

Water Storage

Regardless of how you carry water in your vehicle or trailer it's important that you have sufficient and that it's stored in several independent containers. Don't put all your water into one tank.



There is no fixed formula for calculating how much water you need to carry. Your requirements will vary greatly, depending on the time of year, where you're going and for how long. On some trips – notably in the Victorian High Country – you can rely on top-up water from clear, mountain creeks, if you have a quality water filter, but in the desert there's no reliable water anywhere.

Water weighs around one kilogram per litre, so you don't want to cart around more than you need.

The bare minimum you should budget for is two litres per person per day. That's assuming you're travelling in cool weather; you're not doing any hiking and you're not using water for washing. Baby wipes and ethanol-based hand cleaners are fine for personal hygiene and save lot of water.

If you're travelling in hot weather and you're doing a lot of bush walking as well as driving you'll need up to five litres per person per day. Winter travel with no walking activity drops the requirement to around two litres per day.

Serious bush travellers install water tanks in their vehicles. You can buy hard plastic or stainless steel tanks that fit in ute trays or wagon cargo areas, or behind wagon front row seats. Collapsible containers are attractive, because they can fit into awkward spaces and because they shrink as they empty, making valuable storage space for the results of souvenir shopping sprees!

Back up your main tank with a 10-litre spring water cask.

Whatever your method of water storage it's vital that the containers are secured, so they can't become missiles in the event of an accident.

Stainless steel and hard plastic containers don't normally impart a 'taste' to the water, but most flexible containers do. It's possible to minimise the unpleasant plastic taste by flushing them with sodium bicarbonate solution, or by rinsing with a vinegar solution, or using a little Listerine in the water. Don't forget to drain and flush the contents before filling with clean water.

A more significant issue than 'taste' is your health. Water in tanks or containers should always be dosed with purifiers such as Puritab and BioMagic. Water taken from creeks or dams should be passed through a filter before being poured into your water containers. Camping stores sell filters with varying capabilities – the best ones are unfortunately quite expensive.

When you return home from a trip, make sure you empty your portable water containers and store them dry. It's not usually possible to empty an inbuilt water tank, so it's important to keep up the water treatment dosage.