



Touring Australia in a 4WD is addictive, to say the least. The red dirt of the Outback and the beaches with crystal blue water and rugged coast get under your skin. It doesn't usually take more than a few months before the urge to jump into your vehicle and hit the open road becomes too much to ignore.

Of course, like with everything in life, touring with a 4WD isn't always sunshine and rainbows and the more prepared you are with the right setup, the more enjoyable your time away will be.



You would have a hard time touring in a brand new stock 4WD.

We've done enough travel and open road exploring throughout Australia, and have encountered our fair share of challenges to know what works and what doesn't. Here are my top 10 most useful 4WD modifications for making touring life a lot more pleasant.



With a few modifications, your vehicle will be ready for a longer trip.

1. Quick and easy table

I can already hear you saying, what, a table?! I kid you not, a good quality table that is fast to setup and easy to use will be your best friend when travelling. We have a piece of ply wood that simply folds down when you open the canopy door on our 4WD, and that tiny, inexpensive piece of timber is one of our most appreciated bit of kit.



Lunch on the drop-down table.

We use it for all sorts of things - preparing food, storing camera gear and phones (whilst stopped!), defrosting meat, changing kid's clothes, plus cooking on and putting drinks out of reach from the young ones. If you have a table that is heavy, big, awkward, or time consuming to set up, pass it on to someone else and get yourself one that's more user friendly.

You want something light, easy to move around and quick to set up. Often something that clips into your vehicle or swings out from your vehicle is the best solution. Lots of people are making 'tables' under their fridge slides that extend with a post for additional support, and this is gold.



Our drop down-table which is very loved.

2. Fridge

Sure, you can tour without a fridge, but in this day and age if you can factor one into your budget, they are well worth having on-board. A fridge really is a game changer for touring. You can use it to keep your drinks chilled, extend the life of fruits and vegetables, as well as store your dairy and meat without worrying about it going off and making you sick.

Many these days are able to be split as fridge freezers, or have dual compartments, which makes them even more useful. Of course, get the size and features right for the way you wish to use it, and you'll be onto a big winner.

We run a 55L Evakool Fridge/Freezer that we vary between fridge only, or split fridge freezer



depending on the length of our trip, and what we want to eat.



Our 55L Evakool fridge freezer.

3. No touch electrical system

There are some pretty insane electrical systems out there today. If you want to run a coffee machine and microwave, you can do so, providing your budget extends into lithium batteries and a decent inverter.

This is a step beyond what most people require, but if you are touring regularly what you really want is an electrical system that takes care of itself with zero intervention. By this, I mean that it is designed to run the appliances that you want without ever running low on battery power, and will charge itself without you having to set up panels, chase the sun or take your vehicle for a drive just to top up the batteries.



A simple electrical system is gold.

We use a traditional deep cycle Bosch battery, rated at 150 amp hours. This runs our fridge, lights, diesel heater for the camper trailer and a small 350 watt inverter. The inverter is used for charging the laptop, camera and drone batteries, Ryobi 18V batteries and torch battery chargers. It is fed by a permanently mounted 200W solar panel that runs through a Projecta DCDC battery charger, and the system works without me ever needing to do a thing, even in cloudy weather.

Portable panels and solar blankets are popular, but in my opinion if you can fix a panel and never have to touch anything, it's the ultimate setup.



Running water at the back of our Dmax.

4. Running water

If you've done a lot of touring already, you'll understand the importance of water, and how you need to conserve it accordingly. However, if you are still using jerry cans that you physically lug around, it's time to look for something a bit easier. Nothing beats having a tap that you can turn on and get clean, drinkable water out of at any time.

We run a 50L water tank under the tray of our Dmax, and this is connected to a small electric pump. Admittedly most of the time we just use the gravity feed, and it's brilliant. If your hands are dirty (or your kids need a wash) we just flick on the tap underneath the tray and have water on demand without any mucking around.



50L water tank under the Dmax.

5. UHF Radio

You can travel without a radio, but it's much easier and safer to have one permanently fitted. This is super important for talking to others on the 4WD tracks that you are on, along with trucks and other traffic on the open road.

