

To the caravanners stuck off-track without a plug for their tyre puncture, the light sleepers who've woken to their backbone cold and flat against the floor through a deflated mat, and the adventurers scanning shelves, sites, and profiles for potential gear upgrades...

We see you. We hear you.

As heard in Episodes [65](#) and [66](#) of the [Snowys Camping Show](#), your trusted Snowys gear experts Ben and Lauren answer more of your campsite questions in the second and final part of our [Campsite Q&A's](#) blog series.



*Your trusted Snowys gear experts Ben and Lauren answer more of your campsite questions.  
Image: Coleman*

## **Gear and Maintenance**

### **Essentials for Beach Camping, and Tips for Keeping the Sand out of the Swag / Tent?**

To first address sand, Ben and Lauren recommend a mesh ground sheet which, while expensive, is worth the investment. Double-layered, the mesh allows for any sand on top to fall through without resurfacing, ensuring a sand-free environment. These ground sheets were initially invented as portable helipads, designed to be positioned on loose desert surfaces to prevent sand from blowing and flicking upwards as the helicopter lands. OZtrail manufacture a [less expensive model](#), which still adequately serves the same purpose.

Lauren also recommends [EVA foam floor mats](#) at the doorway, and a dustpan and brush to sweep away sand from legs and feet. A Muk Mat – a large, well-finished slab of Astro Turf – works wonders in sandy, beachy environments too. Lauren also suggests washing away the grit and debris in a [tub](#) of water, large enough for someone to stand in. Ultimately, allocating a 'zone' nearby your setup to clean away sand before entering the living area is the suggested approach. Sand in a tent and living space is often only a problem if we allow for it to build up – so control it from the beginning!

Broadly speaking, beach camping also requires some sort of wind management. That said, setting up a wind break in sandy environments can encourage sand to whip upwards in a whirlwind. To control this, Ben and Lauren recommend choosing [tents](#) with fine mesh, and sealing windows and openings during the day to prevent sand from making its way into [bedding](#).

Lastly, adequate [sand pegs](#) and [guy ropes](#) are paramount when beach camping, as well as [trace springs](#) for added stability in windier conditions.

### **Securing Food from Pests?**

...Try literally anything.

In a previous podcast episode, Ben and Lauren detail [how to manage critters and pests](#) at the campsite.

Ultimately, they recommend Tupperware that seals tight. Ben is content with leaving unopened food packets in a tub with the lid sitting on top. On the other hand, opened packets

should be kept in an airtight container to prevent ants from making their way in.

In [Ep53 – Kangaroo Island](#), Lauren describes the relentless possum raids as a result of leaving her doors open at night. Generally though, she manages well by keeping her food in storage draws under the bed and recommends solid plastic tubs. Even for a grain of rice, mice will chew through soft silicon and thin plastics, so be aware of the quality of your storage options too. Again, Ben can advocate for this in [Ep44 – Ben's Half Lap](#), where he resorts to creating a trash contraption mouse trap to catch a critter than chewed its way into his 4WD!

For the unique nomads who hoped for more than just 'use good storage containers' – ever tried suspending your food from a tree using squat straps? Learn more about this in [Ep57](#) and [Ep96](#) on Weird and Wonderful Camping Gear!

## Can you repair a sleeping mat if it leaks at the seams or valves - and if so, how?

Ben and Lauren have recorded a [video](#) that lives on the Snowys YouTube channel, elaborating on material relevant to this question – though not in detail.

Usually, only a leak via a seam or valve is guaranteed under warranty. This is because inconsistencies or fissures at these points are more than likely attributed to manufacturing faults. Ben and Lauren recommend getting in touch with the retailer of your defective sleeping mat to receive a warranty assessment.

While not the prettiest fix, Ben suggests [Stormsure](#) adhesive or seam grip glue to mend your mat DIY-style. Specifically, heavily smother the hole before spreading the glue at length along each side to create a seal. For an even stronger hold, apply the glue to a nylon ripstop-type material (from a place like Spotlight), as a foundation. This works particularly well with longer tears; Ben recommends incorporating fabric or gauze in and amongst the glue by placing a large strip over the top of the gash. When stretched, the fabric separates – but the seam grip covers it.

## Personal camping essentials, upgrades, original gear, current gear, and reasons behind any alterations?

Before we unpack this question – yes, Ben. We get it. You love your [coffee kit bag](#).

As much as this is true, Ben points out that he considers 'personal camping essentials' the items that mostly sit beneath the 'hygiene' and 'medication' umbrella. Lauren rarely washes her hair on a camping trip, instead relying on [Sea to Summit's Wilderness Wash](#) as both soap and body wash. Other essentials include her quality [base layers](#) and [socks](#), sheep skins to drape over her camp chairs for warmth, Crocs (which she insists are the most bomb-proof, ideal footwear to slip on and off around the campsite), a [head torch](#), and a bird book with [binoculars](#) to watch and learn of the pretty birdlife that often surrounds her on her travels.

