start battery are also a good idea.

There are many things to consider when preparing your vehicle for your next off-road trip. Be sure to get to know your vehicle, research other people's experiences with your vehicle model and have a good chat with your mechanic about preparing to take your vehicle off-



8 Four Wheel Drive tips that could save your life!

road safely.

**Have we missed anything? What are your safety tips for off-road adventures?**