We use ours for overtaking road trains and caravans on a regular basis, as well as chatting to



others out in the bush. If you are travelling in convoy with mates (which you should do from time to time, as it's awesome) they are important for letting others know about oncoming traffic, hazards on the road or just for having a laugh as you tick the kilometres over.



Good communications are important.

6. Accessible and safe gear (drawers, cargo barrier, tie down points)

Once you've unpacked and re-packed your 4WD a few times, you'll soon come up with ways to make your storage better. Having a place for everything, and everything in its place becomes important for your sanity and safety.

This latter point is super important and needs to be considered. Things will go wrong when touring, and having your gear secure is critical. A cargo barrier is imperative for wagons to ensure that if you do have a problem you don't end up with a frying pan or tomato sauce bottle in the back of the head.

Drawers are amazing for making your gear easy to access and keeping things in place, but be careful that they don't make your 4WD too heavy, or you will have a different problem on your hands. Little tubs, storage boxes and tie down points to keep it all together are a good way to maintain easy access to your gear, while ensuring your set up is safe and modular.



Easy and safe gear storage is essential.

7. Recovery points and a winch

You will get bogged touring Australia. I guarantee it. Of course the idea is to avoid this situation all together, but there will be a lapse in judgement or a hole that's a bit softer than you thought, and you'll need to find a way out. At least one recovery point on the front and rear of your 4WD is a must, and these need to be rated, not the factory tie down points that most 4WD's are fitted with prior to arriving at the showroom.

A winch is often cheap insurance, especially if you travel alone. Of course, there are other ways to recover yourself but having a winch makes hauling a vehicle out of a situation quick and easy, and provided you maintain it, they work very well.



Rated recovery points and a winch are useful.

8. Good shelter

Australia is a harsh place. The sun will make you look like a boiled crayfish if you aren't careful, and having shelter from it is one of the smartest things you can do. For some people, this is a gazebo, whilst others prefer to use an awning from their vehicle. We primarily use our camper trailer or gull wing canopy door for shade, and hide inside the camper trailer if it's raining or really windy.

If you don't have somewhere to escape the sun, rain and wind, your touring will not be enjoyable. It needs to be easy to use too, or you'll just risk it and get fried.



An awning is a great addition to hide from the sun.

9. Quality tyres and suspension

If there are two things that work extremely hard when touring Australia, it's your suspension and tyres. A good set of light truck all terrain or mud terrain tyres are an absolute must, with at least one good spare, and two if going remote (or alternatively, a significant tyre repair kit).

Your factory suspension will work just fine unless you are carrying a lot of weight, or doing a lot of corrugations, in which case it simply fades and won't work properly. A quality set of aftermarket suspension will make your ride comfortable, safe and level.



Good tyres and suspension are a must.

10. Long range fuel tank

There's no denying that Australia is a big place, and sometimes you have to drive a very long time between fuel stops. If you have the capacity to install a long range tank, they will make your life a lot easier. They save you money, reduce the chances of fuel contamination and lessen the number of stops you need to make. Admittedly, they aren't the cheapest modification, but if you're heading into remote areas for extended periods of time, then they are well worth the investment.



Remote travel means you need more fuel on board.

Overall

For us, the one thing we haven't yet mentioned as it's not really a modification, but it does significantly aid our comfort and enhance our touring ability with two little kids, and that's our camper trailer. Although there are downsides, the advantages well and truly make up for them. The ability to carry more water, fuel and gear allows us greater freedom when we travel, but ultimately, to do so with ease and enjoyment for all the family, that is the biggest win of all.

Our Recon R2 Hypercamper takes 270L of water, comfortably sleeps 4, has an external hot shower and toilet, and makes travelling off the beaten track a dream.



Our Hypercamper makes touring comfortable.

We love touring this amazing country and I think you'd be hard pressed to find any fellow adventurers who'd say otherwise. Maybe we will see you out there?!

What have you modified on your vehicle for touring?