



With the advancement in technology for camping products over the years, you may have found a need for more and more power in the bush. Fridges, battery lanterns, tent fans, laptops, GPS devices, cameras and phones are all common items we take away camping.

But how do we keep these items running in the outback where there are no electricity plugs? Let's explore a few of the options for getting electricity in the bush.

Car Battery

If you're exploring this great country eat by vehicle then you'll have power on board in the form of your car battery. This is charged by the alternator whilst you drive and your driving is driven by the engine. Most cars put out 12 volts of power and you will find that a large range of products, designed to work in the bush, will either run or charge from the car. Most will plug into the car through the cigarette lighter plug.



Pros:

- This power source is reliable whilst you're driving and you will always have it with you when touring by vehicle.
- You don't need to take anything extra as it's all built in as part of your vehicle.

Cons:

- Most of the time we want to use our electrical items when we've stopped. Once the car is turned off the battery stops being charged.
- This battery needs a lot of power to start the vehicle again and if we use all this power for our electrical items we will flatten the battery.
- Once the car battery drops below 10.5v (approx.), it will be too flat to start the car or run most appliances.
- This means that this power source will not last long without using the car's engine to recharge the battery.
- The more appliances the car is running, the harder the alternator has to work which means that the engine has to work harder which then pushes your fuel consumption up.

Dual Battery System

Because your car's battery doesn't last long and is needed to start the vehicle again, it's popular to fit a second, larger battery. Both batteries are charged by the car when it's running but are isolated when the ignition is turned off.



This allows the 2nd battery to run your appliances and leaves the main battery fully charged to start your vehicle again.

Pros:

- The 2nd battery allows you to run appliances for a much longer time after the vehicle has been turned off.
- Most batteries used in a dual battery system can be completely flattened without damaging the battery.
- These types of batteries are designed to store a lot of power and so can provide power for longer than your main battery even if you let it run flat.

Cons:

- Dual battery systems can be complicated in their installation and usually require an auto-electrician to install.
- They can be quite expensive to purchase and install.
- The 2nd battery will still need to be charged periodically and if being charged by the car. This will increase your fuel consumption slightly.
- You will also need to find space for the dual battery which means you are adding more weight to your vehicle.

Solar Panels

With the advancement of solar power technology, we have access to a great source of power that's environmentally friendly. Free-to-run solar panels can be used to recharge your main or 2nd battery rather than using the car.

Some systems are even powerful enough to run certain appliances directly, and they come in all shapes and sizes so you can use them for a variety of activities and appliances.



Pros:

- Solar power is free to run and can be used almost anywhere.
- They're environmentally friendly and you do not need to carry fuel or start your vehicle to use them.
- Solar panels are a great option for charging your batteries when staying in one spot for an extended amount of time. Or when using high consumption appliances (which require you to recharge your batteries regularly).



- Solar panels come in a range of sizes allowing hikers to carry small ones for charging mobile phones and GPS systems, and 4wd explorers can carry large ones for running fridges, laptops, and recharging lanterns etc.

Cons:

- Solar panels are often extremely expensive and bulky to carry if you need a lot of power.
- Solar panels only operate during the day when the sun is up.
- Most solar panels need a good supply of sun to ensure a sufficient amount of power is being produced. Some panels may only charge at a decent rate for 3 - 4 hours a day.
- Most solar panels need to be in direct sunlight and do not put out a huge amount of power.
- Solar panels are often quite fragile and need to be looked after well.
- Whilst there are new products on the market allowing units to be smaller and more efficient, they can be very expensive.
- Check our consumption rates when deciding on an appropriate system for your needs.

Generators

Generators allow you to have a good, strong supply of power almost anywhere you go. They will operate at all hours of the day (or night) and give you 240Volts of power allowing you to run normal household appliances. Generators can be used to power appliances directly or charge batteries.

Pros:

- Generators give you a constant power source that is strong and reliable whilst they are running.
- They deliver the most power allowing you to run household appliances directly from them, or charge batteries quickly.
- Generators are portable and can come in small, user-friendly sizes.

Cons:

- Generators are noisy (even the quiet ones can still be heard by you or your neighbours).
- They are quite expensive and require fuel which means you need to carry extra fuel for your generator.
- They take up a bit of room and so does the Jerry you need to hold the fuel.
- Generators cannot be used during total fire ban days. And most national parks and

caravan parks ban generators.

- In some places, you will need to stay in the allocated camp area for generator users. Which means everyone around you will have their generators purring away which will be quite noisy.

Gas and other liquid fuels

Of course, not all of us take electrical items with us when we go camping. Some of us don't even take our phones (or we only use them only for emergencies). For most small appliances, for example, phones, UHF radios and charging lanterns, and camera batteries, the car's power supply is sufficient. However, gas and other liquid fuels are very popular for stoves and lighting.



Pros:

- Gas and liquid fuel stoves are much more efficient than electrical items and much cheaper to run.
- Gas and Liquid fuel lanterns often provide a much brighter light and are very cheap and efficient to run.
- Liquid fuel canisters and gas bottles are often smaller to carry than some battery systems, solar panels and generators. And they're much cheaper to purchase.

Cons:

- Like all fuels, they need to be carried and refilled as they are used.
- Gas refills can be difficult to find in remote areas.
- Gas and liquid fuel appliances cannot be used on total fire ban days.
- With the advancement in technology for electrical items, gas and liquid fuel appliances may be more expensive to run than some electrical items such as fridges and LED lanterns.

On a final note

If you're taking electrical appliances away, you may need to consider a power source that will keep your appliances running or charging.

Whatever appliance you're using it is extremely important to ensure your starting battery for your vehicle is protected. A good, reliable power source can also allow you to use items that will make your experience less stressful and more enjoyable.



When choosing a power source, consider the power needs all of your appliances and the volume of power required. Take into consideration where you are taking them and how long you will need them to run as well.

If in doubt, give us a call on 1300 914 007 or email us at customerservice@snowys.com.au. Chat to us about where you are going, how long you are going to stay there and what you need to run for some good advice on which power source will be best for you.

Once you've got the power in the bush that's right for you and your troop, check out the Snowys Website for all the gear you'll need to go with it!