

LPG or Liquid Petroleum Gas has been the most common fuel to take camping in Australia for a long time. It burns cleanly, has plenty of energy and can be easily transported.

It's most frequently used for cooking with on a gas stove, but it has other uses too. Many people with 3-way fridges depend on it, and you'll still see it used for gas lanterns, hot water on demand units and even some heaters.

For the purpose of this post, we are just looking at cooking, but you can apply some of the information below to other appliances to work out how much LPG it will consume.



*A quality burner makes life easy.*

There's nothing better than a good feed when you are camping, and most people wouldn't be without some form of reliable heat. The most popular fuel source is LPG, and second to that if you are able to have fires that's another fantastic option.

In Australia, there are often fire restrictions, especially in warmer weather. When this occurs, fires are completely banned, and in extreme cases, even the use of any exposed flame (like a burner, or Weber) is not allowed either. If this happens, it's cold food for that day.

Cooking with LPG is cheap, quick, clean and safe. Many people are familiar with it as it's used at home for cooking too. However, unlike being at home, you aren't connected to mains gas, and that means you will eventually run out.

The trick, of course, is not to run out when you are camping or to have a backup plan (like a second bottle).



*Cooking breakfast on an LPG stove.*

## How much LPG do you use when camping?

Unfortunately, there's no one size fits all guide here as there are so many different burner types, sizes and ways that people use their burners. A small, single burner is going to use a lot less gas than a fully-fledged triple ring burner, and you might cook something for a few hours a day, or just 10 minutes.

However, I will say that a small quantity of LPG does go a long way for normal camping. Now, I won't leave you with a vague statement like that. You can work out exactly how long you'll get out of a burner if you know a few key pieces of information:

### BTU

Every burner you purchase comes with a BTU rating or British Thermal unit. Essentially, this refers to the amount of heat it is able to create. The higher the BTU, the more gas your burner will use.

One thing you'll want to be aware of is that the BTU rating is for when it's on full flame. For example, the Coleman Hyperflame has a BTU of 24,000, but it has two burners. If you run one flat out, you'll get 12,000 BTU, and if it's only on half flame you'll get 6000 BTU.



*Boiling a cuppa in Pemberton.*



## LPG consumption

Taking it one step further, one kilogram of LPG stores enough energy for 46,500 BTU. So, using the above two burner Coleman Hyperflame as an example, you can run both burners off a 1kg bottle at full bore for just under two hours. The maths is simple:

$46\,500/24\,000 = 1.9375$  hours

Two hours might not seem very long, but I can tell you that there isn't much you'd cook on the 12,000 BTU burner at full bore for very long before it turns to charcoal. Halve the flame and you'll get nearly 4 hours of use from 1kg, which is very reasonable.



*Cooking dinner on the Coleman Eventemp burner at Collie.*

## Types of burners

There are lots of different types of burners for camping. The most common ones you will see are dual burners that the lid and sides fold out on. These are made by the likes of Coleman, Companion and Gasmate.

From there, you can get individual, loose burners, the lunchbox style burners, Trangia and tiny pocket burners used on small gas bottles which are perfect for lightweight cooking solutions.

Camper trailers and caravans have their own in-built burners, which are usually pretty similar to the portable ones.

Lastly, there are a number of 'enclosed' burners, like Weber and Ziggy, which are extremely popular for those camping with plenty of room.

Most of the larger burners connect to an LPG bottle using a gas hose, but you can also get burners that screw directly onto a gas bottle.

Buy a burner that is going to suit your requirements, and then match your gas supply for how long you are going to be away from civilisation for. A big double burner is great to cook on, but if you are hiking it's not an option!



*Single burners are great for travelling.*

## Types of gas bottles

### Disposable LPG

For convenience and to save on weight, you can get a huge range of disposable LPG bottles. These start off around the size of two fists together and work their way to around 500 grams of LPG. These are fantastic for hikers, and those who need to be weight or size conscious.

### Refillable LPG bottles

In the refillable world, you can get a whole range of sizes for camping. They start off at about 1kg and work their way to 2, 3, 4, 4.5, 9 and 12kg. These have a service life of 10 years, and

then they need to be re-inspected, or removed from service.

  
*Boiling the kettle with a cheap set-up.*

## A case study

Since moving to our camper trailer, I've had a chance to really put the LPG consumption to the test. The trailer has a two burner stove - one is 8000 BTU, and the other is 10,000 BTU. Normally only one is used at a time, but of course, there are times where both are needed. The camper trailer has two 4.5kg gas bottles. In over 120 nights in the camper trailer with two adults and a toddler. The LPG bottles have been filled up a couple of times, equating to around 13kg of LPG. That's around 110 grams of LPG per day, on average. One 4.5kg gas bottle lasts about 6 weeks. When possible, we do use the fire for cooking and heating water, but you aren't always able to do this.

  
*Our camper trailer LPG burner.*

## Picking the right gas bottles

You'll notice a pretty simple trend when camping. Caravans usually have two 9 or 12kg gas bottles on the drawbar, and that's because they often use a fair bit of gas with 3-way fridges as well as cooking.

Most camper trailers have two smaller (around 4.5kg) gas bottles, and this will last you a long time between fill-ups.

If you are just heading away for weekends at a time, you'll easily get away with one smaller gas bottle. Just check it's not empty before you leave!

If you are hiking, you have to be the most conscientious as you don't want to run out of LPG, but at the same time, extra weight means harder work for you!

  
*Plan your menu around meals that will conserve your gas.*

## How can you conserve LPG?

In the grand scheme of things, LPG bottle refills are fairly cheap. On our camper trailer, it costs less than 40 cents a day to run. That said, it can add up quickly if you don't do a few simple things to reduce how much LPG you are using:

## Don't cook gas hungry meals

There are some meals that will use a lot of gas, and these should be avoided where possible. If it takes up a lot of space and needs cooking, it's going to use a lot of gas. Stews, soups and big chunks of meat (like crayfish or roasts) can be done on a gas stove, but it will use a lot of LPG.

  
*Cooking crayfish in water uses a lot of LPG.*



## Use a fire where possible

Cooking on a campfire is a lot of fun, and it adds a new dimension to your camping adventure. Beyond that though, it allows you to still cook the gas-hungry meals without using LPG.

If you are doing stews, dampers, roasts or feeding a big crew there's no better way to do it than over the fire in a camp oven.



*A campfire is great for cooking on and relaxing around.*

## Windbreaks are your friend

If you've ever tried to cook some sausages up on a windy day at the beach, you'll know how much it can hurt your gas consumption. On a windy day, you can easily take 2 or 3 times longer to cook your meal or boil a kettle. A wind deflector is a fantastic way to stop this, and keeps the heat where you want it; under the pan or kettle!

## Use the facilities provided

If you are paying to camp somewhere, make use of their facilities. Often there are BBQ's provided, and running them doesn't cost you a cent!



*If you've paid to use the facilities at a site, make sure you use them.*

## Heating water for dishes

Dishes are unavoidable when camping, and warming up water for them uses a fair bit of energy. Of course, don't skimp on it as it's not hygienic, but either warm your water up in a kettle or put a lid on your saucepan or do it over a fire.



*Conserve gas by washing your dirty dishes with hot water heated over a campfire.*

## LPG makes life easy

If you've been wondering how much your burners use, you can now work it out, and ensure you aren't going to run out. I often used to carry a small backup bottle of LPG, just in case. Cooking with LPG when camping is simple, cheap and easy as long as you don't run out! See you out there!

## Do you have any tricks for conserving LPG when camping?