

Travelling in Remote Areas >

The Australian Outback offers spectacular scenery and the chance for great adventure. But it is important to be ready for the rigours of travelling in isolated areas.

Unfortunately, up to a quarter of the emergency medical evacuations that the RFDS carries out each year are the result of city travellers who get into trouble on their Outback adventure.

Preparation

- > get good quality maps and plan your route
- > be careful of how much you pack on your roof rack; a heavy load on top increases the chances of a roll-over
- > store water in small containers instead of one large tank; check all water containers for leaks; if you're unused to the Outback, you may need one litre of water every hour; if active (eg walking, climbing etc) you will need to consume additional water at regular intervals (remember: don't wait to feel thirsty before taking a drink!); most towns have water but, at some places, you may not be able to get drinking water; we recommend that in very hot conditions you carry 10 litres of water per person per day; don't rely on waterholes, dams, bores, mills, tanks or troughs; soap or detergents should not be used in any natural water course or stock watering point
- > carry enough food for each person for two days
- > bring matches or a lighter
- > pack a fire extinguisher
- > carry an HF radio compatible with the RFDS (mobile phones and CB radios will not work in remote areas); you can buy an HF radio from most two way communication centres
- > get a summary of your medical history and bring all medication and repeat scripts with you
- > do a first aid course and pack a first aid kit
- > take a hat, sunscreen and insect repellent
- > wear clothing suitable for the climate; wear good walking shoes; take warmer clothes for the evenings
- > don't travel in the hottest part of the year
- > overseas visitors are encouraged to take out adequate travel insurance when travelling in Outback Australia

General information for Outback travellers

- > Aboriginal land: if you are planning to travel through Aboriginal land (other than on designated highways), you must obtain a permit; tour leaders will organise permits for their tours; it is the right of Traditional Owners to refuse entry permits
- > Sacred Sites: there are a number of places or objects that hold special significance for Aboriginal people; visitors are welcome but respect must be shown for these sites; some are protected by law and there are penalties for trespassing; permit applications and general enquiries must be directed in writing to the relevant Land Council in each State
- > truck parking bays: never park in truck parking bays which are provided exclusively for the use of trucks and road trains; these rigs need room to manoeuvre their trailers and often need to run noisy refrigeration units
- > rest areas are provided for regular fatigue breaks and there are camping and caravan park facilities for overnight stops
- > pets: dogs and cats cannot be taken into National Parks

Exploring on foot

Before you set out anywhere, get local advice about conditions and what you should know about where you intend to go. Advise people of your intended trip, where you will be going, when you'll be leaving, when you think you'll be back, so if you're not back, they can sound the alarm. Remember to:

- > carry ample food and water
- > take notice of signs at ALL times
- > follow the advice of tour guides and rangers
- > always wear a hat, sunglasses, sunscreen and a reliable insect repellent
- > wear good walking shoes and be prepared for extremes of temperature
- > carry a detailed map, compass, whistle and lighter
- > if it's hot, take a little salt or a salt tablet

In an emergency

If well planned, your trip should go smoothly and safely, but if you get into difficulty, there are a few key things to remember:

- > if your car breaks down or you become lost, never leave your vehicle; use it for shade and shelter and remember it is easier to locate a missing vehicle than a missing person in the vast Australian Outback

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- > if you become lost while out walking, sit down and study your maps; determine where you came from and slowly take that route back; if you can't find the way back, move to higher ground
- > distribute food and water sparingly
- > if you hear rescuers, signal with three torch flashes and with your whistle
- > light a small smoky fire with green leaves during the day and a small bright fire with dry materials at night
- > be prepared to wait

Watch for the signs of exposure:

- > **heat exposure** - an affected person becomes pale, clammy and breathes rapidly and should be sponged with cool water: drink water with a little salt dissolved in it and rest in the shade
- > **exposure to cold** – an affected person may become slow, irritable, develop cramps, shiver, stumble and have blurred vision; attempt to find shelter from wind and rain, wrap up as warm as possible, share a sleeping bag and drink warm fluids

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