

The Vehicle

Fitting out the vehicle is half the fun. You are like a kid at Christmas, except the excitement continues for the entire 4 months that you spend fitting out the vehicle. The process is deliciously endless. Driving Lights, the radio telephone, with its ridiculously long antenna sprouting from the bull bar, is installed for emergency calls.

There is something about a ridiculously long antenna that makes you feel as if you belong in the bush, or at least look as if you belong. Then there is the water tank. Ahh... the water tank. You think of self sufficiency and the dream of being so remote that you and your wife, Caroline, are away from all services and supplies away from contact with any other human being. Your most valuable supply is water. You must take it with you. Back to the water tank, you have delusions of grandeur, camped in the desert or on some remote beach for weeks on end, you will need a heap of water. You end up installing a two hundred litre, stainless steel tank on the floor behind the front seats. You have gone for serious overkill.

You will not die of thirst.

You are into tanks. You move onto the long range fuel tanks. You go for a ninety litre fuel tank to compliment the existing one hundred and twenty litre tank. Your extra range makes you feel powerful in a strange sort of way. You can drive all day without running out of fuel. You install heavy duty drawers in the back, you mount the fridge onto these. You go for a tow bar, you also get a 'recovery kit', which includes a pulley, snatch straps, u bolts and serious leather gloves. You are really building a sense that you actually know what you are doing with all this gear. You invest in tie downs for the roof rack, did I mention the roof rack?

You develop a deep love for your roof rack. You bolt a tool box onto its back end, you fill it with the light weight cooking and fishing gear. You attach your extra spare tyre with a custom made bolt, you are loving this. Everything works. It is at this point that you can't help yourself and you overdo it. You get a chair custom-made that will be bolted onto the roof to allow you to be seated on top of the roof rack, whilst the vehicle is barrelling along some remote stretch of road. You try it one day on the Nullarbor Plain. You ask Caroline to take it up to 80km so as you photograph the dust as it rises behind the vehicle. You end up taking very few photographs. Sitting on the roof gives you a far greater sense of speed than the normal position behind the wheel, you very nearly shit yourself as you wonder how much longer you can hang on as Caroline continues to accelerate from the safety of the driver's seat. Your cries of anguish cannot be heard. Caroline finally hits 80km, it feels like 120km. You hang on for your life, knuckles turn white, the speed eventually backs off. You put this down as an experience not to be tried again.