

QuickSmarts

Regional Driving



See the outback safely

Prepare. Prepare. Prepare.

Got it? Before you leave, you'll need a rock-solid plan.

Start with working out where you want to go and grab a good map – you can't always bank on phone service. Also, work out exactly how long it will take to arrive at your destination and make sure you factor in a 15-minute break every two hours. Without a rest, you're putting your life in danger.

Your plan at a glance:

When planning your journey think about:

- meal and drink breaks
- rest stops
- scenic detours
- refuelling—it can be a long way between petrol stations in the outback
- toilet stops
- overnight accommodation.

It's a good idea to have your vehicle serviced before your jet off and think about alternate routes in case you come across roads you can't pass.

A road trip is a great way to experience the wonder of the outback – its wide-open spaces, wildlife and quaint townships. But before you hit the road, there's a few things you should know. Read on to make sure you're ready for anything. Look out, roo!

Pack your car for every eventuality

Anything can happen outback. You may be a long way from the nearest town so it's important to be prepared.

It's recommended you pack:

- a first aid kit
- water and non-perishable food, in case of delays or breakdown
- a fire extinguisher
- a tool kit (jack, winder, wheel brace, spanners, screwdrivers, spare fan belt, hoses and fuses)
- two spare wheels (one additional to the standard spare provided with your vehicle)
- a tow rope
- a shovel (in case you get bogged)
- toilet paper
- maps covering the whole of your route
- a compass or global positioning system (GPS)
- a tarpaulin
- a cooler
- rubbish bags
- communication equipment; remember your mobile phone may not work in the outback.

Just before you leave

- Check tyres, lights, windscreen wipers and washer fluid, battery, coolant and hoses, oil and fuel
- Get a good night's sleep before you hit the road and avoid alcohol, that way you will be fresh and alert for the morning's drive
- If you're heading into a remote area, give friends, neighbours or the police the details of your route
- Charge your mobile phone. It should work in regional centres but may not work in areas in-between
- Pack plenty of toys and games if you're taking the kids along
- Check the weather along your route and delay your trip if heavy rain is forecast.

Check the road conditions for your route before you leave using QLDTraffic. This is an official source of traffic and travel information from the Queensland Government. You can download the free QLDTraffic app, visit the website www.qldtraffic.qld.gov.au or phone 13 19 40. QLDTraffic provides the latest information about road closures, roadworks, congestion, hazards and crashes.

Fatigue

Long distances and stretches of unchanging outback landscape can make a driver very tired. Stop for a break if you experience:

- sore or heavy eyes
- dim or fuzzy vision
- daydreaming or hallucinations
- tiredness, stiffness or cramps
- aches and pains
- delayed reactions
- wandering across the road.

Overtaking heavy vehicles and road trains

Road trains hauling fuel and livestock are common on outback roads. Road trains comprise a large truck pulling up to three trailers. Australia has the longest and heaviest road-legal road trains in the world weighing up to 200 tonnes and stretching over 50 metres in length.

Road trains are restricted to 90km/h in Queensland, so you may want to overtake them. Just make sure you have enough time – 50 metres, remember! And only overtake when the road markings indicate you can.

Before you overtake a long vehicle or road train:

- allow yourself enough time to overtake
- stay back at the recommended following distance (remember, heavy vehicles need longer to stop, so it's a good idea to increase your following distance around heavy vehicles) without crossing the centre line when preparing to overtake
- look out for soft shoulders, guide posts and wildlife as you overtake
- when it's safe to overtake, indicate, accelerate and overtake quickly without exceeding the speed limit. Changing down a gear may give you enough engine power to get past
- maintain your speed so the road train does not have to brake after you overtake
- never overtake a turning vehicle.

NEVER try and overtake a truck or road train in dusty conditions – you won't be able to see what's ahead. If you come up behind a slow-moving long vehicle hang back out of the dust, be patient or stop and take an early break.

If you come across a truck or road train going in the opposite direction that's raising dust, slow down, get off the road, stop and wait until its gone past.

Outback RoadSmarts

Driving on unsealed roads

Many outback roads aren't sealed with bitumen – you'll drive on surfaces comprising of gravel, sand or dirt. Driving on unsealed roads can be challenging – your tyres can lose traction, while loose dirt and gravel can be thrown up by other vehicles. When driving on unsealed roads slow down and increase the distance between you and other vehicles.

Weather can also affect driving conditions on unsealed roads. Dry weather can create dusty conditions and limit your visibility, while wet weather can make roads muddy, slippery and boggy.

Never drive through floodwater

If you come across a road closed due to flooding, do not attempt to enter – you'll get fined and you're also putting your life in danger. More than half of flood-related deaths are a result of people driving through floodwater. Even if it looks calm, no one can predict what floodwater will do or what's happened to the road underneath. Any amount of swift flowing water can sweep away your car, no matter what type of vehicle you drive. Remember, if it's flooded, forget it.

Be particularly careful in wet weather

If the roads are wet, be careful of slippery conditions and unstable road edges.

If you have to drive in wet weather:

- keep your windscreen and lights clean
- keep headlights on low beam. In foggy conditions, it is easier to see the low beam
- use fog lights if it is difficult to see other vehicles or objects
- use your air-conditioner or demister to keep the windscreen clear
- slow down
- double your following distance.

If the weather is really bad pull over, have a rest and enjoy the hospitality of an outback town until the bad weather passes.

Driving in dusty conditions

Dusty conditions severely limit your visibility, to be safe:

- don't try and overtake other vehicles
- pull over, stop and wait for the visibility to improve
- turn on your lights so other vehicles can see you
- switch your aircon to recirculate so you don't get dust in the cabin.

Watch out for animals

The outback is full of fascinating animals such as kangaroos, emus and camels, as well as free roaming stock from sheep and cattle stations. Wildlife—particularly kangaroos—are more active at dawn and dusk. If you encounter an animal on the road, don't swerve to avoid it as this can cause you to roll your vehicle. Gently brake and slow down and use your horn to alert the animal.

Cattle and sheep might stand in the middle of the road to watch you approach. If they do, stop and be patient, use your horn and the animal will soon move off the road.

Avoid driving at sunrise and sunset

Many of Queensland's outback roads have an east-west orientation. When the sun is low in the sky, clear vision is particularly difficult, meaning you might not see oncoming vehicles or animals. Avoid driving before 7am and between 4pm and 5pm.

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