

ADVENTURE IS CALLING



[LAST YEAR BROUGHT WITH IT **UNCERTAINTY**, FEAR AND A WHOLE LOT OF CANCELLED PLANS. INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION AND MAY BE FOR SOME TIME.

WHILST 2020 WAS A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER,

FOR MANY IT CAUSED A SHIFT IN THINKING WHEN IT CAME TO THEIR ADVENTURE OPTIONS. GOING FROM 195 COUNTRIES TO CHOOSE FROM TO JUST ONE MAY HAVE SEEMED DEPRESSING TO SOME, YET IT REALLY OPENED THE EYES OF MANY PEOPLE, FORCING THEM TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THEIR BACKYARD AND THE NEVER-ENDING POSSIBILITIES THEIR HOMELAND HAS TO OFFER.

THE CARAVAN INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA REPORTED THAT 2020 SET A NEW RECORD FOR THE AMOUNT OF TIME PEOPLE SPENT CAMPING OR CARAVANNING AROUND AUSTRALIA, AN INCREASE OF 11% FROM 2019. THE NUMBER OF DOMESTIC VISITORS GOING CAMPING OR CARAVANNING ALSO SET A NEW RECORD WITH AN INCREASE OF 9.9% IN 2020. THESE FIGURES ARE VERY IMPRESSIVE WHEN CONSIDERING THAT 2020 WAS NOT ONLY A TIME OF GREAT UNCERTAINTY BUT ALSO A TIME SPENT IN LOCKDOWN FOR MANY.

WITH HIGH DEMAND FOR 4WDs, RVs AND CARAVANS, THE DEMAND FOR THE FAMILIARITY OF A GOOD OL' CAMPING* HOLIDAY IS ONLY GOING TO GO UP. IN FACT, THE SAME REPORT REVEALED THAT 50% OF CARAVANNERS AND CAMPERs SAID THAT COVID-19 IS LIKELY TO MAKE THEM TRAVEL MORE REGIONALLY THAN EVER BEFORE.

CAMPING THERAPY

Veteran campers know that the payoff of camping will always outweigh the inconveniences. There's absolutely nothing like getting back to nature. If you're on the fence about whether camping is right for you, consider the following benefits:

- **Better sleep:** A study released in the journal *Current Biology* revealed that camping improves our sleep by resetting our internal clocks to a natural sleep cycle and this can happen in as little as a weekend away. As we all know, adequate and quality sleep is critical to overall health and wellbeing.
- **More exercise:** Many people spend long periods sitting down in their day-to-day lives. While there's nothing better than chilling around a campfire with a beer, when out in nature we naturally move more. Whether it be collecting firewood, swimming in a river or ocean, or just exploring, there's no better joyful movement than that in the great outdoors.
- **Sunshine:** A 2019 study labelled Vitamin D deficiency as a global public health issue. There's no better way to increase your Vitamin D levels than sensible sun exposure, which has also been linked to an improved mood; they don't call them "happy campers" for nothing.
- **Switch off:** After the initial panic of realising you have no phone service subsidies, you'll quickly start to feel the benefits of switching off. Not only does it keep you from "just checking" your emails when you're supposed to be on holidays, it helps you really connect to the people here and now (or to nature if you prefer to solo camp).

- **Great for kids:** Camping is so beneficial for children and provides them with an education they may never get anywhere else. Camping connects them back to nature, helps them develop a sense of adventure, boosts creativity and gets them out of their comfort zone to help them build resilience.
- **Brain training:** Whether it be working out where and how to set up the tent or dealing with situations that modern technology would usually take care of for you, camping is great for improving problem-solving abilities. Plus, tackling new challenges and embarking on new experiences can enhance self-confidence, personal growth and happiness.

A GOOD START

In our 60th edition camping special, we'd like to give you an overall picture of the things to consider when going off grid. Whilst we won't be able to cover everything, make sure you check out our 4x4 Culture chronicles information hub on arb.com.au for tonnes of articles providing an in-depth look at everything off road.

Remember that our friendly off road specialists are always ready to give you tips or advice before you head out. Head into your local ARB store or stockist, or jump on our social media channels to ask any questions you need help with.

*For the purposes of simplicity, we will refer to all forms as "camping" whether it be in a regular tent, camper trailer, caravan, glamping tent or swag.

