

The Beginner Overland Rig Checklist

Everything worth packing before your first trip off the pavement

You don't need a \$30,000 build to get started. You need the right basics, packed and checked before you leave the driveway. Print this out, run through it before every trip, and adjust it as your rig and experience grow.

VEHICLE & MECHANICAL PREP

6 items

- Fluids checked/topped (oil, coolant, brake, transmission, diff)
- Tire tread, pressure, and spare tire condition inspected
- Air compressor or tire deflator/inflator packed
- Basic tool kit + duct tape + zip ties + electrical tape
- Spare fuses, fluids top-off bottle, and jumper cables/jump pack
- Full-size or reliable spare tire mounted and accessible

RECOVERY GEAR

6 items

- Traction boards (e.g., MAXTRAX-style)
- Recovery strap or kinetic rope rated for your vehicle weight
- Shackles or soft-shackle attachment points
- Shovel (folding or full-size)
- Gloves for handling straps and winch line
- Basic first-aid kit rated for backcountry use

NAVIGATION & COMMUNICATION

5 items

- Offline GPS app or dedicated GPS unit with downloaded maps
- Paper map or atlas of the region as backup
- Satellite communicator or emergency beacon (if going remote)
- Fully charged phone + backup power bank

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- Trip plan shared with someone not on the trip

CAMP SETUP

7 items

- Tent or rooftop tent, staked and weather-checked
- Sleeping bag rated for expected overnight temps
- Camp chairs and a folding table
- Cooking setup: stove, fuel, pot, basic utensils
- Cooler or fridge with 2+ days of food/water
- Headlamp or lantern + spare batteries
- Trash bags (pack it in, pack it out)

WATER & FUEL

3 items

- Extra drinking water (aim for 1 gal/person/day minimum)
- Water filter or purification tablets as backup
- Extra fuel (jerry can) if traveling beyond your vehicle's range

FIRST-TRIP EXTRAS (EASY TO FORGET)

5 items

- Sunscreen, bug spray, and a small personal toiletry kit
- Layered clothing for temperature swings, rain shell
- Cash for backcountry fees, permits, or small-town stops
- Printed or downloaded permits/reservation confirmations
- Camera or phone mount for the memories

Note: this list covers general fair-weather trips on maintained forest and backcountry roads. Add cold-weather, desert, or extended-remote gear as your trips demand it.