

It's been 12 months now. Max and I downsized from big city living to a caravan in a 12-acre paddock to a rooftop tent with no fixed address. All in very quick succession. We had talked about moving our life on the road since the day we first met.

There was planning involved, of course, but there is only so much you can prepare for. Most things are learnt on the road, so here are some things I wish I'd been told...

From our first days on the road, we've made a few changes since then.

Be prepared for the good and the bad

Bad stuff happens. Always know that it's likely and be prepared for it to hit you at the worst time. Sometimes the bad stuff just keeps on happening and it feels relentless. We rolled our boat trailer after a very smooth three months on the road and then everything just started unravelling. Little things became big things and it hit us very hard.

There's no such thing as a dream run, but you just start to forget the bad stuff when the good stuff piles up. It's amazing how quickly you move on, we have had too many good experiences to dwell on the bad.

You're going to have good days, and bad ones on the road.

Always keep backups and spares

One day you will run out of gas halfway through cooking a meal and wish you had a little back up one. So invest in a backup or just get your bottle filled sooner rather than later. We have figured out how long our bottle lasts now and we just fill it every three weeks, no questions asked, no guessing how much is really left.

Stock up on windscreen patches. Road trains throw some mean rocks. We currently have four patches holding our screen together, that's a lot better than having four windscreen changes. Sikaflex, a heap of ratchet straps, some cable ties and a bit of duct tape will get you out of some very sticky situations. These and a thick branch have helped us limp our boat trailer to the nearest town multiple times now.

Stock up on all of the supplies you need including gas.

Get to know your vehicle and your new home

Get to know your car and whatever you are towing. I really wish I had some more mechanical knowledge. Luckily, Max doesn't mind pulling stuff apart and trying to put it back together again. Max could build his own boat trailer (can you tell our trailer is our biggest problem?), he has pulled it apart that many times.

Getting bogged can bring out the best and the worst in people. Swear words, innovation, frustration, hard work and a few more swear words come hand in hand. What a wonderful way to test a relationship, digging your car out in forty-degree heat with flies in your mouth. Use a walkie-talkie to communicate with your spotter when the tracks get sketchy. And learn your left and rights, I still haven't done that yet.

Tyre pressures are key. Don't be afraid to spend some time inflating or deflating, depending on conditions, it makes for a much smoother ride. Yes even in a 2WD you can adjust your tyre pressures for a safer and nicer drive down those corrugated roads.

Don't draw the line at a cordless drill, take some tools and know how and where to use them. It is amazing to have met some people who aren't travelling with any tools at all, none. After a few long days on dirt tracks, the car is vibrating apart and every bolt needs tightening.

Cape York tracks are worth taking the time to drop tyre pressures.

You don't have to have the perfect set up

I'm sorry, but you don't have to have the perfect setup, but just go anyway. So many people are too busy planning they forget their goal. Make do with what you have and just build as you go.

The cheap stuff won't last out here. Invest a bit more money to avoid buying gear twice.

Our vehicle set up at Cape Le Grand, WA.

How to use social media to plan your trip

Social media provides a vast library of places you may want to save to your itinerary. Just remember that photos can be edited and some places may not live up to your expectations or the hype they get.

Don't get overwhelmed by stories you hear on social media and all the stuff they tell you that you NEED. Figure it out as you go. Keep in mind that social media is now a major advertising platform. For the Cape York section of our trip, we found it very hard to sift through the information to get the appropriate advice.

Try to find people who have done it before, have a similar 4WD experience as you and talk to them in person. It's the best way to get valuable information.

Social media can be deceptive when planning your trip, so do your research.

Little luxuries

A hot shower is so underrated. When you finally have instant hot water running over your body after a few weeks of bucket baths, you will understand that you took it for granted.

The feeling of clean sheets is almost unexplainable. It is a lovely thing to switch out the sheets that have become a beach of sand and feel smooth cotton under your body.

You have packed way too much, trust me. Take a step back and look at your car, is it sitting a bit heavy the back? I already know the answer. We were the same. We have a monthly clean out now because you unknowingly gather new things. Get rid of what you don't need.

You'll wonder why clothes are even made in white. If you are not dirty, you are not living. It is impossible to keep anything clean.

A hot shower will soon become a luxury.



Camp diet

Sriracha is a game-changer, making all food taste great since, well, whenever it was made! Some days you won't have access to fresh food and it comes time to work through your non-perishable back-up foods. Cover it in Sriracha and nothing is bad. Mee Goreng is the only two-minute noodles you need, the rest are just child's play.



When you run out of fresh food, condiments are a must.

Australia and the weather

Do you know how big Australia is? Because it is big, very quickly you will probably realise you need more time to travel this big continent.

It gets cold in the Top End in the dry season, and it gets really cold down south in the winter, and a whole other level of coldness in the desert on a winter's night. I had to get a snow jacket in Alice Springs and ended up wearing it for three months straight, well into a South Australian summer. Crazy!

Rain is better than wind. At least when it rains you have almost no other choice than to stay inside. But wind just ruins a good day and makes you feel guilty about not wanting to go adventuring even though it is sunny.

Australia has it all, the landscapes, the weather, the extremes of seasonal change, the wildlife, the activities...I could go on. There is something for everyone and every desire. I can't understand why anyone wouldn't have a dream to travel Australia.

Corrugations become the soundtrack to your life. I wish I knew the onomatopoeia for the bumps of a red dust track.



Australia has so many incredible landscapes.

Funding the dream

There is always work available if you are willing to do it. A couple of months of work can lead to several more on the road.

Sometimes gravel pits are pretty lovely places to set up camp, and very free which can help you save some money. We were a bit opposed to camping in gravel pits when we first started. But one night in far north Queensland we had no other choice, and let me tell you, there is nothing quite like the 5-million-star view you get from a quiet patch of dirt in the middle of nowhere.



On route to doing what he loves.

Make the most of the opportunity

There's no time like the present, do it now whilst you are at your most youthful. I always think about some of the things I may not have been able to do as age sets in. Get out there whilst you're nimble and energetic.



What I Wish I'd Known Before Starting Life on the Road

It pays to be a morning person, to beat the crowds to the tourist hot-spots and have them to yourself if only for a while. But fear not you will naturally start to live by the sun and the stars in due time.

This is your chance to do what it is you truly love, all the time. Fishing, hiking, meditating, driving, cooking, swimming, photography, writing, painting, dancing, being. Do that thing you love and do it on a weekday.

Are you planning on packing up and hitting the road permanently?