



Australia has some pretty incredible places to wake up to in the morning. One of my favourite sounds to wake up to is waves rolling in, just metres from my bed. Australia has over 10,000 beaches, and you are allowed to camp on a number of them. Many of these are about as good as a beach gets, so we're pretty lucky here.

We've all seen photos of glassy, calm beaches, clear water, and just the right amount of sunshine. The reality is that beaches can also provide the exact opposite; if you want to spend a night or two camping on the beach, there are a few things you'll want to consider before heading off.



The idea of camping at the beach sounds good, but there are a few things to know.

Finding a Beach

Unfortunately, there are plenty of restrictions when it comes to camping in Australia. Aside from the strange looks you'll get rolling a swag out on the main beach of your local city, you are likely to be asked to move on, and receive a fine by the resident ranger.

In general, the more populated the area the less chance you have of being allowed to camp on that beach. Once you start heading further away from the crowds, finding beaches where camping is allowed becomes easier.

Finding out whether or not you are permitted to camp on a beach is actually quite simple: look for any signs, check the relevant shire websites, follow any National Park regulations, and download helpful apps like Wikicamps (full of information). These days, it only takes a couple of minutes of online searching to find your answer.

If you find that camping is not permitted, follow the instructions. While you could get away with it for a night or two, it just provides more reason for more places to shut down... and you could end up with an extra bill when you get home!



Always check out your location before you set up.

Beach Driving

If you plan to drive on the beach, you should have a 4WD. Some beaches can handle AWD and even 2WD vehicles, but only if the sand is extremely hard... and most of the time it isn't. If you've never taken a 4WD onto the beach, be sure to do some reading prior to hitting the sand! Understand how to engage 4WD, in both high and low range, and how to let your tyres down (including what pressure you should be running). It's also important that you have rated recovery points and take a recovery kit, should you get stuck.

Check in advance too that vehicle access is allowed. In general, you should drive between the waterline and high tide mark, and steer clear of restricted areas like sand dunes to avoid native flora and fauna.



If you've never driven your vehicle on sand, make sure you know what you're doing.



Sometimes, camping off the beach is the best option...

When things are perfect, there's nothing better than camping right by the water's edge. However, beaches are not always camping-friendly, and in many situations you will be better off camping a little way back from the beach. You can still be within 30 metres of the water's edge, but this way you can enjoy far more protection.

In general, the wind is a concern when camping on the beach. If you know it's going to be good weather, you're in luck. However, if you suspect that the wind may pick up and can find a sheltered position behind a dune, usually camping off the beach becomes the better decision.

I can tell you from experience that there's nothing worse than waking up in the middle of the night to the wind lashing at your tent from every direction!



If it's windy, camp behind a dune or your vehicle.

Do Your Research

Before you commit to camping on a beach, take a few minutes to do some online research on tides, wind, and temperature.

Tides

There are many websites online that tell you what the tide will do. In some parts of Australia, it only goes up and down 30 centimetres, and that makes for little of an issue. However, if you are in the northern parts of Australia where they can go up and down 10 metres, you can get into some serious trouble very quickly.

Always consider the tide before setting up your tent... or you may wake up to the ocean running through the front of your tent!



Keep an eye out on the tides.

Wind

Weather predictions are becoming more and more accurate, and you can usually gauge what the wind is going to do pretty well before you head away. No, it's not always perfect, and sometimes you will end up with more or less than predicted – but it gives you an idea.

If you know the breeze is going to come in hard, perhaps it's better to camp off the beach, where you have a bit of shelter! When setting your tents up, have a good think about where the wind is going to come from and how it will affect your setup. Many tents will fare much better when faced into the wind, with decent aerodynamics.



Try to face your tent in the ideal direction during windy conditions.

Temperature

There's nothing better than a warm, sunny day at the beach – but only if you are prepared for



it. The temperature will determine what you need to take, and how you set up. If it's going to be 40 degrees on the beach, you are going to want lots of water and shade. It can also get cold at night, so ensure you take warm clothes just in case.

