



Checklists are either a waste of time, or extremely useful. Maybe you have one buried in your filing cabinet, outdoor shed, or ~that~ drawer in the kitchen. From a scrawled list on a scratchy old notepad, to a computer spreadsheet or even a mobile app – nowadays, camping checklists seem to be getting longer and longer.

Sometimes, the excitement of going camping can be almost as intense as the trip itself. Part of that is packing all your gear into the car in preparation for a safe and enjoyable trip.

Whatever your preferred outdoor activity is, a list could very useful. How many times have you forgotten something in the middle of nowhere, and it's a bit late to get another one?



Writing a checklist gives you that peace of mind that you've properly prepared for your trip.

Planning and Preparation

Caravanning

Your destination determines what you list and pack, and the spares you take. Camping in a remote location would require a different kit to what would be in a park close to a town and with access to supplies. Pre-planning and listing items for both scenarios are wise processes.

Prior to caravanning, remember:

- Manual brake: off
- Water pump: off (plug taken out)
- Inside taps: down



- All doors and drawers: secure
- Windows and hatches: closed
- Fridge setting: correct
- Gas bottles: off and secure
- All 240-volt power cables disconnected
- Awning: secure
- Pop-top roof locks: down
- Radio and TV antenna: down
- Stabilizers and wheel braces: removed
- Air conditioner covers: on/off
- Safety chains and stabiliser: connected and secure
- Lights: working
- Water tank valves: shut
- Wheel chocks and jockey wheel: stowed
- The wife and kids: in the car

Hiking and Camping

For hiking, backpack weight is extremely important – so list your days, proposed meals, maybe an extra day's worth of food (to be safe), snacks, clothes, and a compass.

Space is also very important on a camping trip, so first list the tent, fly, and ground sheet. Check that you haven't lost any pegs, your torches are operating, and you have spare batteries. Ensure the gas bottle or canisters are full, don't forget new mantles for your gas light and, as above, plan your meals ahead. It'll make life easier.

Another suggestion is to jot down every time you run low on an item in the camp kit, so you know to replenish it before you head off next time.

Fill Your Gas Bottle

Don't wait to arrive at the campsite before realising you've run out of gas.

- Check your bottle is in date – **it must be tested and restamped every ten years**
- Top it up, even if it doesn't feel it needs to be
- Determine whether there is enough gas for your trip, and if there is anywhere you can fill up en route
- If you're going on an extended trip, or feeding an army that likes bacon and eggs three times a day – consider carrying a spare gas bottle!



Imagine setting up camp, dreaming of BBQ snags... then realising you're out of gas!

Keep Your Cool

Keeping perishable food fresh and drinks cold requires the right gear to do the job. From the humble but robust ice boxes through to the many 12-volt fridges on the market – buy the best you can afford, as it will be more effective and last many years.

For those with a fridge, cool it down by turning it on the weekend before you're due to head away.

- Cooling your fridge first using 240-volt (e.g. in a shed) will ensure all your food stays cold on the first day of your travels
- If it's already cool, the fridge won't have to work so hard from the car battery
- Turning your fridge on early will allow the chance to ensure it's working properly. Don't forget to test it in the car too!
- Freeze any meat you have in preparation too. Frozen meat will last longer, and it will help keep the fridge cold for the first few days – which will use less power too!
- For more tips on getting the most out of your camping fridge, read [here](#)

Check Your Tent

OK – this one requires a bit more effort! Your tent or camper trailer is probably the most important to check.



The last thing you want is to arrive at camp only to find you have a mouldy tent, or no pegs and poles!

Drag your tent out of the shed, set it up in the backyard, and give it a good once-over:

- Ensure all componentry is there
- Ensure the tent isn't mouldy or brittle
- Check for holes and unravelled stitching
- Check for broken poles and bent pegs
- Remind yourself how to pitch the tent... so you don't look like a turkey at the campground!

