



Going camping at Christmas time is an Aussie tradition. 'What you doin' over Christmas?' you'll be asked. 'Heading up the river/down the beach' will be a common response. In fact, Christmas camping is about as Australian as the flies that will be there to greet you when you arrive at the campsite. True patriots, them flies.

But, due to its popularity, Christmas camping can be challenging. Chances are you won't have that idyllic bush campsite next to the [Howqua River](#) to yourself. Everybody is on annual leave, the kids are off school – heading bush at Christmas time isn't just *your* bright idea! That's why we thought we'd share 10 tips to make camping over Christmas more of a breeze.

### 1. Be prepared by doing your research

Leaving things to the last minute is never a good idea. Picture this: you're about to head off for a week on the [Gloucester River](#). You have yet to even unlock the shed door and start packing the car. Chances of forgetting something are pretty high if you're this unprepared. If you plan to head off over Christmas, make sure you start planning a few weeks in advance. The first thing you should do is prepare a gear list. This could be as basic as a handwritten checklist or [Snowys own gear checklist](#).

Or if you're a geek like me, a comprehensive spreadsheet with weights, prices, the packing order, and all the bells and whistles (you should see the extent some [ultralight hikers go to](#).)



*Check gear off as you go, that way you won't forget anything!*

Over the proceeding days start bringing stuff out of the shed to check that it is in good repair and put it aside, ready for the car. This will give you plenty of time to repair (and clean) anything that is broken and buy replacements. This is also a great time to update your camping [tool](#) and repair kit as well.

Be sure to write a shopping list for anything you may need to buy. If you're going to shop online, make sure you leave plenty of time for the purchases to arrive. Over Christmas, Australia Post and couriers are run off their feet so get your purchases in early.



*Wikicamps provides the most up to date info on campsites around Australia. Image: WikiCamps Australia*

### Make the most of apps

During your research, [download the WikiCamps app](#) and check the campsites you're interested in visiting. There's also a whole host of other handy outdoor apps that are helpful for this time of the year which you can check out [here](#).

WikiCamps is crowdsourced (campers just like you list their favourite sites) and allows users to leave comments and photos of their experience. The comment section is a handy way of gauging how busy a campsite might be at a particular time of year, and any other useful tidbits that might help fellow campers, e.g. pub happy hour is at 4 pm!

Also, be sure to research fuel prices. Petrol and diesel can be really expensive the further you travel outside of the city. There are many sites and apps out now that display fuel prices in a particular area – have a look at [FuelMap](#) and [MotorMouth](#) as examples.

Don't leave anything to chance. Be prepared. You'll be less stressed. Oh, and don't forget the



toilet paper!

## 2. Book in advance!

So it's Easter and you've just had a fantastic couple of days at your favourite caravan park on the Murray River. 'We have to come back at Christmas!' you announce on the journey home. Do it, but book now! If a campsite requires you to book, book as far in advance as possible.

## 3. Arrive early

I headed down to the Coorong for Christmas last year. We arrived on Christmas day. There was hardly a soul to be seen. We got in ahead of the crowds. Two days later, as we braved the road back to Adelaide, there was a convoy of 4X4s and camper trailers heading in the opposite direction.

Had we stayed another night, our peaceful waterside camp would have been transformed drastically. Get in early to bag the best spot!



*Getting in early means plenty of peace and quiet. Image: Matt Pfeil*

## 4. Head a little further afield

The easier a camp is to access, the more people it will attract. Consider going a bit further afield this Christmas to avoid the crowds. It may just afford you the peace and quiet that we tend to like when we go camping. Having a 4WD and a sense of adventure comes in handy, as you can access places off the beaten track.

Just a note, if your intention is the fire up the trail bike or jet ski, be mindful that others that have gone to the effort to camp out in the sticks might have done so to avoid that sort of noise. Make friends, and enjoy the serenity together.

