

Trip Preparation

As the race draws near, it's time to think about setting up your vehicle. Arriving at Purnie Bore with the vehicle, bike, bodies and all equipment intact can be an achievement in itself.

At an absolute minimum, you will need to allow one day from Alice Springs, two or three days from Adelaide and three or four days from Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Those leaving from Queensland often travel to Birdsville and drive along the course to the start, but you will need to allow at least 2 long days to cross the desert.

The quickest approach from the Southern states is via Pt Augusta along the Stuart Highway, turning off at Coober Pedy. From Coober Pedy the track is unsealed. If you have time, the Oodnadatta Track (via Maree) is a nice trip.

Approaching Purnie Bore, the last (limited) supplies are available at Oodnadatta and Mt Dare. After that, there are no other services until we reach Birdsville.

You can usually maintain 80km/h on the Oodnadatta and Birdsville tracks (subject to road conditions). The track from Oodnadatta to Purnie Bore can be extremely slow and rough, usually taking about 5-6 hours to cover the 260 kilometers. Also allow time to have a swim at Dalhousie Hot Springs.

Vehicle and Spares

Only genuine all terrain 4WD vehicles are suitable for the trip across the Desert. Smaller versions such as a Subaru or Toyota Rav 4 are not designed for this sort of travel. Your vehicle will need to be fully serviced and in good condition.

TRAILERS ARE NOT RECOMMENDED IN THE NATIONAL PARK. If you do bring a trailer it must be a genuine off-road trailer. You will also need a powerful vehicle to pull the trailer over the dunes and the experience to use it. Expect to get bogged and have the necessary recovery gear to get yourself out.

Stone roads take their toll on tyres and many people blow tyres on this trip. Light Truck tyres, are generally considered more suitable than standard radial tyres that are often supplied with 4WD vehicles. You will need to ensure your tyres are in good condition. Carry 2 spare wheels or have the equipment to repair a tyre.

To minimise the risk of blowing a tyre, ensure your tyres are at the correct pressure. Carry a pressure gauge and check and adjust your tyre pressures daily. Whilst on gravel roads, use no more than 35lbs pressure. Once you reach Purnie Bore, reduce

your tyre pressures to about 22lbs. This will greatly help you get across the dunes.

Fuel

From Oodnadatta take sufficient fuel for the 800km trek to Birdsville. As a rough guide allow 150 litres of Diesel or 200 Litres of Petrol.

Detours and back tracking can add substantially to your fuel requirements – carry at least 20 litres spare fuel for contingencies. Remember that strong winds, a heavy load and a roof rack can increase your fuel consumption.

Water

The desert is hot and dry and you will need to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. At a minimum, allow **100lt per person**. If you intend buying water from the supermarket, make sure that it is packed in sturdy containers that will survive the trip across the desert.

DO NOT plan to pick up water at Oodnadatta or Mt Dare. These places only have very limited supplies of rain water and cannot afford to give it away.

Bore water is available for showers and washing at Dalhousie Hot Springs and Purnie Bore. There are no other reliable water supplies in the desert.

Recovery Gear

Make sure that you have a good spade. A snatch strap and shackles are also a good idea. There will be plenty of people there to help you out if you get stuck.



Communications

UHF Radio is compulsory for the trip across the desert. Whilst on the highway use Channel 40. In the Desert use Channel 10. If you don't want to buy a radio, they can be hired from 4WD clubs or you can buy a pair of hand held UHF radios for around \$100 but you will need to be able to replace or recharge the batteries.

Shade

During the race it is essential to have shade for riders and crew. Most people use a plastic tarp about 3m x 2.5m in size. Strong winds are common in the desert. The tarp will need to be securely attached to the vehicle.



One simple option is to buy a pole the length of your tarp and securely bolt it to the roof rack. Attach one side of the tarp to the pole. The other side of the tarp can be supported with tent poles. Bring a large and medium set of pegs to attach the guide ropes to. When travelling, roll up the tarp towards the vehicle and tie to the pole.

Packing your vehicle:

Make sure that you allow space for the bike, helmet, rider's water bottles and other race gear. These take up a lot of space and are often forgotten about when planning to pack the vehicle.

If this is your first trip to the desert, have a practise run packing the vehicle a couple of weeks prior to the trip.

Storage

Remember that you will need to set-up and pack-up your camp twice a day during the race. Items you need for each stop should be in easy reach. If you don't have storage cupboards in your vehicle, it is a good idea to pack gear in stackable containers to save space. Make sure the containers are sturdy or they will break.

A roof rack is always a good idea but make sure it is securely fitted to the vehicle. Keep your heavy items like water and fuel low down inside the vehicle and pack clothes, tents, swags and other light gear on the roof rack.

Carrying the Bike

Rough roads, dust and long distances can cause damage if bikes are not packed carefully. The best method is to pack your bike in a box or bike bag and carry it inside the vehicle.

A rack mounting on the vehicle roof is also a good option. Be careful using mounts which attach to the front forks (with the wheel removed). These have been known to bend the forks. Make sure that the frame is braced so the forks don't take all the strain.

DO NOT USE TOWBAR MOUNTED BIKE RACKS. The bike will get damaged through vibration, stones and 'bottoming out' in deep ruts.

Plan to arrive at Punie Bore with plenty of time to rebuild, check and adjust the bike.

Rubbish

During the race you will need to carry all your rubbish. There are rubbish dumps at Dalhousie Hot Springs and Birdsville.

Suggested items to take:

Vehicle Spares:

2 spare tyres and tyre repair equipment
UHF radio
Snatch Strap
Air Compressor and tyre gauge
Tools
Jerry cans for spare fuel
Warning flag on long pole
Tie-downs and straps

Camping Gear:

Tent or swags
Ground sheet – protects floor of tent from thorns
Pillows and pillow cases
Mattress – self inflating, airbed, stretcher, foam etc
Sleeping bags
Ground Sheet
Shade tarp, poles, ropes and heavy duty pegs
Mallet or hammer
Folding table and chairs
Lantern and/or fluorescent light
Camp stove and cookware
Stove fuel/gas bottle
Chopping board and knife
Wash-up bowl and buckets for laundry and washing
Laundry powder, length of clothesline and pegs
Cutlery and plates, bowls and mugs
Thermos
Washing up gear
Tea Towels
Can opener/corkscrew
Toilet paper
Spade
Matches/lighter
Torch
Heavy duty rubbish bags and ties
Fly nets, Sun hats, Sunscreen
Water containers: (20-25Lt containers are good)
Water bottles for support crew's use



Check the website www.desertchallenge.org
There are downloads and other information that will help you with your preparation.

Make sure that your support crew have read the "Support Crew Information Pack" on the website. This information is invaluable for people who have not been to the desert before.

Remember, the organising group behind the SDBC have a huge amount of information and expertise. They are more than willing to provide advice to anyone who has any doubts or queries. Refer to the Contact section on the web site.