



Dreaming of going to one of Australia's iconic 4WD destinations? Simpson Desert, Cape York or does the Kimberley get your blood pumping? But what if you can't find someone to go with or perhaps your travelling companions don't have the same time available.

Tag-along tours can be expensive, and their dates and plans can have little flexibility. Maybe you want some time with just the family or explore without having the hassle of looking after other people and their problems. Well with some good planning and the right preparation – why not travel solo?



*Anywhere is possible with the right planning.*

## Relying on others can disappoint

If you've never done a solo trip it can be a little daunting. It may be that you never intended to travel alone but your travelling companions have pulled out the last minute or perhaps they have broken down and have to return home. Will that be the end of the adventure that you may have been planning for a couple of years and invested hundreds of dollars into your setup?

Instead, you can try a couple of small trips to get yourself comfortable with travelling alone and to test that your equipment is up to scratch.



*Remote camping with nobody around is an amazing experience.*

## Benefits of self-sufficiency

Even if travelling with a group sometimes it's a good idea to plan to be self-sufficient and not rely on others. Yes, you might have to carry extra tools and recovery gear, but are you really going to share cooking stoves, showers or fridges? Unless you have the exact same vehicle, everyone will need to carry their own spare parts and equipment. Waiting for your companions every morning if they spend longer packing up can also be frustrating. Travelling solo lets you decide how many kilometres and hours per day you want to drive and when you want to have a rest day. You're able to see the things you are genuinely interested in and skip places that you have been before.



*Tyre repair kit is essential for your trip.*

## Planning your route

Once you've decided on your destination the next step will be planning the route. This is completely up to you and what you're driving/vehicle capabilities are. How far to drive each day and when to stop and explore an area, can be a lot more flexible without having to ask a group's opinion. When travelling with nobody else to cater for you can be spontaneous and really seize a moment when it presents itself.

Along most tracks, there is usually a bypass track around any difficult obstacles and there is no shame in taking the safer route when thousands of kilometres from home. If you are correctly set up, not having other vehicles with you should not make a difference to where



you want to go.

Research your route and have a plan of attack for obstacles where other travellers have been caught out or had any difficulties.



*Research tide times to make driving easier on any beach.*

## Preparing your vehicle

With the reliability of the modern vehicles, a lot of the preparation will depend upon how far you are willing to push the envelope off-road, so long as your vehicle is well kept and maintained. Preparing your vehicle will come down to what 4WDing challenges you will face, how long you are going or how remote you want to travel.

Preparing your vehicle for a solo trip in Australia should not be any different to a trip in a group. We certainly would not be heading to Cape York with a squeaky water pump no matter how many cars are coming with us.

We usually start preparing for a big trip 12 to 24 months in advance, which gives us plenty of time to sort out any issues, plan for what we are going to be up against and to make sure everything is in top condition.

Try to have all repairs and modifications completed 2 to 3 months before departure. Test that everything works and allow time to re-check that everything is tight and sealed correctly. Then you can do any small tweaks if needed.



*Changing an old alternator before heading for Tasmania.*

## Tyres, suspension, and shock absorbers

Make sure the tyres are in good condition and gauge the amount of tread you should have remaining by the time you get home. The less tread the more the tyre is prone to punctures, so if they are getting low it may be a good idea to replace them early. Check the suspension is in good working order and can handle the extra weight.

Also, probably one of the most important items is the shock absorbers. Change out old, damaged or leaking ones because Australian roads, especially corrugated ones, are shock absorber destroyers.

Have your batteries checked and swapped out, and if in doubt, remember there might be nobody around for a jump start.



*New springs and shocks going in before a shakedown trip.*

## Check over everything

We spend one weekend about 5 weeks before the trip to inspect every nut, bolt, electrical connection, hose and belt in, under and around the car and trailer. Use this opportunity to tighten up anything loose adding thread lock, new spring washers or lock nuts, and add zip ties or silicone to keep wires, hoses or other parts from rubbing. Check all fluids, grease, bearings, tyres and batteries as well.



