

## HOW TO PACK YOUR 4WD

### **Trim the load to a bare minimum**

Packing a 4WD for a big trip is quite an art and one that definitely improves with practice. However the vital thing to remember is to trim the load to a bare minimum before you begin packing. Don't fall into the trap of throwing more things in 'in case' you need them just because there's room left over.

The lighter the load, the less the strain on the vehicle. That means better fuel economy, less chance of breakdowns, less chance of flat tyres and tyre wear. Less load also means less time spent packing and unpacking every day. And if you intend travelling up beaches, across deserts or through forests, every kilogram you save reduces your chances of getting bogged. Remember, most vehicle recovery operations in the bush start by unpacking the vehicle to lighten the load!

### **Essential items**

So sensible packing starts with the essential items like vehicle spares, tools and recovery equipment. After that, consider your navigational aids - good maps (packed in water proof bags or containers), a compass, GPS and EPIRB beacon if they are required. For any trip within Australia, water is an essential. However don't rely on one container or on-board water tank, it's too easy for a tank to be punctured or water contaminated. Each person should carry a good sized water bottle close at hand and be responsible for filling it every chance they get in addition to the containers you've packed in the back.

Spare fuel and LPG gas bottles should never be carried within the vehicle itself due to the risks of explosion and fire. They are best mounted on a purpose-built rack on the back of the vehicle.

### **Most people carry far more camping equipment than they really need.**

Analyse your gear and take just one of everything. Essentials should include plenty of lighters and fire starters - a good fire can make any camp comfortable - a couple of decent sized tarps or plastic sheets and some spare lengths of rope. Something to sit on and shade or protection from the rain is invaluable when you're travelling.

Carry your sleeping bags and the few clothes you're taking, (remembering that laundromats are more popular than banks in the country these days) in soft bags. They can double as pillows and soft packing during the day and squeezed into awkward spaces.

Always carry some reserves of food and it's certainly worth packing essential condiments and basics like tea, coffee and sugar in plastic containers before you leave. However, while it might cost a little more to shop for your groceries locally in small country towns, it's definitely recommended. This is your chance to soak up the local atmosphere, ask questions about your intended route and take advantage of locally grown vegetables and fruit. Liquids should be packed inside containers that won't leak in the event of a breakage and care should be taken with anything in glass, wrapping jars in tea towels or wedging them between the toilet rolls.

When packing an off-road vehicle, it's essential to keep the centre of gravity as low and as close to the axles as possible. That means putting all the heavy stuff - recovery gear, tools and spares - in first, graduating to the lighter equipment on the top. If you're using a roof rack, use it for the lightest stuff and only sparingly. Cargo barriers in station wagon style vehicles are recommended. Off-road travel means plenty of bumps and odd angles so at the very least take advantage of the tie down hooks and use an elastic trailer net or some rope to secure your load.

The last thing you should pack is a comprehensive first aid kit, a fire-extinguisher, suntan lotion, a hat and some insect repellent. Know where those things are so you can find them quickly and easily.

## **Vehicle Packing checklist**

### **Vehicle spares:**

- fan/alternator belts
- radiator hoses
- spark plugs (petrols)
- fuel filter and engine oil and gear oil
- brake/clutch fluid and power steering oil
- two spare wheels (for outback/remote travel)

### **Handy spares:**

- tie wire, electrical (zip) ties and gaffer tape
- variety of spare hose clamps
- insulation tape      spool of insulated electrical wire
- strip of wiring connectors
- some 12 gauge welding rods
- tubeless tyre repair kit (if applicable) and tyre valves

### **Vehicle tools:**

- spanner and socket set to suit your vehicle
- shifting spanners, vice grip pliers
- screwdrivers and allen keys
- 12 volt check light    trouble light (or torch)
- hammer and chisel
- battery jumper leads, tyre gauge

### **Basic recovery equipment:**

- vehicle's jack and wheel spanner
- long throw jack or air bag jack
- 2 x snatch straps, 4 x shackles
- hand winch, leather gloves
- shovel, axe
- 12 volt compressor or tyre pump
- flat wooden plank or similar for jacking platform

### **Camping equipment:**

- tent, swag, groundsheet
- plastic tarps and sleeping bags
- gas stove and/or BBQ plate
- cooking equipment (including a billy)
- firelighting gear
- tin/plastic mugs and plates
- camp stools or seats
- esky or car fridge
- bucket and large plastic bowl
- plastic clip lid containers
- cutting board and BBQ tools
- detergent and laundry powder

**Personal Items:**

- clothes (including rain gear and a good coat)
- soap
- towels
- toothpaste and brush
- hair brush
- any medications you might need
- sun screen
- hat and sun glasses
- camera and film
- identification, driver's licence, cash and bank cards

**Other essentials:**

- water in several containers
- emergency food rations
- spare fuel
- spare vehicle keys insect repellent
- comprehensive first aid kit
- a sense of fun and adventure.