On the other hand, Ben reveals the gear he's replaced over the years. He now avoids rounder table [lanterns](#) and instead opts for [12V LED strips or hanging lights](#), having decided that they light his table setup more effectively. As well as lighting, Ben has reconsidered how he operates his stove, now opting for [multi-fuel](#) over gas. Unlike large, heavy gas bottles, [multi-](#)

fuel systems are easy to transport and assemble, eliminating the need for hoses and other accessories. While it may take longer, Ben confirms that this is the trade-off he's willing to sacrifice. His cast iron camp oven – whilst a favourite – is also soon to be replaced by one of spun steel for both weight and portability reasons. Lastly, he's removed his awning from his 4WD. This was after deciding it was too tedious to set up and take down on trips where he was driving more frequently than he was pulling over. It now sits in his shed at home... and he doesn't miss it!

*Ben now avoids table lanterns and instead opts for 12V lighting. Image: Hard Korr*

Lauren hears of new and improved gear through the grapevine from as often as monthly to even weekly. For this reason, her setup reflects constant evolution as opposed to a 'before and after' project. An example of this is her transition from a Waeco 45-litre fridge to a myCOOLMAN dual zone 85-litre fridge, after discovering more room in her van to store it. Now in the process of fitting out their camper van, she reflects on why she didn't consider two drawer fridges to stack on top of one another – an arrangement she's keen to progress to when the vehicle renovations are done. The drawer fridges she's interested in are 10 centimetres wider than the current fridge, but are stackable and each capable of running as either a fridge or freezer.

Overall, settling on a sprinter van instead of a 4WD or caravan – as much as Lauren and her partner love it – has its limitations. Lacking features such as 4WD access or adequate clearance can sometimes be more significant issues than not, especially when she plans to go far beyond her backyard and get wild! As a result, Lauren finds herself wondering what she may opt for further down the line, and what differences it will pose regarding setup. Better or worse – at the end of the day, the grass will always seem greener.

## Advice on Tent Security (and Storing Spare Keys)?

The simple answer is: don't keep your keys in your tent.

With his minimalist setup, Ben has spent many camping trips probably appearing as one of the less wealthy campers at the campsite – which likely explains why he's yet to be robbed! In some ways, locking everything away can suggest that you have something to steal.

An effortless solution is to not store valuables inside the tent, where Ben tends to only leave his bedding. While there's always a chance, the likelihood that his sleeping bag will be stolen is relatively low, with fewer repercussions if it was over his wallet or phone.

As for Lauren, theft has never been on her radar. In her experience, there's an unspoken rule in the camping community to not steal from other setups. Ben admits that National Park spaces are relatively theft-free, though some caravan parks in particular are more prone to it. This is often not as malicious as it is purely opportunistic; young, ratbag kids are usually just out for a thrill, looking to snatch up some loose change or something valuable. This is often the case in most areas alike.

Ultimately, the chance of theft at a campground depends on its location. To address any concerns you may have, simply lock your vehicle and avoid leaving loose change or valuables in exposed places. For instance: at night, Ben tends to store his car keys in the small internal tent pocket just above his head.

## Gazebos - Necessary Additional Family Shelter, or Storage Space Waster?

The short answer? It depends on who you are, the storage space you have, and the nature of your desired setup.

For a more detailed response, Ben and Lauren cover relevant information extensively in [Ep7 - Gear You Don't Need for Camping](#) and [Ep59 - Shelters for Rainy Days](#).

## What is Safer: to Keep Your Lithium Battery (Plugged Into Solar Panels and a Fridge) in a 6 x 4 Trailer, a Tent, or on a Blanket on the Ground?

If the battery is lithium, it's generally safe either way.


On the other hand, other lead acid batteries (including sealed) emit hydrogen and generally don't operate well in extreme temperatures, so best kept in a ventilated space. Keeping it by your [fridge](#) shouldn't be a concern in this regard, as the fridge itself also requires adequate aeration due to its compressor.

Albeit, Ben and Lauren aren't experts on batteries. Initially, they suggest using common sense; keeping a hot battery close beside you within a tent isn't ideal! Those who are still unsure should note the warnings in the instruction manual of their respective power station (for instance, the [Companion Lithium Rover](#)), or talk to the experts (e.g. Battery World).

