



Travelling on outback roads with a caravan can be fraught with problems. But with a bit of preparation, you can have an enjoyable worry free trip

Generally, caravanners stick to sealed roads as rough outback roads can take their toll on the average caravan. With a bit of extra care, some simple preparation, and knowledge of your vans limitations, you can take a conventional caravan off the blacktop and into the great Australian Outback.

A Smaller Van is a Better Tourer

Because of their size and lack of manoeuvrability, large vans can create unwanted hassles. Poor ground clearance and overhang both in front and behind the axels often results in the van scraping over washouts or gutters, while the extra weight causes problems on soft or slippery surfaces.

A Standard 2WD Car Won't Cut It...

Lack of ground clearance and traction means they will struggle when things get rough. A four-wheel drive, even an SUV type vehicle offers far more reliability.

Remember the tow vehicle must always have the appropriate ratings to tow your van, no matter what roads you are on. Plan for increased fuel consumption, and get both your vehicle and caravan serviced before you go.

Slow Down - Speed and Rough Roads Don't Mix!

Trying to skip over corrugations may work in your vehicle but not for the caravan.

A caravan suspension is different to your vehicles, and it will handle bumps differently. There is a risk of the van bouncing and skating sideways, especially on corners. Even on good dirt roads I rarely travel over 80kph as the risk of losing control is far greater on loose surfaces regardless of your vehicle type.



Some caravans just aren't made for outback roads.

Invest in Good Tyres

(and a second spare for your van and vehicle)

Check with your tyre dealer if an all-terrain tyre can be fitted to your van. These tyres tend to be taller, give extra ground clearance and offer better sidewall protection. Make sure it fits in the wheel arch and that your van can legally accept the larger size. Lowering the tyre pressure to suit the conditions will give a better ride.

Take a good jack that suits your van, and a base plate for use on soft ground. Some vans require the jack to be located under the chassis rather than the axle, meaning the jack has to lift the van higher to get the wheel off the ground.

There Will be a Risk of Flying Stones...

Invest in a good set of mud flaps on your vehicle and an appropriate stone guard on the caravan, get some good advice on this, as the wrong stone guard can cause stones to ricochet back into your vehicle.

Look under your van for any cables or plumbing that need to be secured well up out of the way from flying stones or sticks. Fit a stone guard to the water tank making sure it protects the front, sides and wraps around the bottom of the tank.



Pack Carefully

Make sure nothing rattles about, check that all the catches on cupboards, drawers, doors and windows are in working order. Heavier items like the microwave and onboard batteries need to be held firmly in place.

If you have a TV mounted on the wall, take it off and put it somewhere safe. Keep the weight down to a minimum. Only take things that you know you will need, not just because you can fit them in.

None of these preparations will turn your standard caravan into an off-roader, so at some stage, you may have to decide if the road is getting too rough and you have to turn back. There are some vans that are simply not suitable for outback roads.

Take your time, enjoy the outback and you will have a great holiday.

Do you have any tips for fellow travellers planning on hitting the dirt for their next touring holiday?