

Imagine how straightforward things would be if everything in life was, ‘one size fits all’? Despite many things fitting this description, part of life’s beauty is that we are unique individuals with so many vastly different options to choose from. Whether you favour motorbike touring, swagging in the back of the Ute, a fifth-wheeler caravan, or a converted bus, the options are truly endless and there’s no singular arrangement that suits everyone. Figuring out which travel setup will best suit you can be confusing – so in this post, we’ll compare some of the different options and look at a few circumstances that may influence your decision. The setup loved by your best mate or neighbour is not necessarily the right one for you, so how do you pick what is?

Let’s start with the core items for a travel setup and from there you’ll have a much better idea of what is going to work for you.



A 4WD bus exploring the northern parts of WA.

How long are you travelling for?

The most significant impact on your travel setup is the time for which you are travelling. What you need for a year-long lap of Australia is vastly different from a quick weekender. The longer you’re away, the more important it is to have a setup that is easy to use, functional, durable, and that meets your level of comfort. It’s easier to accept an inadequate setup when it’s just a short trip – it’s staggering what we can manage to put up with when it’s only temporary! However, if your travel setup is literally your home on wheels for months or years at a time, then your patience will wear very thin using a problematic arrangement. Generally, the longer your journey, the more gear you will carry – which in turn has implications on weight, space, and storage.



A Unimog takes things to the next level.

What standard of comfort do you want (or need)?

Comfort is a personal thing and where some are content with a swag and basic cooker, others require solid walls, climate control and all the bells and whistles. Many people trade their mortgage in favour of life on the road and travel every day of the year with setups more luxurious and comfortable than your average Aussie home.



Camping with a simple setup – vehicle, tent, mat and sleeping bag.

Not wishing to offend, but age often influences what level of comfort you are willing to accept. As a young single lad, I was perfectly happy sleeping in a cheap tent with an air mattress that often deflated overnight! As I’ve got older and had kids, that basic setup has changed, and no doubt it will change again as the years pass.

You rarely see older travellers using heavy canvas tents and/or camper trailers. These setups are brilliant but are physically demanding and although they satisfy the comfort needs for some, that comfort is not the same as what’s experienced in caravans and motorhomes. The time and effort required to set up and pack down should also be considered because if this is a repeated exercise multiple times a year and if yours is a time-consuming difficult setup, you’ll start to avoid going away because of the effort involved.



Some people trade in the family home in favour of one on wheels.

What does your budget allow?

There are some truly incredible rigs on the road today and you can spend some seriously big dollars on elaborate setups – million dollar motor homes and everything in between. On the other end of the spectrum, a huge number of people are travelling with setups worth less than 10 grand.

Unfortunately, your budget is one of the largest constraints around your setup investment. I know I certainly haven't found a way to make a magic money tree and chances are, neither have you. So, that means you need to be careful with how much you commit, so you don't extend beyond your financial health.



Fancy a 6WD 4WD? They exist!

Even if you are one who can enjoy a certain amount of financial freedom, it is still important to consider how much you are willing to spend.

Oh, how I wish travelling was free – but it costs a significant amount of money. If you are travelling long term, it's usually somewhere between \$300 and \$1500 per week to travel, or some swear by the guide of \$1 per km. However you manage to calculate your adventure, there needs to be a method of funding. The reason this is important is that a lot of people stop periodically to top up their savings or they choose to reduce their expenses as much as possible while on the road.

Your travel setup can easily determine your ability to seek out free-camps or ones at low cost, which means you can avoid staying in caravan parks as much as possible. This may require more of an initial outlay of money but saves a huge chunk over the long-term.

Consider having your own water storage, fridge/freezer, toilet and solar power so you can comfortably stay off-grid.

In many cases, if you spend a bit more on your setup, it will repay itself quickly, especially if committing to extended travel or regular short trips. Something like a mid-range electrical system (solar panels and power station) will allow you to run your fridges, lights and basic appliances without ever having to rely on a mains power supply.



Our camp setup at Karijini using the Oztent RV.

What do you want to see and where do you want to go?

Travelling Australia means different things to different people. For some, it's hopping from caravan park to caravan park and visiting the main tourist attractions. For others, it's crossing the Simpson Desert in hope of not seeing a single soul for weeks on end. Ultimately, what you want to see and where you wish to go will determine the setup you end up with. Whilst it would be nice to take a fancy double story bus across the Simpson Desert or into Arnhem Land, it just isn't going to happen. If you want to access remote areas that are less travelled, a big rig may not be your best choice.



If you want to travel to remote destinations, you need a 4WD.

Everyone has their own concept of adventure and wish-list for what they want to do and see. If you love fishing, kayaking, 4WDing or stumbling upon that unknown area, then your travel setup will be tailored toward encouraging those interests. Likewise, with how much space you need for your gear and how much weight capacity you need. It's almost impossible to travel long term in a 4WD with a family, and have enough gear to mostly stay off-grid without being overweight. However, if you tow a trailer your option to do this becomes possible.

The humble Troopy is one of the most popular travel vehicles.

Learning to Compromise

Once you begin considering those questions, you'll recognise that every single choice is a compromise. It's not possible to have the most comfortable rig on the market and be able to access remote areas or pass through narrow tracks. Whilst everyone would love an amazing setup, they come at a cost and with compromise.

At the end of the day, you buy what is within your budget that will suit your style of travel and meet your requirements as best as possible. From there, a measure of character building kicks in and it's about learning to live with any of the shortfalls that arise.

Taking life onto the road requires a different setup than that for a weekend adventure.

So, what is best?

Evaluate your standards of comfort, how long or how frequently you wish to be travelling, where you want to go, and how much money you have to spend. Then tick as many boxes as possible while keeping to your budget and consider the areas in which you are willing to compromise.

Trial and error are inevitable, and you'll likely try one setup before outgrowing or getting tired of it and moving on to something else. Eventually, you'll gain a solid understanding of your needs and wants and will be able to tailor the best setup for yourself.

Whether you travel for relaxation, adventure, fun, or to learn and experience new things, you want your setup to enhance those adventures and not be frustrating, time-consuming or difficult.

Keep reading for Part 2, *Travel Setups – Vehicle Choice, Sleeping & Touring*.

What's your ultimate setup?