## Items you Thought Would be Useless but Were Useful, and Vice-Versa?

For Ben, he never expected to need a paintbrush on a road trip - but has found it useful in sweeping away dust and debris from his car or tent interior, especially in outback travelling! On the other hand, the few opportunities he's found to use his [awning](#) don't warrant transporting it about as often as he once did. For this reason, it now lives packed away in his shed indefinitely. As well as this, he's allocated his 'Grandpa Fork' to the box of untouched tackle. The tool is simply a fork-like piece that attaches to the end of a stick, designed for toasting marshmallows. While Lauren thinks they're a nifty invention, Ben would rather just use a stick...

For Lauren, her [set of four collapsible tubs](#) are the most unexpectedly delightful addition to her camp clobber. She uses them regularly, and plans to soon purchase another set. As for the presumably great gadgets that have turned out to be sub-par, she keeps a large collection of items alike in her shed which simply haven't suited her setup as much as she initially thought. At this stage, nothing in particular springs to mind - but keep an eye out on the Snowys Camping Show Facebook group while she sets this question aside to marinate...

 Ben finds he doesn't use his awning enough to warrant transporting it around as often as he does. Image: Darche

## **Camping, Caravanning, and 4WDing**

### **Funniest Camp Fail?**

... On par with Ben's 'green ant' story, as told in [Episode 44](#)? Lauren may just match it. There's a place she and her family love to go, the track to which is recommended for 4WDs only - especially when wet. That said, Lauren claims her Sprinter van can tackle more than one may think... but in this instance, these were her famous last words.

Lauren and her family were due to meet with another two groups. Given the substantial room in her vehicle compared to others, she was transporting enough gear for six people - plus more to lessen the load for other families. This added significantly more weight to the van... which didn't bode well on the track after recent rainfall. When they approached the track, it was a slurry of cold, grey mud. By the time they realised it wasn't a good idea to proceed, it was too late to turn back!

Initially, they were hopeful... before the van began to slip and slide perilously in the sludge. Eventually, they were left steadfast in sticky mud, stranded in the middle of the Riverland. The sun had set; it was 9:30pm. Lauren directed the kids to toddle off into the inky blackness with a torch to find help, while she and her partner began the exhaustive process of attempting to nudge the van, stubbornly wedged in the thick mud.

After some time, their friend arrived, and together they discovered the root of the problem; the vehicle's diff was lodged firmly into a large lump of clay. To first alleviate some of the weight, Lauren had the kids carrying camp clobber from the van to the campsite, piece by piece like a row of ants. Next, her partner stripped down to only his shorts and primely positioned himself well underneath the van. The track soon became a mucky mess of footprints as Lauren's family gathered sticks, logs, and debris to dig away at the diff buried deep in the sludge.

Time moved fast - but the van remained resolute. By midnight, Lauren and her crew attempted one last tactic. After removing the wheel, they packed in the space underneath with sticks and bark, inserted the jack, and pushed as hard as they could while one of them took the driver's seat. Eventually, Lauren and her family were a wholesome blend of filthy, relieved - and with a vehicle in motion!

For a camp fail equally as chaotic involving a snake, a floating tent, and a mass of green ants - check out [Ep44 - Ben's Half Lap](#).

### **Practicality of Extended Overland Trips in an SUV/Wagon/Car, Versus the More Built-Out 4WDs/RVs/Camper Vans/Caravans?**

The key consideration that distinguishes one from the other is preparation. Travelling in a 4WD, RV, or camping vehicle requires less given that, in many ways, they already account for half of your setup. With an SUV or smaller vehicle, space is more limited.

As much as it bodes well to first do your research before purchasing a more built-out camper van, don't let your current wagon or car be a roadblock to hitting the road and seeing the

sights. While it may not be wise to travel through the Bungle Bungles in a Sedan, there is still so much to see and do in the great outdoors without a 4WD setup.

## Do Either of you Own a Camper Trailer or a Caravan? What are Your Hacks?

Ben and Lauren do not – but Snowys' resident caravanning expert, Kevin, certainly does! Kevin has frequently featured in episodes of the Snowys Camping Show, such as [Caravan Water Tanks 101](#), [Caravan Refrigeration](#), and [Caravanning the Oodnadatta Track](#). Given how many caravanning hacks there are, Ben and Lauren suggest advising us of any specifics for Kevin to address from his fountain of knowledge.



*Travelling in a 4WD requires less preparation given that, in many ways, they already account for half of your setup! Image: Darche*

## What are the essential spare items that Kev would take for extended caravan travelling, off-road?

We've addressed this in detail in [Episode 68](#) with our caravanning expert, Kev. While the [list](#) extends further, and excludes the various considerations and details depending on the off-road situation – Kev recommends the following as a guide:

- A standard toolkit
- Wheel bearings
- A hub seal
- Irrigation [joiners](#), straights, and elbows etc. for the hoses and connectors beneath the van
- Two spare wheels, as well as plugs for any minor punctures
- Turn buckles and chains to secure broken springs and axels (this becomes complicated, and depends on the situation!)
- A roll of duct tape, insulation tape, and wire
- Replacement fuses to suit those existing in your car or caravan
- So much more!

