

TRAVELLING IN SQUEEZY STYLE – By Stephanie Jackson

Camping in the great outdoors in an old and unusual vehicle.

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I have to admit to an occasional smudge of envy when I see fellow travellers with the comfort of their caravans and motorhomes, but when I look at the reality of my back-to-basics style of camping, it's unbeatable.

Few people, I would surmise, have a smaller or older car than mine in regular use. Many would consider it impossible to go out into the bush for more than a weekend in a 1973 Citroen Dyane, driven by the grunt of a two cylinder 600cc engine. But I've obliterated that word from my vocabulary because I travel extensively in squeezy style.



Camping is, at least for me, about escaping from any hint of a regimented or conventional lifestyle. It's an excuse to become temporarily feral, to wear outrageous clothes if I should wish to do so, to have no timetable for meals and to be able to abandon daily chores.

And all that's needed to accomplish this great escape is a small car crammed full of a few basic possessions.

The secret of camping with such a diminutive vehicle as mine is organisation - and I have to admit to being an organisation freak. You know the sort, the one who insists that there's a place for everything and everything must be in its place.

I begin each journey with good intentions, but after day two, some things are definitely not where the great plan intended them to be. By day three very few are, and by day four I've tossed that well intended motto out of the window.

The idea is to load things in a specific order so that the items in most regular use are the most easily accessible and those that are required on only odd occasions are loaded in first then buried.

The first thing to be needed on arrival at any campsite is a cup of coffee, so cooking equipment is always giving priority of access and the boot of the car becomes the temporary pantry-cum-kitchen.

The everlasting metho burning Trangia is my favourite piece of cooking equipment. It comes with its own set of small saucepans that double as soup or cereal dishes and a frying pan that becomes a saucepan lid or dinner plate. And the versatile billy can fit on it for that old favourite camp stew -the one I use on regular occasions for its simplicity. I merely toss whatever tucker is on hand into it and leave it to bubble away while I pursue activities more interesting than cooking.

The other secret of travelling in squeeze style is to carry only the bare essentials - which means I've had to learn to do without some of life's little luxuries.

I'm often greeted with stares of amazement on arrival at some isolated campsite, for my tiny car's a bit like the famed Tardis - the time travel machine used by the TV character Dr. Who - that is far larger inside than its exterior would have mere mortals believe. Open its boot and there's my kitchen - Esky, a box of groceries and another box with cooking utensils and crockery. Open the rear door and it all tumbles out - camp bed, folding chair, sleeping bag, blankets, tent, the dirty washing, and a backpack of clothing.



And somewhere among the organised chaos, there are water bottles and a container of spare petrol.

And that's not all. The front passenger seat, when I'm travelling alone, is reserved for camera gear, books, and magazines, and junk that I inevitably collect along the way. The space beneath both front seats is stuffed with spare boots, more writing materials and more of the mounting heap of junk.

And what if the car breaks down? Well, under the floor of the boot there's a recess for a spare wheel and a mountain of tools - with another spare wheel hidden in the engine compartment.

The little car can't carry tons of water, so I top up as often as possible so the containers I carry are always full. If they are getting low, I use any available creek water for washing and keep mine for drinking purposes only. And when I buy ice for the esky, I try to ensure it's made from water that can be used for drinking.



Travelling in squeeze style is also about prioritising what to carry. Fuel and water are essentials, as is food - but not the entire contents of the kitchen cupboard. My meals may have limited variety but as long as I have staples available, that's good enough for me. With a few potatoes to turn to charcoal in the ashes of a campfire, some bread, dried fruit, muesli bars and fresh fruit and vegetables that I stock

up on at every town, I can dine well.

And there's no need to carry every article of culinary use. All I need is the compact and light Trangia and the billy - that most versatile piece of equipment that doubles as saucepan, stew pot and kettle.

Clothing? Well, here too I take the minimum. There seems no desire among campers to wear the latest fashions, so simple not elegant is the order of my backpack. Limiting the amount of clothing might mean I'm a visitor to the laundry at every caravan park, but this is squeeze style I'm talking about.

Don't put off that adventure with the excuse that you haven't got a big enough vehicle. Your car is undoubtedly bigger than mine so if you can temporarily discard some of life's contrived luxuries you can savour that most valuable of luxuries - the freedom of being on the road. Even if it is in a rather squeeze style.