

# Planning and Preparing for Extended 4WD Trips

*The following has been learnt through experience over many years and many extended remote 4WD trips.*

## TRIP "LAWS":

1. **Rule 1:** *You have got to have fun.* **Rule 2:** *If you are not having fun, refer to Rule 1.*
2. Prepare for the worst, hope for the best, and take what comes!!
3. Px7: Proper Planning and Preparation Prevents P\*\*\* Poor Performance.
4. The longer and more remote the trip, the more planning and preparation is required.
5. The more vehicles in the group, the slower everything is and the harder it is to find camp sites big enough.
6. Nothing is ever the same. Different scenery, different ecosystems etc. Conditions constantly change.

There are a number of phases to a trip.

## TRIP PLANNING - ANTICIPATION:

- Do your homework!
- Get together a number of times for joint planning. Consider the needs of all men, women and children.
- Where do you wish to go?
- What is there to see?
- How much time do you have? Is it enough? Don't rush!
- Think about timing e.g. School holidays, major events, expected weather conditions.
- What route do you want to take?
- What are the roads/tracks like? Dust, bulldust, corrugations, sand, rock, overgrown tracks? What are likely travel speeds?
- How many vehicles will there be? The ideal is 3 – 4 for long trips.
- Make sure people are compatible. Be flexible and be aware of conflicts.
- Do you have the right balance of skills e.g. first aid, mechanical, vehicle recovery, tyre repair etc?
- Do you need to refresh your skills e.g. first aid?
- Have a Plan B and C in the event Plan A goes pear shaped.
- Do you need permits for travel and/or camping? Do you have to book ahead?
- How much water, fuel and food do you need to carry?
- Where can you resupply food, good water and fuel?
- Will there be quarantine restrictions on fruit, vegetables, honey etc?
- Where can you wash clothes?
- Will meals be shared or individual?
- How much money will you need? Fuel is the major cost (Up to \$3.30 c/L).
- Will your vehicle insurance cover you e.g. accident, breakdown, recovery?
- How will decisions be made on the trip? Tag-along or shared responsibility?
- What maps, guide books, entertainment do you need?

## TRIP PREPARATION:

### *Vehicle & camper*

- Do a full vehicle and trailer service before you go (filters, oils, fluids, bearings etc).
- Ensure you have good tyres (at least half tread) suitable for the trip.
- Carry spares – especially filters, drive belts, maybe 2 spare tyres, fuses etc. (See separate list).
- Carry extra reserves of fuel, water and food.
- Recovery gear – don't overdo it. Take what is essential.
- Carry a sand flag if going to the deserts.
- Carry a vehicle computer scan tool and know how to use it.

### **Equipment and packing**

- Do not overload! Minimise weight (two uses for each item?). Remove seats which are not needed.
- Have 3 packing lists: **1. Essential. 2. Important but not essential. 3. Nice to have if there is room.**
- Share equipment and tools between vehicles (care if group splits up)
- Check first aid kits, defibrillator (hire one?), EpiPen? (See recommended contents)
- Pack so that regularly used items are accessible (if possible, move only one item to get at another).
- Pack heavy items low down and between axles.
- Take a table and comfortable (light) chair etc.
- How are you going to carry food, fuel, water, firewood?
- Reduce food packaging which takes up space.
- Make sure all equipment works. Check each other's vehicles.

### **People**

- Take clothing (layers) for expected weather (most people take too much).
- Sleeping arrangements? Camper? Tent? Swag? Is bedding comfortable, warm and easy to clean?
- Carry fly veils!!
- What will be the shower and toilet arrangements when bush camping?
- Do up a food plan of meals to guide purchases.
- Practice skills before you go (e.g. tyre repair, first aid, cooking).
- Have a health and dental checkup.

### **DURING THE TRIP:**

- Do not rush. Camp early (2-3 hours before dark). Enjoy the trip. Take every opportunity to stop and look at things. Have rest days. Tired people make mistakes and get cranky.
- Travel slow to minimise stress on vehicles, tyres, equipment and people.
- Take care with navigation (GPS, maps etc).
- We recommend that you change convoy order each day and share the lead.
- Carry all necessary permits and licences. You may get checked.
- Keep an eye on the weather and forecasts (AM radio? Satphone? HF radio?).
- Are the tracks open?
- Ensure good communications: within convoy (UHF), home, emergencies (Satphone? HF radio?).
- Are fires allowed? Can you collect firewood? Collect firewood well away from camp sites.
- Ensure good hygiene – especially toilet. Bury toilet waste!!
- Burn rubbish and carry it out!! Do NOT leave rubbish in fire places!
- Keep fires small and cheerful. Use existing fire places. Extinguish with water (e.g. washing water).
- Beware of idiots who have no idea of 4WD or camping etiquette.
- Consider others when driving and camping (show good etiquette).
- Expect the unexpected (vehicle, health, weather).
- Replenish fuel and drinking water at every opportunity. Check water quality.
- Respect others. No photos in indigenous communities or sensitive areas.
- Dingos can be a problem in some areas (secure food and rubbish).
- Be friendly and spend money in communities.
- Observe alcohol restrictions.
- Keep cooking and camping simple. Allow time to relax.
- When making camp, consider smoke, sun direction, wind, dust, animals, shade, level ground etc.
- Tread Lightly!! Care for the environment so others can enjoy the experience – besides you may want to return too. Take nothing but photographs and leave nothing but footprints.

**AFTER THE TRIP:**

- Do a full service of your vehicle, camper and equipment.
- Reminisce about the good times.
- Make notes for preparing for the next trip. Update your camp list.

**RESOURCES:**

- Experienced travellers
- Internet
  - Road houses. NPWS. Social media etc.
- Club web site *Hints and Tips*:
  - Planning and preparing for extended 4WD trips
  - JK's camping list
  - What to take on a 4WD Trip
  - Food for long trips
  - Recommended first aid kit
- Club equipment
  - Sand flags for hire
  - Hand winch

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