

## Tips for off road driving



### Driving on dirt roads and 4WD tracks:

- no matter if the soil of a dirt road or track looks good to you, always moderate your speed!
- some 4WD tracks have invisible holes that are filled with very delicate sand.  
This sand is also known as bulldust. Please keep in mind that should you drive through bulldust holes without having both your hands on the steering wheel, you are at great risk of suffering an accident.
- The Outback has a few areas that are characterised by so-called corrugated roads (washboard roads).  
You can find these type of roads in areas including the Pilbara and when travelling along the Great Central Road. One often-heard advice to deal with these 'washboard' roads is to drive along it as fast as possible. However, this is nothing short of extremely dangerous, especially when done on a rather curved route. A good and safe speed usually lies around 60 km/h.
- many dirt roads (also called gravel roads) have a somewhat convex shape, meaning that the centre is usually more elevated than the sides of the road. So if you choose to keep driving on the left side, you will continuously drive inclined, which isn't very comfortable. So for as long as you don't see another vehicle approaching, try to drive in the centre as much as possible, though only during high visibility.
- in some areas the roadsides consist of nothing more than a thick layer of loose sand. Stay clear from these roadsides as much as possible!
- always moderate your speed before taking a turn. If you choose not to, you are at high risk of the 4WD's rear snapping off when making the turn, especially if the road has a loose structure. Your 4WD could then flip over, with disastrous consequences...



### Driving on beaches:

Please adhere to the following points when driving on beaches:

- lower your tyre pressure.
- put your 4WD in low gear.
- only try to switch gears when it's absolutely needed.
- never stop driving when you're in a thick layer of loose sand, no matter how slow your progress.
- always keep your speed low in loose sand up to maximally 25 km/h.
- stay vigilant when driving.
- never just decide to drive over a sand dune. Not only is it dangerous, but it's punishable!
- always make sure that you drive through loose sand in a straight line.
- always keep both hands on the steering wheel with your thumbs on the wheel (instead of around).

You can also opt to mostly drive along the tide line on the hard(er) sand layer.

This way you can drive your vehicle in high gear up to about 60 km/h. Always travel when it's low tide.

Never park your car at a tide line if you want to go for a swim at high tide. Every year a handful of vehicles get gobbled up by the advancing ocean! This is mostly why most vehicle suppliers forbid driving on Fraser Island.



Moderate your speed on hard sand and watch out for so-called 'washouts'. Washouts are worn-out breaches, mostly caused by small creeks that flow onto the beach from land and leave their occasional marks. Even though washouts are usually no deeper than 20 centimetres, they do pose a serious hazard. If you don't spot a washout on time and drive through at full speed, the worst case scenario is that your vehicle endures a major hit and you can lose control of your steering wheel. The risk of washouts is mostly a concern when driving the beaches at the east coast.

#### **Driving through water:**

- only switch gears when it's absolutely needed.
- never risk driving through water unless you're absolutely sure how deep/shallow it is.
- drive into water at a slow angle instead of a steep descent.
- always keep the engine running, even when stopping.
- always make sure you have traction otherwise the car might float, particularly in strong currents.
- don't forget to dry your brakes after getting out of the water.

#### **Large unevenness on the road:**

- always drive over uneven spots with the wheels and never go straight across.
- for larger obstacles, get a good estimate and keep the differential clear from the obstacles and/or large unevenness.



#### **Uphill/downhill**

- always descend down a hill at limited speed to keep control over the vehicle.
- it is recommended that you do not operate the clutches on a steeper descent (so no gear switching).
- if you want to drive up a steep slope your speed should already be high enough at its foot.

- oncoming vehicles that drive towards the beach downhill have priority at all times.

#### **If your 4WD is stuck:**

- don't spin the wheels, it will only make matters worse!
- have yourself towed out with a stretchable snatch strap or use the electric winch.
- find some branches and rocks to place them underneath the wheels for better traction.  
This is usually a good and relatively fast way to get unstuck without needing another 4WD.

- use a supplied shovel to dig out any mud, gravel or sand in front of the tyres.
- if the 4WD has an electric winch you should be able to roll out relatively easily.

The following 4WD's are equipped with an electric winch: Bushcamper with recovery kit, Hilux Pod, Troopy Rooftop and Landcruiser Stationwagon.

#### **General important points:**

- common sense is always key; don't go out doing reckless things!
- don't have people hang out the window in case the 4WD ever flips over.
- be well rested before you embark on a long journey across tracks like the Tanami Road or Oodnadatta Track.
- after a beach trip, thoroughly hose down your 4WD, especially underneath. Use a high-pressure cleaner that you can usually find at a gas station or car wash. Generally, this isn't free and it can cost you up to a few dollars.
- if you travel along a dusty sand track, please limit how often you open your windows.

Especially if you have them open at both the front and back, there will be a lot of fine (red) dust coming in whilst driving. These dust particles will settle in every nook and cranny of the 4WD car or 4WD camper. Needless to say, it's a massive chore to get the vehicle dust-free again.

Please heed the warnings on traffic signs!

If the conditions of the road are dangerous, you will usually be notified of this with a sign.

**Gibb River Road, Spring Creek Track and Jim Jim Road are amongst the areas that are closed during the months of December to March, sometimes even up to the end of April. Due to the heat, it's forbidden to travel in the Simpson Desert during the Australian summer, no vehicles allowed there between 1 December and 15 March.**

