

Nature, nurture and adventure

TRACY MORRIS, the mother behind family travel blog [THE BLONDE NOMADS](#), shares what it is like to road trip along the NSW and QLD coast with her family in tow.



What's that noise mum?" Waking early we can hear the birds starting their day happily chirping away, but that's not what has woken our three-year-old Marli. We sneak quietly out of our sleeping bags and unzip the door of our tent to see a cute kangaroo eating the grass, right out the front of our tent. With excited whispers we wake the others (Rob and baby Ziggy) to enjoy the nature show. Lying in bed we narrate what we see outside in our best David Attenborough impersonations as more kangaroos come into sight – some even have baby joeys – all enjoying their grassy breakfast. What a great start to our day!

We are on a camping road trip up the coast of New South Wales and Queensland – something we do a lot as a travelling family. Moments like these are plentiful on our adventures and it's one of the reasons we can't get enough of caravanning and camping.

Travelling with kids is very different to travelling solo or as a couple. Before kids we used to squeeze as much as possible into each day, zipping around from place to place, but now we have to slow down a little, stop and

01 Life on the road 02 Pit stop on the beach 03 Taking in the view 04 Making new friends 05 Exploring the coast 06 Learning to fish 07 Sky-blue jellyfish. All images © The Blonde Nomads



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ROAD TRIP TRAVEL TIP
We like to use plastic tubs to pack our travel gear – that way everything is neat and tidy, sealed from dust and creepy crawlies and best of all, they double as bucket baths for the kids.



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- OUR ROAD TRIP MUST HAVES**
- ✕ WikiCamps phone app www.wikicamps.com.au
 - ✕ Hema HN7 GPS www.hemamaps.com/navigate/hn7
 - ✕ Camps Australia Wide road map book www.campsaustraliawide.com
 - ✕ Caravan park membership
 - ✕ 12V car fridge (with its own battery)
 - ✕ Foxwing Awning www.rhinorack.com.au

smell the roses, pick them... and maybe even make a fairy garden with them!

The bells and whistles
Our 'adventure truck', as we affectionately call it, is kitted out with a fridge and awning so we are always well prepared for travelling with our hungry tribe. When needed, we simply pull over on the beach or a road stop, set up some shade and enjoy something fresh to eat. Having the freedom to stop when needed is something that works well for us so we don't have to rely on distances between towns, petrol stations or takeaway food outlets – which are often crowded and not as picturesque.

If we're travelling a long distance we always cut down the drive by staying a night or two en route to our main destination. The kids travel well with the help of healthy snacks, simple craft and sticker books and we also pull out the trusty DVD player when we need to get a few good kilometres under our belt. If possible, we leave a spare seat in the back, ready for one of us to jump in between the kids if needed.

Immersed in nature
Each day we share encounters with animals and sea life and always enjoy teaching our mini blondies about what we see. Recently while camping on Tallebudgera Creek in southern Queensland, we woke one morning to find hundreds of vibrant blue blubber jellyfish along the shoreline. They had been brought ashore by strong winds and currents. It was a bit of a shock to see so many on the sand, but we took the opportunity to research these bright blue creatures to find out more about them, like what they eat and,

interestingly, that they are believed to be brainless, can feel no pain and grow up to 30 to 45 centimetres in diameter! There is nothing like learning firsthand in Mother Nature's very own classroom.

With so many untouched beaches, tidal estuaries and vibrant scrub-filled headlands to visit, it's hard to have a favourite camping spot along this beautiful stretch of coastline. Each location provides us with new and exciting opportunities and places to explore.

We always travel with our Macpac baby carrier so we can go on a hike to explore on foot – this is when we really find the hidden gems and secluded spots. When on the road we remind ourselves that everything is new and exciting for our little adventurers and it is not just about our destination, but all the fun new things we see along the way. The world has a special magic when viewed through a child's eyes and we love that we can share their perspective and wonderment on a daily basis. Many of our planned hikes have become side tracked as we watch a spider spin its web, soldier crabs digging holes or spot whales breaching out at sea.

Glamping versus camping
We choose to stay in a combination of national parks, free camps and established caravan parks while we travel. We take advantage of the facilities offered in caravan parks like a camp kitchen and washing machines while we stock

up on groceries and supplies from town, then escape back to nature to embrace and experience the raw untouched coastline.

Making connections
Slowing down with our little ones gives us the opportunity to meet and enjoy time with fellow travellers. There is a real sense of community within the nomads of Australia and we have met some amazing people. This has also led to some unique experiences like sleeping under the stars in the Byron Bay Hinterland in a retro caravan, learning the hot tips from the locals for fishing, collecting pipis on the beach and finding 4WD tracks that lead us to local secret spots like waterfalls and swimming holes.

To wake up each day together and discover something new and exciting is something we hope to continue to enjoy and embrace as we grow as a family. There is something about the open road that keeps you wanting more – do you know that feeling? As we like to say "life's an adventure... do it now!" ●

Follow their travels! The Blonde Nomads share their adventures at theblondenomads.com.au and on Instagram @theblondenomads



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