## Food

### Favourite Meal to Cook When Camping / Meal Ideas?

Ben and Lauren elaborate on relevant information throughout both [Ep2 – Tips for Keeping Camping Food Fresh](#), [Ep13 – Camping on a Budget](#), and [Ep27 – Camp Kitchen Essentials](#). In addition to this specific content, Lauren confirms that her favourite camping food – especially in Winter – is a cooked brekky. For her, nothing beats smoky bacon, eggs, and



charred toast by the campfire coals first thing in the morning!

On the other hand, Ben tends to cook modified versions of the meals he eats at home. For example, when cooking a pasta at the campsite that would usually include fresh tomatoes, he'd add tinned instead.

Another winner for Ben is damper. A doughy, buttery, body-bolstering blend of simple and versatile – damper requires only staple ingredients, elevated even more with bits and pieces of sweet or savoury. By the same token, a jaffle iron is one of Ben's favourite appliances at the campsite. As well as cooking mini dampers, Ben uses his iron by pressing dough into the moulds, filling it with either baked beans, chocolate, or other fillings of choice, and toasting to create little dough pouches for his kids to carry around camp.

In the meantime, she suggests preparing as much food in advance as possible. This includes pre-chopping vegetables, and pre-cooking meals to then vacuum-seal and re-heat in boiling water at the campsite. Storing pre-cooked rice and chopped vegetables such as onion, pumpkin, or carrots in vac-sealed bags also keeps food fresh and maintained.

In Lauren's experience, meal-prepping for only herself and her partner versus her entire family are two very different processes. So again – watch this space for more content specific to this aspect of adventuring!

## What are the recommended meal and preparation ideas for camping, specifically for stove cooking?

For a little while, Lauren has been keen to produce an episode purely centred around campsite meals. In it, she'd aim to cover meal planning, preparation, and cooking for camping.

In a previous episode with Dr. Kate Grarock, 'Food for Adventure', Ben and Lauren kept the content hiking-focused. Episodes alike include 'Food for Hiking', as well as content that explores camp kitchen essentials and how to keep food fresh. Considering this, Lauren has identified the absence of an episode solely dedicated to recipes and meal ideas.

## Fridges

### Use-case tips on Dometic icebox sizes - including packing standard-sized items to assess how they fit, and how to subsequently determine a suitable size?

This has been an angle on iceboxes from which both Ben and Lauren have wanted to approach for a little while. In a previous podcast episode, 'Fridges Vs Iceboxes', they discuss the pros and cons of each and consequently which option is more suited to various setups. For now, our gear gurus confirm that it depends on the purpose for which your icebox is being used; be that solely cooling, or in conjunction with a fridge. Granted, a YouTube video on our channel may be the perfect way to further elaborate on this question and demonstrate visually... so for the last time, watch this space!





*In a previous podcast episode, Ben and Lauren discuss the pros and cons of both iceboxes and fridges. Image: Dometic*

## **OK, now let's be real for a second...**

### **Will Snowys ever open a store in Victoria or Sydney?**

Unfortunately, this isn't on the radar. Ben says that Snowys aim to continue to focus on what they do well, as opposed to expanding and subsequently increasing the prices of products.

That said – never say never!

Nonetheless, this isn't a conversation Lauren and Ben are ultimately involved in, instead determined by a higher level of authority.

### **Do you two each have an Instagram account, so we can see your setups as well?**

The short answer is: not really.

Why? Lauren's answer for Ben is simple: he's 'lame'!

Ben's explanation for his lack of internet sharing is a little more sentimental; when he's on holiday, he unplugs almost entirely. Instead of watching the number of views rise on his Instagram stories, he watches the view of the sunrise instead. While some reach the end of a demanding day outdoors and choose to take the time to share photos with their family via WhatsApp, Ben watches the sun set instead. On his half-lap across the Northern Territory and Western Australia, Ben became so immersed in his surroundings that his wife would update his family for him!

Nonetheless, Ben and Lauren admit that they reference their own setups a lot throughout their Snowys podcasts and content. Those who listen to the Snowys Camping Show podcast have insight into Ben and Lauren's identities in a work-based capacity, with little reference to their personal life.

Lauren has a personal Instagram account that she rarely uses, but has considered creating one that is more relevant to her camping life for public observation. Where she'll continue to ponder the idea, Ben is certain that a personal account will be disappointing for his followers due to the simplicity of his setup!



*More questions? Hit us up! Image: Sea to Summit*

**Got a question for Ben and Lauren? Check out Episodes 23, 30, 48, 65, 66, and 92 of the Snowys Camping Show to hear whether it's already been answered!**