By doing this, you will have enough time to fix anything that may have been missed while preparing in the months leading up to the trip.



*Corrugated roads can destroy components.*

## Spare parts

Carrying too many spare parts can push your vehicle over its GVM. If a part is critical to keep the vehicle going and you're a little suspicious, change it before you go. It's not fun to be changing a thermostat in the heat of the outback only to discover the gasket is wrong!

We carry spare radiator hoses, belts, a fuel filter, 1 set of front and trailer wheel bearings, tyre repair kit and that's about it. We have gasket glue, radiator and fuel tank stop leak with spare engine and power steering oil, brake fluid and some grease.

We carry a small fishing box with spare electrical parts, nuts, bolts and fuses, and we also take a full tool kit for every nut, bolt and screw on our Patrol.



*The tools we carry on any trip.*

## Recovery gear

Now, this is an important issue for solo travellers, what recovery gear to bring will depend on your route and worst-case scenario. Travelling to Cape York will require a lot more gear than a trip to Moreton Island. There is so much gear out on the market to get you out of any situation, the problem is the weight.

Buy quality gear from a reputable company that will not let you down when you need it the most. Regularly check for damage and wear and tear to ensure that your gear is in top condition. Run the winch out every couple of months to keep moisture out and the grease moving, and check the stitching on your recovery straps.



*Along with recovery boards, this is what we carry.*

One of the greatest items on the market for solo travelling are recovery boards. Yes, a winch is fantastic but how do you move backwards if that's the only option during a recovery or there are no trees to hook onto? We carry 2 sets when towing – we would never have attempted the Simpson without them.



*Solo recoveries made easy with the right gear.*

## 10 Must-have items for solo vehicles

- Shovel
- Recovery boards
- Electric winch and hardware (snatch block, shackles, tree trunk and extension strap)
- Tyre deflator and air compressor
- GPS and paper maps



- Satphone
- Appropriate first aid kit
- Tools to suit your vehicle and workshop manual
- Vehicle-specific spare parts/serviceable items
- Tyre repair kit including spare valves, patches, and at least one tube to match wheels.



*Cape York is possible solo, but it's challenging.*

## Overcoming challenges

There is a comradeship among solo travellers in Australia, almost an unspoken rule, if you see another vehicle on the side of the road, you stop and check they're okay. I can't tell you the reassurance I get when stopping for a bite to eat in a remote area and every solo traveller slows down until I give them a big thumbs up letting them know we are okay. With a full recovery and tool kit, getting out of most situations should be no problem with the right know-how. Carry a vehicle-specific workshop manual for the technical stuff and also a scan tool to help find and clear faults that might leave you stranded. Remember to keep calm if a situation arises and look at the problem from a different angle as that might give you the answer.



*Breakdowns can happen but don't panic.*

## Communication on your travels

We take a satphone everywhere we travel now that we have one. With relatively cheap monthly contracts, it's great insurance not only if something goes wrong with our 25-year-old Patrol, but if there's an injury or even if the weather looks bad. Early on in our travels, we would have relied on the kindness of other travellers to send a message to the next town to call someone we know to send parts or help. Thankfully with the right planning, we have never had to, but most travellers are only too willing to help. Let the local police or rangers know you're in remote locations and what your planned route is. We always have a trip itinerary printed out and left with a responsible family member. If we fail to make contact with them within a certain time, they should know what area we are in and can start making a few phone calls to see where we might be.



*Carry a comprehensive first aid kit and communication.*

## Travelling solo - give it a try

You don't have to explore the far reaches of Australia to experience a great solo 4WD trip. It could be to iconic National Parks, remote beaches or picturesque mountain tops. With the right gear and preparation, an adventurous spirit and your wits about you, there aren't many places you cannot get to.





*Travelling solo has strengthened our family bond.*

So, why wait for your friends to get their stuff sorted when you could be sitting back at your dream destination and having a fantastic story to tell?

**Do you intend to embark on a solo expedition in your 4WD?**