

# Towing Destinations

Where you take your camper van, boat or caravan depends on many factors.

Before we start laying down some guidelines on where you should or should not take this or that piece of trailing equipment let's acknowledge that, with sufficient determination, you can take anything virtually anywhere.

Examples include the bloke who took a Model T Ford to Cape York, later emulated by a group of whacko Frenchmen in Deux Chevaux Citroens. The early motoring pioneers in Australia went almost everywhere in underpowered, leaf-sprung, wooden-wheeled, rag-tyred vehicles and the regular desert-defying feats of Birdsville Mailman, Tom Kruze, have made him a deserved living legend. However, we'll assume normal testosterone levels, typical financial frailty and the common sense restraint of at least one mature female in the crew.

Even then, on long, tough trips, expect trailer damage and carry typically-needed spares: tyres, shocks, rubbers, spring leaves, U-bolts, brake bits and wheel bearings.

## The Deserts



Australia is around 80-percent arid, of which area about half is sand-ridge desert country. King Feisal accused TE Lawrence of being 'one of those desert-loving English' and many Aussies share the trait. Lawrence said he liked the desert 'because it was clean', but there was obviously more to it than that.

Most Aussie 4x4 enthusiasts rate their travel logs lowly if they don't have a desert crossing or two in them and the most popular destination is The Simpson.

We'd make a general ruling that the French and QAA Lines across the Simpson Desert are not trailer tracks – not even for small camper trailers. If you must pull a small trailer across The Simpson you'll manage it more easily on the Rig Road route.

Trailers are a drag – literally – on dune crossings, sapping precious power on climbs and giving unwanted 'push' on downgrades. This was bad enough in the old days, before The Simpson became a winter highway, but now that the once-straight French and QAA Line dunes are pocked with bumps, twists and turns, trailers are even more out of place.

A straight dune climb with a trailer is sometimes achievable, but the winding climbs reduce momentum. When you do get stuck, it can be very difficult to back down the convoluted dune track for another go.

The good news is that there are many desert tracks you can negotiate more easily with your trailer bobbing along behind, including the Birdsville Track, the Strzelecki Track, the Cordillo Downs Road, the Plenty Highway, the Sandover Track, the Tanami Road, the Great Central Road and the Diamantina Developmental Road.

The more experienced could also tow across the Gibson Desert, using the Telfer Mine Road from Marble Bar and the Desert Highway, or Gary Junction Road, to Alice Springs. The Talawana Track, the Gary Highway and the Gunbarrel are very corrugated and knock trailers around severely.

## The Kimberley

Most of The Kimberley is accessible by 4x4s with trailers in tow. The Gibb River Road is usually well-maintained during the winter months and most of the popular Kimberley sites have trailer access. We wouldn't haul a large van up to the Mitchell Plateau, but it's easy to leave it at Drysdale River Station and collect it on the way back.

The Bungle Bungles access track is easy enough for the most part, with some steep jump-ups causing grief only to tail-dragging 4x4s with long-drawbar trailers.



## The Cape

Cape York is in everyone's must-do book and is now more accessible by trailer-towing vehicles than it used to be. However, unless you can leave the trailer in a secure place at several points on the Cape you'll miss some of the attractions that can only be accessed by deep, soft beach sand tracks or narrow, rocky trails.

It's safe to tow a trailer to Vrilya Point, for example, but attempting to tow it up or down the beach could see you stranded on the edge of croc-infested waters. The track to Ussher Point looks fine on the map, but becomes very narrow and scrubby in places.



The beauty of the Cape York road and track layout is that you can alternate between the challenging Telegraph Line or the road-like, but tragically corrugated, Bypass Road.

You can tow a trailer down the famed drop at Gunshot Creek, but you'll need to belay it from a 4x4 with a winch, parked behind the trailer.

Expect trailer damage and maybe a recovery operation at Cannibal Creek.

## The Victorian High Country

Parts of the alpine areas are fine for camper trailers and others are definitely off limits. Because there are literally hundreds of roads and tracks through the High Country, and because conditions change from season to season, it's impossible to give precise details of where you can and cannot go.



## The Mallee



Western Victoria's mini-deserts are interesting places to visit and most tracks through this sandy region are accessible with a trailer in tow. However, clay sections and low-lying ground becomes impossibly boggy after rain, so you need to visit in dry conditions.

Some of the desert tracks near the Vic-SA border and inside SA have steep dunes that you can't climb pulling a trailer, but there are detour tracks around these difficult points.

The Mungo Lake region of NSW is also trailer-friendly.

## The Red Centre

The roads and tracks around Alice Springs and Uluru, and the Mereenie Loop are nearly all negotiable with camper trailers. A possible exception is the Boggy Hole Track, which features several very soft river crossings that can trap heavy trailers.

The East McDonnells 4x4 Route has some tricky dry creek banks to negotiate and one steep rocky section, but camper trailers with double-yoke couplings can get through. The road down to Chambers Pillar is mostly flat, but is very corrugated, so take it easy when towing along it.



## The Gulf

The Gulf country is mainly flat and the numerous creek crossings are usually low or dry by mid-winter. Care is needed if you intend to travel to the waterfront down bush tracks.

Many of these are dead-ends with nowhere to turn around and others criss-cross muddy creeks that love sucking down trailers.



## The Pilbara

Travellers in Gregory's footsteps can tow their campers to most of the sites in the Pilbara region, but the weather controls access to many areas. Some tracks to the high points in Karijini National Park are best done in solo vehicles, but these are located near campsites, so leaving the trailer isn't a problem. There are several beach access places along the Pilbara coast, but sand conditions vary widely and we wouldn't recommend towing a trailer on any of these remote beaches.

## The North

The major National Parks in the far north are Kakadu and Litchfield and both offer easy trailer access.

As we said at the outset you can tow anything virtually anywhere, but our suggested go and no-go destinations are for typical travellers, who don't want to spend much of their travel time recovering their trailers from bogholes or uncoupling them at every steep dune.