If you don't prepare for what Mother Nature may throw your way, your beach camping trip may not be so enjoyable!

Gear for More Comfortable Beach Camping

Shade, Sunscreen and Appropriate Clothing

If you spend time down at the beach without shade, sunscreen, and appropriate clothing, it will be a lesson you won't forget. On Australian beaches, it doesn't take more than an hour (even less for some people!) to get badly burnt.

Tourists especially often underestimate how powerful the sun's rays and heat can be. Look after yourself!



An awning or shade will go a long way for UV protection.

Matting

Camping on a beach brings its own set of unique challenges. There's nothing pleasant about dragging half of the beach into your tent with you, or climbing into a sleeping bag covered in sand.

These days, there are fantastic options for matting around your tent to clean off on before heading inside. These range from the foam puzzle pieces, to various shade cloth styles that allow sand to fall through and not resurface.

Don't underestimate how good it feels to be able to sit on a clean mat off the sand!

Leave Your Tent Closed

We always try and leave our tents shut when camping on the beach. Little grains of sand will blow past your tent all day; if you don't secure it closed properly, you can expect to share your bed with a fine layer of sand.



Close your tent completely to prevent sand from blowing in.

Dustpan and Brush

By the same token, sand will end up where you don't want it to. It's inevitable; there's not a whole lot you can do about it. A simple dustpan and brush will allow you to keep on top of most of it, and makes for easy cleaning of your feet and legs before entering the tent.

Washing

If you are staying on a beach for more than a day, you'll probably get sick of the salty feeling from swimming in the ocean. Of course, it's better than nothing – and a quick dip each day is not a bad way to stay hygienic and reasonably comfortable.



Baby wipes are an excellent option for cleaning salt off your body. There are also some soaps that can be used in saltwater, but it's best to take a bucket and wash away from the ocean. Whenever you're washing anything outdoors, always use biodegradable soap (as some conventional types are harmful), and always do it 100 metres from waterways.



Always be considerate of your surroundings to keep our beaches pristine.

Take Care of Our Beaches

Fires

Having a fire on the beach is a fantastic way to wind down in the evening. However, do it responsibly: in a fire pit, if possible (check the council for specifics), using sustainable timber. Make sure the fire is out when you leave, and do not bury the coals in sand (this keeps them hot). Wind can blow any residual embers to nearby bushes or shrubs, so be extremely careful and aware of the surrounding risks.

When packing up to leave, use sea water to completely extinguish any coals and a non-combustible marker that clearly shows where the campfire has been. A cairn of rocks works well, and may help to reduce the frequent incidence of third-degree burns experienced by the next campers arriving at the site – or kids digging into the sand when building castles! There should be no indication of a fire ever being on the beach. It is also worth checking the rules of the area, in case there are any fire restrictions in place.



A bonfire is a camping tradition, but just ensure you are considerate.

Leave No Trace

Nothing is more annoying or disgraceful than arriving at a beautiful beach to see that others have left it in a filthy state. We have some of the best beaches in the world, so it should be in everyone's best interest to keep it that way.

There should be no evidence that you have camped in an area on the beach after you leave, except for foot and car tyre prints.

Take all of your rubbish with you, put fires out, and fill the hole in.



If you camp on a beach, it's your responsibility to leave it as you found it.

Toilets

Going to the toilet on the beach isn't always easy to do. Generally, the best practice is to walk as far off the beach as possible, dig your hole, and do your business. Portable toilets make this a simple exercise, but make sure you're well away from any main tracks.

One issue often faced when beach camping is the lack of cover under which to go about your business. Consider taking a toilet/shower tent with you for more privacy.



A coastal destination should be at the top of your list for your next getaway.

Spending a few nights on a pristine beach is an experience you won't forget. There may be a few things to change about your usual camping setup, but it's definitely worth it.



Beach Camping – Everything You Need to Know

We live in the best country for waking up on the coast – get out there and enjoy it!

Do you prefer camping in the bush or on the beach?

