

There's a great many schools of thought around doing laundry when you're on the road and really, it comes down to your personal preference, the specific environment in which you are camping, the weather conditions, and the length of time in which you are away. Here are just a few tips to keep up your sleeve when planning your next trip.

Sometimes the next caravan park is too many days away so a bush washing line does the job.

Wash 'n wear

Sometimes you need to change your camping clothes, there is just no way around it, especially if you are away for longer than a few days. Perhaps they are dirty enough to stand up on their own, or maybe you've pulled into a town and have decided to treat yourself to a meal out? Then there are those occasions when you've booked into a day tour and feel like wearing a fresh outfit. Whatever the reason, washing laundry while camping is, for the most part, a necessary chore.

There are many options for washing on the road and it doesn't matter if you are touring or base camping, driving a 4x4 or travelling by bicycle it is inevitable you will need to wash something on your travels, even if it's just your underwear.

You may not want to wear the same underwear every day, but dark colours are a good choice.

First things first, allow me to debunk any notion in favour of packing extra garments in an attempt to avoid washing. You will gather an increasingly full bag of dirty laundry and it's false to believe this is advantageous for it will serve only to clutter your limited camp storage, even if you're using a laundry bag.

If your clothes aren't obviously soiled or smelly, don't bother washing them. Surprisingly, this saves a lot of time, arguments, and precious real estate on your drying line.

If your travel plans include an overnight stay in a caravan park, this is a good time to cycle through one larger load where you can get both the clothes and bedding done. Take advantage of the extra-wide communal line and hang everything out to sun-dry while you enjoy a cuppa or a swim.

The communal clothesline in a caravan park is great for getting everything dry.

Don't pack lights

Dark colours and patterns are always a good choice for hiding marks and stains, and clothing with a longer wear-life, like denim shorts or jeans, are good to pack. Skirts and dresses can also stretch out the days between washing sessions and are good space-saving garments that can be perfect for the days when a tour is booked or dining out in the new town as previously mentioned.

Don't despair if bore water discolours your clothes and makes your light clothes look a little brown, that's what it does to everyone. Wear it as an outback badge of honour, but remember that darker colours help to disguise that bore water trademark.

Recently, I came across a tip to skip the PJs; the idea is to sleep in what you intend to wear

the next day. I'm not sure that's one for everyone, but it could suit you and although there are many more ideas out there, both odd and practical, most are worth considering and maybe even experimenting with.



A simple wardrobe with small loads washed more often makes managing laundry easier. You can stretch out the days between washing through one simple strategy - wear the same thing!

Generally, no one will notice if you dress in the same clothes day in day out and if they do, it's unlikely they'll care. If you don't believe me look at anyone's holiday snaps and you will see their repeat wardrobe between locations.

Taking a couple of scarves is a tip for women who like a fresh look without the need for suds and water, and for gents... well maybe it's not quite as easy as interchanging a scarf but certainly, a t-shirt over the same shorts will always make things feel fresher if required. Perhaps the trend towards a 'capsule wardrobe' has its roots in camping?



Use a watertight lidded bucket and biodegradable laundry detergent.

Man vs machine

Doing smaller loads more frequently is a better system than putting it off until there's a monumental pile - you will save both time and water!

Washing on the go can be done by hand using a Scrubba Washbag or a watertight bucket as you travel. Simply mix wool wash and water together, pop in your dirties and it will agitate as you drive along. If possible, replace the washing water with clean water during your lunch break, lock on the lid and your cycle will rinse as you drive. When you stop wring them out and hang on the line.

I like to use a wool wash since it's gentler on fabric and you needn't rinse it out as thoroughly as when using other liquids or powders, yet it still gets your clothes clean and smelling fresh. When buying detergent look for biodegradable options, especially for handwashing out in the middle of the bush or by the beach when you are not disposing of the wastewater down a drain. Biodegradable options are just what their label suggests and therefore, they are far less disruptive to the natural environment.



A Scrubba Washbag is an effective way to do the washing while on the road.

Cash and carry

If you're away for an extended time, then campground laundries are a necessary evil. Use these tips to make washing less of a chore.

Before you leave home try to gather a stash of \$1 and \$2 coins for the washing machine and dryer if you're unable to line-dry. There's no guarantee what coin you'll need, so at an average of \$4 per load, I start with \$10 of each and use purse change to top up as I go.

When you arrive, ask at the office what coins are required and only take them. Staff or other campers using the machines usually know how long a load takes, which is useful information, but if you're not sure, why not save yourself a walk back and forth and get the kids to go and check instead?



Be prepared with a stash of gold coins.

Get to the laundry as early as you can, a load is done in around 45 mins so you could have it on the line before breakfast. Otherwise, do it last thing at night and if you're lucky it will be dry after breakfast the following morning and you can fold it away before the day's activities get going. It's a good idea to avoid the peak time of 3 pm - 4 pm as most people are either returning from their day trips or arriving to set up camp and eager to get a load on. I use a ziplock bag to decant a load's worth of powder and a small dash of Napisan to brighten the whites and colours, so I don't have to carry the whole box to the laundry. Always leave a basket or bag on your machine and check the time to be back. If your cycle finishes and you're not there, the next person can pop your load out and get theirs in without delay.



Leave your basket on the machine to make it easier for everyone.

Drying's a breeze

If you are going to use the tumble dryer, be the person who (*finally*) cleans out the lint! The machine won't have to work as hard to dry your clothes, making it more efficient and saving you some gold coins.

If you have space for one, travel with a [folding rack](#), [mini folding clothesline](#) or a folding "[smalls hanger](#)" or [airer](#) and dry your washing that way.

I prefer to line dry, folding and sorting as I go. There is often limited space back at camp, so I use two methods, the first involves hanging out deliberately in per person groups, the second is to unpeg one family member at a time.



One method is to hang washing in per person groups.

I have heard some people use a compartmentalised bag like those for supermarket trolleys to separate clothing and linen, towels etc. It sounds a bit crazy, but useful to get away and see the sights instead of sorting on site.

If I need a makeshift line on washday, I carry a couple of [Sea to Summit Clotheslines](#) which are designed to use without pegs. They are easy to fix onto a couple of awning poles, or using a line of cord tied between two trees is another option.



The goalposts work perfectly in place of trees for stringing up a line of cord.

Down a peg or two

I have saved the best advice till last as it is almost impossible to survive without it. You may think it obvious, but I have seen many washer folks at the point of collapse for failing to take it.

So, the number one tip? Don't forget to pack the pegs!



Never leave home without the pegs.

Let's recap for those who want a quick list on the go...

- Pack essentials only and favour dark colours or patterns



Laundry List - A Guide to Washing Laundry When Camping

- Repeat your wardrobe - you do not need to wear something different every day
- Wash small loads more frequently
- Consider using a wool wash detergent to avoid having to thoroughly rinse
- Use a Scrubba Washbag or sealable bucket to agitate the water and wash clothes while you drive
- Pack rope or a pegless clothesline for drying clothes
- Save your larger loads for the caravan park
- Carry a stash of gold coins for the laundromat machines
- Use a ziplock bag for decanting 1 loads worth of powder
- Leave your washing basket or bag on top of your machine to save everyone time
- Create a hanging and sorting system for yourself
- And once again, remember to pack your pegs!

Have you got any other tips to add to this list?