



If you've ever thought about doing a solo outback camping adventure, you're certainly not alone.

At any given time, countless numbers of lone campers set off on their individual journeys across this vast country of ours, into the outback and beyond. Although more commonly the domain of the Aussie bloke, women are also stepping out on their own independent adventures.

I personally set off fairly regularly to explore our NSW national parks and reserves to walk and camp in the isolation of the great Australian bush.

What's great about solo camping and bushwalking?

I think it's the solitude and isolation of the places I visit. When with company, there's conversation, movement and sound that distract from the sounds of the bush – the wildlife calls, the wind in the trees, and the crackle of the campfire, for example. It's amazing what you can hear when you're all by yourself out there.



Experiencing the serenity of the bush is one of the best parts of a solo adventure. Photo: Lauraine Deeth

Less noise and solitude

Less noise and movement means I see much more wildlife too, as they're not so scared of just one small female sitting quietly in camp as they might be when there's a crowd moving around the campfire.

You don't need to be any particular type of person to set off on a solo trip. For most of us, the key is in having a sense of adventure, a love of outdoor activities, and an appreciation of the natural environment.



The solitude means you can enjoy the sights and sounds better. Photo: Lauraine Deeth

The independence

There's a certain sense of accomplishment when completing a successful solo trip. I've managed to build my confidence over the years as I became more competent and self-reliant on my trips. I alone decide where I go, what pace, what and when I eat, when and if I have a campfire, which walks I do, and how long I'll be away. There's a lot to be said for autonomy. Of course, I'm not always entirely alone out there, as there are often other campers enjoying the serenity. I find people are more likely to approach for a chat when I'm alone. I suppose in some cases it's a matter of curiosity, but in others, it's because a solo traveller just seems to be more open to a gesture of friendship. I'd certainly say that travelling alone can be quite a sociable experience.



You can kick back and relax whenever you want when you're by yourself. Photo: Lauraine Deeth



What you learn from the experiences

I'm sometimes complimented on being brave for doing these trips alone, but honestly, I'm really not. Recently when finding myself harassed by a wild dog in camp, I am ashamed to say I hid in my car to feel safe.

Now, however, with hindsight, I can plan ahead for any similar encounter armed with a personal alarm, and the resolve to keep my wits about me at all times. Every time I do one of these trips I learn something new and useful to draw on for next time.

Where to go on your solo adventures

National parks are great places to enjoy a solo camping and bushwalking experience. Many have facilities such as walking tracks, and camping areas with BBQ or fireplaces, toilets, and picnic tables to make your trip more comfortable.

Staying in a designated campground offers a measure of comfort and security for the solo female camper, as you will often have other campers around to chat with.



Toorale National Park is a great spot to visit by yourself. Photo: Lauraine Deeth.

Safety gear to bring

On these tracks, light day-walk hiking boots such as the Scarpa Terra that I regularly use are more than sufficient. Snakes are fairly common in the areas where I travel, so I also recommend wearing long pants or a pair of gaiters to reduce the risk of a bite if you're heading into snake territory.

It's always wise to carry a PLB when camping and bushwalking in isolated areas. I use the Spot Satellite Messenger device as it allows you to send a message to your loved ones to let them know you're alright, and they can also track your GPS location online.

It's also important to include a first aid kit with your camping and walking gear. Similarly, always let someone know your travel itinerary, and if your car breaks down – never walk away from it.



If your vehicle breaks down, always stay with it and don't walk away! Photo: Lauraine Deeth

Research, planning, and preparation

Research your area of interest thoroughly with a Google search. The NPWS site is full of useful information on facilities and attractions, as well as local alerts. A phone call to the relevant park office will provide you with the most up to date road condition information. Satellite navigation equipment can be a useful investment for use in areas where no phone signal is available. Plan your trip around this information and prepare your vehicle by making sure it's well maintained. Keep an eye on the weather forecast before your intended visit as well as many outback roads are unsealed and impassable when wet.

Plan and prepare the food you'll need to be self-sufficient for the duration of your stay in the national park. Also, take a couple of extra days supply in case you become stranded.



Research each area before you visit so you can stay safe. Photo: Lauraine Deeth

Gear for a solo trip

The gear you'll need for solo camping in outback parks is pretty much what you'd take on any other camping trip. When camping alone, however, keep in mind that you're responsible for every task in the campsite. That often means that setting up and packing away can take up a lot of your time.

To speed up and simplify these tasks, I sometimes use bushwalking gear. I have recently bought the free-standing Companion Pro Hiker 2 tent which is great to use for car camping. It's easy and fast to set up by myself, and able to be used without the need to peg it down. This last point is important in areas of rock hard earth where tent pegs are notoriously difficult to use. As a solo female camper, making sure you can safely lift large heavy items such as a wood box or water container is important. Two smaller containers are always better than one large heavy one.



A freestanding hiking tent is easier to pitch and pack up for one person. Photo: Lauraine Deeth

Lastly - what else do you need for a solo adventure?

Finally, attitude can often play a significant role in whether you make the most of your solo camping experience.

Possessing a degree of spontaneity and flexibility when dealing with the unforeseen on your trip can make the difference between having a problem, or an opportunity for a new idea. Don't make the mistake of having your plans so rigid that you start feeling like you're conducting a military endurance test.

Take your time, have a plan B when things don't go quite according to plan A, and remember to take the time to relax and enjoy yourself. This is your tour of independence, so make it a fantastic and exciting adventure!

What are your tips for a solo adventure in the outback?