## 5. Shop in town

Do your shopping before you leave the big smoke. Not only are the prices cheaper, but you'll also be able to buy a lot of things that you might not be able to get in rural or remote areas. Like with Tip 1, preparation is key. Write a list. Come up with a menu ([read more about menu planning here](#)). Work out what you can take from home, what you need to buy, what can go in a storage box or on ice, and what needs to go in your car fridge/freezer.

That said, support the local economy by picking up the essentials in the local town. And don't forget to visit the local bakery. Country bakeries are always the best!



*Planning your menu beforehand will make mealtimes so much easier. Image: Coleman Australia*



## 6. Make friends

Camping over Christmas usually means sharing a camping spot with lots of other people. Don't let this be negative, see it as an opportunity to meet new friends. After all, you all have a common interest – you like camping! Shouldn't be too hard to strike up a conversation.

## 7. Get wet

Holidaying near the water is such an Aussie thing to do over summer. It's likely to be hot if you're out over Christmas, so add some water to the experience. Australia is a big place with heaps of great camping spots close to beautiful beaches, rivers, streams, and lakes. There's nothing quite like making a morning cuppa while staring out over a beautiful stretch of water, then ten minutes later take a dip. What a start to the day! Camping near the water also allows you to take some water toys with you. Snorkels, body boards, surfboards, jet skis, boats, fishing rods. Your togs. Yep, you can see why Aussies like camping near the water over summer.



*Look for a campsite with water nearby, Christmas has the perfect weather for a swim! Image: Alite*

## 8. Buy gifts that can be enjoyed on the trip

As the kids get older they're probably less interested in heading bush with their crusty old folks (if not, you have top kids!), only to be away from the new PS4 they got for Christmas, or not have any mobile reception for their new iGadget. Consider gifting them something that they can use while camping. It might be a snorkel or a small kayak or a camera or colouring in books or the must-read fantasy novel.

Buy them something that will keep them entertained while you're laying back with a cold one. The best camping trips are the ones where everyone is happy and gets something out of it.



*You can still have a delicious Christmassy meal, even when you're out bush. Image: Oztent*

## 9. Get merry

If you're camping on Christmas day, it doesn't mean you have to pass up the Christmas meal. There are some amazing recipes floating around the place for Christmassy things like Jack Daniel's honey glazed ham, and stove top roast chicken that can be cooked in your camp oven (check fire bans in your area – there is a way to use your camp ovens in summer though) or camp stove.

Nothing says Merry Aussie Christmas more than fresh seafood. So if you're camping near the ocean or river, and have some luck with the rod and line, you could have the beginnings of the most Aussie of Christmases yet!



## 10. Be prepared for hot weather

Summer in Australia gets hot. Who would have thought? So it's important to be prepared for a scorcher. There are stacks of things you can do to maximise your comfort if you're faced with blistering temperatures (we've got some more tips for keeping cool [here](#)):

- Position your camp in a shady spot and [set up a sunshade](#)
- Remove your tent fly to encourage airflow (and [place a shade over the top](#) of it if necessary)
- [Bring a lightweight 12V fan](#) or [portable evaporative cooler](#)
- Hang out in the water all day
- Keep hydrated
- Don't forget to slip, slop, slap, and don't overdo it on the frothies!



*Staying focused on the roads is essential especially around the holidays. Image: Cybertext Consulting*

## Bonus tip - stay safe

Finally, being safe when out bush is vital to an enjoyable trip. Camping during summer can be risky, what with [snakes](#) and bush fires out to get you. Keep tabs on the weather and conditions. If a bushfire approaches your campsite, [follow the instructions as set out by the local fire board](#). Make sure you have a [reliable means of communication](#) as well for emergencies.

Getting to and from your campsite requires you to exercise caution and good judgement too. You may be a top driver but not all other road users are. And a distraction in the car can have shocking consequences.

You've probably watched the news over Christmas and Easter and seen all the reports about the road toll. Don't push yourself, don't drink and drive, drive to the conditions, and take regular rest breaks.

Most importantly, if you're going camping over Christmas have a great time, bond with the family, and relax. That's what it's all about, right?

**Where are you heading this Christmas? Let us know in the comments!**