

Safety information – desert and outback

A journey to the South Australian desert can be the trip of a lifetime with so much awe-inspiring landscape to explore. It's also one of the harshest and least hospitable areas to cross. Make sure you're well prepared for your trip and stay safe with these tips:

Note the annual Simpson Desert Closure

Due to extreme heat, the Simpson Desert is closed annually from 1 December - 15 March. Temperatures hit between 40 and 50 degrees celsius.

Let people know before you go

The outback can be a dangerous place if you break down or get lost. Tell someone your travel plans and keep in regular contact. It's a good idea to travel with other vehicles to reduce the need for expensive outside help if you have an accident or breakdown. Get prior permission from landholders before crossing private or Aboriginal Lands.

Check road conditions and closures

Weather conditions vary seasonally in the outback. [Check forecasts and conditions online](#) or by phoning 1300 361 033. You can also call the Desert Parks hotline on 1800 361 033.

Be an outback-wise driver

The safest way to cross the desert is in a well equipped 4WD vehicle with high ground clearance. Ensure your vehicle is well maintained, serviced and roadworthy and inspect it every morning before you hit the track. Check tyre pressure, fluid levels and underneath for leaks or cable damage. Remove any dry vegetation that could catch fire.

Always keep a safe distance from the vehicle travelling in front of you. Stick to designated public access tracks, parking areas and campgrounds and

avoid driving on salt lakes and other sensitive terrain. If dust limits your visibility then pull over. Never overtake through a dust cloud as there may be another vehicle coming towards you.

Take the right gear

The following items are recommended as a minimum, but you should find out about the places you are visiting so that you can be best prepared:

- water – a minimum of 6 litres per person per day plus a 3-4 day reserve supply
- food – enough for the trip plus a 3-4 day reserve supply
- fuel – calculate distances between refuelling points. Remember frequent low gear and 4WD work uses more fuel so it's a good idea to double your estimated consumption
- spare tyres – at least two tyres and tubes
- tools – long-handled spade, tyre levers and pressure gauge, air compressors, spanners, multigrips, screwdrivers, pliers, hammer, electrical tape, WD40, spare fan belt, radiator hoses, coolant, engine and transmission oil, spark plugs, fuses, spare fuel filter, fence wire and plastic tubing
- recovery equipment – make sure you're well stocked with maps, compass, GPS, jack and plate, wheel brace, tyre levers, tube mending kit, two ropes, leather gloves, winch and sling, tree protector, D shackles, snatch block and straps, jumper leads and booster cables
- first aid kit



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- sun protection – sunscreen, hat, sunglasses and long sleeve loose shirts to help avoid sunburn, heat stress and heat stroke
- communication equipment – Personal Locator Beacon or EPIRB which can be activated in life-threatening situations, satellite phone or HF radio. Vehicles in a convoy may like to use UHF radio to communicate.
- if you hear a nearby plane or vehicle, attract searchers by flashing a mirror in the sun or burning firewood with some green vegetation to produce a dark smoke.

Further information

Before embarking on your outback adventure you may be required to purchase a Desert Parks Pass.

For further safety information refer to the [Remote Area Travel brochure](#) and the [Desert Parks Bulletin](#).

Take care at creek crossings

Water levels can rise unexpectedly with heavy rains falling upstream.

Watch out for wildlife

The wildlife in our parks is pretty incredible. Enjoy observing native animals but don't try to interact with them or feed them as this can affect their natural behaviour. This is particularly important for dingoes in the outback.

If 'humanised', animals may not be able to survive in the wild. They can also become aggressive towards parks visitors for food.

Wildlife and stock are most often on roads at sunrise and sunset. Birds of prey sometimes feed on road kill. Slow down when passing these birds as they take some time to get airborne.

Be a safe and savvy camper

Avoid camping in creek beds or watercourses in case of flash flooding, and avoid setting up camp under trees that may drop limbs.

If your vehicle breaks down or is immovable

- do not leave your vehicle
- stay calm
- radio or phone for help
- wait for assistance to arrive
- ration food and water
- conserve energy and stay in shade