Test Your Air Mattress or Sleeping Mat

Ensure your mat and sleeping bag are warm enough. A tarp with associated pegs, poles, and guy ropes is also suggested for any inclement weather – this allows plenty of space to cook, read, and relax in the dry. If you have roof racks on your vehicle too, consider using them as a tie-down point for one side of the tarp.

If you use an air mattress or self-inflating mat, check it a few days before your trip. Pump it up, put some weight on it, and allow it to sit out overnight. You don't want to find out the hard way that it has a leak!

- Check for leaks early, so you have the chance to fix or replace the mattress. If there is one, repair it or buy a new one.
- Allow the foam in your self-inflating mattress to expand properly. This may take a few days if it has been rolled up for a while!



If you discovered this after you set up camp...you're not going to have a very enjoyable trip, that's for sure!

Charge or Purchase Batteries

Most adventurers have left for their trip at least once without charging the electric lantern, or buying new batteries for the kids' torches!

Batteries run flat while sitting around in the shed, so check all your battery-powered gear.

- Rechargeable batteries may need a whole week of charging to bring them back to life. Overnight tends not to be long enough for a battery lantern or bed pump.
- Make sure all your battery-operated devices work
- Check if old batteries have leaked inside the device
- Always take a spare set of batteries!

Check Your Vehicle

For extended trips, ensure your vehicle has:

- Engine oil
- Radiator fluid
- A basic toolset
- A means to inflate your tyre – trust me, it is possible to get two flats in one weekend!



Check your tyre pressure (including the spare), consider bringing a jerry can of fuel, and even take your vehicle to have a basic service. You never know what might be discovered!

Supplies and Equipment

Cookware and Appliances

The Companion 2-burner stove puts out impressive heat, while camp ovens are brilliant on a campfire – and there are dozens of recipes out there on camp cooking. A fridge or icebox and a plastic storage container should both adequately hold your food and prevent animals from invading.

In National Parks, tables and BBQs are often already provided. For other areas, pack a camp table or perhaps a second plastic box to act as one. A tub to wash up in is also essential. A small selection of cooking pots, a frypan, durable plates, and cutlery is usually all one requires, with a billy, spoon, and knife the very basics of cooking. That said, a wok can be extremely useful in a camp cooking kit too.

Lighting

The invention of LED lighting is a camper's dream! Compact, low power-consumption, and many shapes and sizes to suit any application – there is so much available. A good headlamp provides adequate hands-free lighting for those inevitable campsite chores after sundown.

Water

Water is important for drinking, cooking, or perhaps extinguishing a fire. One should never be without a good supply of water in the bush.

How much water you need to carry will depend on what is available at your campsite, both in quantity and quality. The real issue is how to carry it. Some options are:

- 20-litre plastic drums (types that don't leave a plastic-like taste!)
- Water tanks fitted to your vehicle (an expensive option)
- 10-litre Watercells, or spring water casks available from the supermarket (the taps from these can be easily removed, and the bladders refilled)

Toiletries

Aside from a portable toilet, for those roughing it remote – a toothbrush, floss, and multi-purpose wash are the often the most necessary hygiene items. Toilet paper can be awkward to pack – so for the lightweight travellers, a pocket-sized toilet or simply the sublime strength of newspaper often handles rear-end activities!

Odds and Ends

Sometimes, it's necessary to have a separate box just for these!

Think a hatchet, lighter, spare cord, mosquito coils, sunscreen, repellent, tinder, and a rag or



two. These items are usually easy to pick up on the way to your destination too.

Matches are essential too – and be sure to check out Fire Safety and Preparation for Camping for all the tips on creating and maintaining a safe campfire!

Leisure Items

These include books, music, balls or toys, cards, hiking shoes, campfire stories, and a comfortable camp chair.

Coffee makers are a luxury – but an indulgence worth endorsing! Check out those by AeroPress and Wacaco for your next cuppa at the campsite.

Don't get halfway to your destination and realise that you've left something at home - download the Snowys Checklist here.