



Before we begin it's important to remember that every kid and every family is different so the tips mentioned in this blog may not work for everyone. Some of you reading this may have already been through the camping stage with kids under five and have had different experiences. If this is true, comment your 'dos' and 'dont's' in the comments below - I'd love to hear them.

This blog is designed for parents of kids under five-years-old that might be a little nervous about taking them camping for the first time. Or that have had stressful experiences and need some advice on how to make it more fun next time. Isn't that the point of going camping?

Having taken our first daughter camping for the first time at the age of three months, our learning curve was extremely steep. Two weeks in the Blue Mountains sounded like fun at first but quickly deteriorated. It went from a two-day drive to get there to an early trip home. Including a stop at a rural hospital when we couldn't get our daughter to stop crying for nearly an entire day.

Even though this trip turned out to be more hard work than enjoyment, I found myself motivated to make camping with my new family work. So over the next four years, and another kid later, I have got a few tricks for turning a two-week nightmare into my two-year-old screaming every weekend: 'Want to go camping, Daddy!'

1. Travel Short Distances and Take Regular Breaks

Most kids don't like to sit still in a car for hours on end. Yes, books, music, drawing, and iPads can help entertain them but the younger they are the less help they are. We've found the best method of travelling is to break the trip up into short sections of no more than two hours.



Break a long drive up into smaller, more manageable sections. Or, if you're feeling a bit tired, let the baby drive!

If your kids are still having multiple sleeps a day try and cover the most distance while they're asleep. Older kids will appreciate a good break at a roadside playground so factor these into your planned route.

Two hours on the road, 30 minutes to an hour break is a loose rule we have adopted. Sure, we cover fewer kilometres in a day but as we get older we enjoy the rest. Important for cutting down on driver fatigue too.

2. Big, Easy to Set-Up Tents are Key

We have gone through about four camping set-ups over the past four years and every time we've upgraded the tent and other gear has gotten bigger, quicker to set-up, and easier to use.

There is nothing worse than being stuck at camp in cold and wet weather and not having the space to keep the kids entertained. With the amount of stuff you end up bringing for the kids you need ample space to store and organise it so you don't keep tripping over everything!



These two are off for a hike. Stay away from the water, girls!

Let's face it, roughing it in remote locations tends to slow down a bit when the kids come along. Rugged out of the way locations are replaced by caravan parks with jumping pillows, pools, and playgrounds. It's nice to maintain a bit of privacy by having a large tent so you can get changed or have a space to chill out.

3. Invest in a Porta Potti

Once the kids start toilet training having your own toilet becomes a huge advantage. Running across the campground with your three-year-old that has a 'number two' halfway out isn't doing any favours to the enjoyment of your camping trip!

The convenience of having a portable chemical toilet around the side of your tent can't be overestimated.



Kids get to learn about and experience things when camping that they just can't at home or in the classroom.

Unfortunately for us, toilet training has been an extremely difficult process. Our now-four-year-old still struggles to get through the day in the same set of clothes. However, our Porta Potti changed this. The novelty of using a new, funny looking toilet meant she wanted to go every hour or so. Which we didn't mind as it was our daughter's first week without an accident.

What was even better was the toilet belonged to my parents. When the little voice cried, 'I need to use the potty!' we sent her off to the caravan for grandma and granddad to deal with!

4. Glow Stick Night Lights

My four-year-old ended up with a night light when she graduated to her 'big girl bed'. This was to help her if she woke up in the middle of the night. She could find her toys or blanky or water bottle and get herself back to sleeping without calling for us.

We found out the hard way how much she needed this when out camping. So my wife came up with a brilliant idea - glow sticks! Not only are glow sticks fun and something for the kids to play with when it gets dark, but hanging a couple in the tent above their heads gives them enough light to see if they need to without keeping them awake.

They've worked brilliantly and it's probably the best tip I can give for getting the kids to sleep. That way you can enjoy a glass of wine around the campfire and enjoy the moment.

5. Swags - The Perfect Bed for Kids

One of the most frequent questions I get asked at Snowys is what bedding to we recommend for young kids. When still in a cot back home, our kids used a port-a-cot with blankets when camping. An extra blanket would be draped over the top to keep in the dark and to stop us from disturbing the little one when we got into bed.



An extra set of hands when camping with the kids always comes in handy.

Once in the 'big girl bed' at home, the four-year-old started sleeping in a swag when

camping. We use an [Oztrail Biker Swag](#) due to its compact size, and just roll it out in the tent without the hoops and poles.

All her bedding can be rolled up inside, keeping set-up time quick and simple. During the day we pull the canvas right up so she can run and jump around without getting her bedding dirty. If it's really cold at night, she'll sleep with the canvas pulled right up to trap in as much warmth as possible.

We use [Black Wolf Star sleeping bags](#). They are rated to -5 but I would rather the kids get warm and wiggle out of their bags a bit than constantly be waking up because they're cold. Always choose a bag that's warmer than you think you'll need.

If your kids are still quite small fold the sleeping bag in half, so they don't wiggle down too far. This puts more padding and insulation underneath and makes their bed comfier.



There's plenty of camping gear made just for kids. Like the [Oztrail Moon Chair Junior](#).

So there you have it, my top 5 tips for camping with toddlers

These tricks have had a positive impact on the enjoyment of our family camping trips and make the kids happier and us more relaxed. And remember, don't be worried about camping with kids - it's a wonderful way to bond and teach them life skills. The sort you don't learn at home or in the classroom.

I would love to hear what tips you have for travelling with young kids. Comment them below.