



If you've just had a beautiful baby, you'll have to put camping on hold for a few years... just kidding!

Despite what many might think, camping with a young baby is entirely within your reach. I'm not suggesting you book your first trip away with a baby the day after you get out of the hospital, but once you've settled into a good routine there's no reason why you can't head away on your first camping adventure.

There's a rather steep learning curve that needs to happen but at the same time, there are plenty of things you can do to make it easier. Don't let a baby stop you from heading away from the hustle and bustle of life.

Babies need 5 things; to be fed, cleaned, loved, and kept warm and safe. Whether you do these things at home, in the middle of the Simpson Desert or on one of Australia's pristine beaches is entirely up to you!



There are so many memories to be had with your baby. Photo: Aaron Schubert

How soon can you go camping with a baby?

There's no hard and fast rule here – when you feel comfortable taking your baby camping, go for it! Some babies are born on the road and live the camping lifestyle even from day one. We didn't head away until Oliver was nearly 5 months old but have done many trips since. I would say give it at least a month to get used to the new addition to your family at home!



When you decide to take your child on their first camping trip is up to you! Photo: Aaron Schubert

How does camping change with a baby?

Like most new parents, I only had a narrow perspective of how a new baby was going to change camping. It most certainly does change it a lot, and you've got to adapt, learn and be flexible.

You'll need to slow it down

The first and most obvious change when you camp with a baby is the pace needs to slow down. We've always been fairly active campers, filling our days with fishing, diving, hiking, exploring and 4WDing.

You don't get the luxury of go, go, go with a baby, and things have to slow down. It's not a problem (in fact it's quite relaxing in many ways!), but it's most certainly an adjustment you need to get used to.



Camping will take some getting used to with a little one in tow! Photo: Aaron Schubert.

Be flexible

If you could put your baby to sleep and know the exact time they're going to wake up, when



they'll want their next feed or nappy changed, you'd have a pretty cruisy camping trip. Unfortunately, you won't get that luxury, and this means you need to be flexible. Have a rough idea of what you'd like to do, allow lots of time in between and then just take it as it comes.

If your baby wants a feed and you're doing a long drive, pull up earlier, have the break and then continue on your way. If you aren't flexible with your plans, you'll soon find they don't come to fruition and you'll get frustrated.

Top tips for making camping with a baby easier

1. Bring a dummy with a clip

If you're using a dummy, get one that has a chain and clip. Yep, they might look daft, but picking a dummy up from the dirt and cleaning it gets old real quick (especially when they're supposed to be run under boiling water for the first few months!).



A dummy on a chain will save you a lot of trouble at a dirty campsite. Photo: Aaron Schubert

2. Organise food in advance

When your baby is younger, they will be either breastfed or from a bottle, and things are relatively straightforward. Keep your bottles hygienic with boiled water, and feed them as required.

Once they start solids though, things get a bit interesting. There are plenty of ways you can feed a baby, from the little baby food jars through to pouches and making food on the spot. If you have access to a fridge and freezer, we've found the best way is to pre-make food before the camping trip.

You don't have to make complete meals, but having frozen ice cubes of everything from fruit to vegetables and meat allows you a huge flexibility in preparing food.

Everything is harder and more time-consuming when you're camping, so being able to grab a few cubes of food, warm them up over the stove and feed your baby easily and quickly will make your life easier.



Keep it easy by preparing food for your child before you go away. Photo: Aaron Schubert

3. Clothes and sleeping bags

No matter how much time you spend looking at the weather forecast when you're camping it's often not very accurate. Take clothes for both cool and warm weather, and you'll be laughing.

Beyond this, babies will have mishaps, and you want to have plenty of clothes to change them into. It's not like they take up much room or weight anyway!



A pram is great for putting a baby to sleep in while on a trip. Photo: Aaron Schubert



4. Prams, bouncers, and baby carriers

Space and weight is often a problem when taking a baby camping. You'll need to prioritise what's important, and the best way to do this is with small, regular camping trips to see what works.

For the younger months, a bouncer is priceless for being able to put your baby down while you prepare dinner. A baby carrier is also extremely useful, as it keeps both of your hands free and babies enjoy the comfortable position.

A pram is good for walking on relatively flat and hard ground. The problem with camping though is this rarely exists. However, what they are exceptional for is putting babies to sleep. Walking your baby around for a few minutes with the hood down and they'll have a pretty good sleep in the shade of your campsite.

5. Take a big blanket

You'll do a fair bit of sitting around camp with a baby. Having a big blanket is hugely important for them to lay on, play with toys and stay relatively clean. At Steep Point, we found mesh floors to be fantastic – they allow the sand to fall through and plenty of room for babies to play.



A blanket gives a baby somewhere flat to play on to keep them entertained. Photo: Aaron Schubert

6. Bug nets

You'll want to take a bug/mosquito net for your pram and cot. Bugs can be a right pain for little babies, and knowing they are safely protected from nasty mosquito bites gives you great peace of mind.

7. Cots

Portable cots are a fantastic way to ensure your baby gets a safe sleep each night, and for the day sleeps. We sometimes move ours from inside to outside as a playpen as required.



A cot provides a safe place for your baby to sleep. Photo: Aaron Schubert

It's not always sunshine and rainbows

If you think camping with a baby is always going to be an amazing experience, you've got it coming! Babies require a fair bit of attention, and you can't always make them content. When they are teething, or sick, there will be times you wish you were back at home. I guarantee it. There have been nights where Oliver spent most of it awake and unhappy, and it wasn't easy.

However, daylight eventually rolls around (even though it can take forever!), and you'll have a ball overall. We've made some truly amazing memories camping with Oliver.



It does get easier

Looking back at our camping trips with Oliver, it's great to see the changes. The older they get, the easier camping is, but the challenges change. Go with the flow, enjoy the moment and you'll love it.



The challenges will be different as your baby grows. Photo: Aaron Schubert

Who should you go camping with?

When you eventually do decide to go camping, have a think about whether you want to go alone, or with others. There are pros and cons of both choices.

If you go with others, be aware that unless they've been around a baby they won't have any idea of what's required. Just know that they can easily become impatient with your delays while you stop to feed, change nappies or let your baby stretch.

The benefit of going with others is that they'll often help out with the child. If there are a few kids, one parent can easily look after a few while the others relax, or get food ready. This shares the workload and everyone can have a good time.

On the flip side, going just as a family means you have to do everything, but you can do it in your own time without worrying about holding others back.



Babies do need a bit of patience, so make sure the group is prepared! Photo: Aaron Schubert

Long drives in a car

Babies usually travel pretty well. You'll have to stop every 2 - 3 hours to feed, change nappies and allow them to stretch out, but they are usually pretty content to travel for at least 350 - 500km.

Anything over 600 - 850km a day is a bit of a stretch for babies that don't regularly travel. The more you push your driving days, the grumpier they will get, so find a decent balance that keeps everyone sane.

Toys make a world of difference, as does a tablet to play some videos for babies when they get upset and you're still a little way from the next stop!



A solidly made, cushioned baby seat is a must for car travel. Photo: Aaron Schubert

4WDing

One last thing to consider when camping with a baby is the 4WDing side of things. Babies have very poor neck control and strength for the first few months, and you need to support their heads extremely well when off-road.

A quality baby seat along with cushioning as required is an absolute must, or avoid the bouncy tracks until they can comfortably hold their necks.



Take your baby camping!

You'll have a great time taking your baby camping, as long as you take it slowly and remain flexible. Start with short trips until you're confident, and enjoy each moment as it comes!

Have you taken your baby camping? What have you found that makes life easier?