[ACCOMMODATION]

Camping



HOME AWAY FROM HOME

FROM **BASIC TO BOUJIE**, YOUR CHOICE OF CAMPING ACCOMMODATION COMES DOWN TO A NUMBER OF FACTORS. THESE MAY INCLUDE YOUR BUDGET, THE LENGTH OF THE TRIP YOU INTEND ON TAKING, THE SIZE OF YOUR FAMILY AND SO MUCH MORE. COMPARING A SWAG TO A CARAVAN IS LIKE COMPARING APPLES TO ORANGES. INSTEAD, WE ARE JUST GOING TO LOOK AT EACH OF THE STANDARD CAMPING OPTIONS AND YOU CAN MAKE UP YOUR OWN MIND ABOUT WHICH IS RIGHT FOR YOU.

THE HUMBLE SWAG

GREAT FOR:

- Solo travellers
- Couples
- Older kids
- Overnighters and quick getaways
- Those with limited storage space
- No fuss, quick set-up

The swag originated with Australian swagmen, farm workers who used to walk between farms looking for work during the 1800s. Their swag would be rolled up with their belongings inside and carried on their back.

Over the years, the humble swag has evolved from a simple sheet of canvas to a tapered design and, more recently, to dome-shaped structures. Swags are great for cool nights as they hold heat well and modern designs offer full star-gazing views with over-sized entries for warmer conditions.

SOME IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A SWAG INCLUDE:

- **Material:** Make sure your swag is made from a heavy-duty, waterproof canvas with wicked seams and rain gutters to prevent water entering zips. Swags that also incorporate a waterproof PVC base are important for keeping you dry and protected in extreme conditions.
- **Size:** Swags can make some people feel cramped so we recommend a king single size at minimum. Dome swags also provide a roomier comfortable night's sleep with space to sit up and get in and out more easily. A double-sized swag is great for couples, multiple kids or extra room for your furry friend.
- **Mattress:** The thickness of your mattress is vitally important; after all, a soft bed of meadow grass is rarely an option when pitching your swag. We recommend a minimum 70-millimetre mattress thickness and make sure it comes with a machine-washable cover. Many swags on the market are provided vacuum-packed, which can mean waiting weeks for your mattress to gain proper shape (if it ever does), so look for swags that are provided ready to use straight out of the box.
- **Ventilation:** Whilst swags are great to keep you warm in winter, without proper ventilation they can be stifling in warm or humid weather. Look for a swag with multiple windows and large openings for maximum ventilation and airflow.

THE GREAT TENT DEBATE

THERE ARE A PLETHORA OF TENT OPTIONS ON THE MARKET, FROM TINY ONE-PERSON TENTS TO MULTIPLE-ROOM CAMPING MANSIONS. THERE ARE MANY IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING A TENT AND THESE CAN INCLUDE:

- Number of people using the tent
- The environmental conditions the tent will be used in (Look for a tent that offers features that will work in every condition.)
- Ease of use and the time it takes to set up
- The size of the tent (Remember, the bigger the tent, the larger the campsite you need to find.)
- Weight and size when packed up (Will you have room to fit it in with all your other camping necessities?)
- Price (You get what you pay for with tents and a good quality tent can last a long time.)
- Aftersales service (Look for a manufacturer that provides warranties and stands by their product.)

ROOFTOP TENTS VS GROUND TENTS

Whilst the option of having a rooftop tent will depend heavily on your 4WD set-up, there are many benefits to them. They keep you off the ground, which means you don't have to worry about messy sand or mud or finding a perfectly flat surface. Rooftop tents are also ready to go as soon as they are set up with your mattress and bedding packed inside. Rooftop tents also free up vital "everyday access" storage space in your vehicle.

Editor's note: A few years ago, I spent three months travelling the Top End of Australia. Before our trip, my husband and I decided to purchase a "quick set-up" tent as we would be making and breaking camp every few days. Whilst the bones of the tent were up in less than 30 seconds, by the time we had pegged it out, secured it with all the guy ropes and set up our beds and bedding, our fellow rooftop tent campers were set up and onto their second beer, smugly watching us from the sidelines. The same was true for packing up. The rooftop tent campers were always packed and ready to go first, followed by the camper trailer and in last place was our "quick tent", making everyone wait for us while we packed up to head to the next spot. After three months, we had learnt our lesson and we will be upgrading to a rooftop tent for our next big adventure.