

# Traveling with Kids of All Ages

**PRACTICAL TIPS TO ENSURE YOUR NEXT FAMILY ADVENTURE IS EXHILERATING IN A GOOD WAY!**

**T**raveling with kids is like diving into the deep end of the pool. It's risky. It might be cool and refreshing, but if you lose your balance, the whole thing can flop. These travel tips will ensure your trip is exhilarating in a good way.

### Baby on Board

Whether you'll go by car, train, or plane, plan around baby's needs: eating, sleeping, and pooping. Keep her usual schedule as much as possible. Don't let her get too hungry or too tired. Change diapers often, even if you have to do it at 32,000 feet. Blowouts can ruin a perfectly good trip.

Pack light, but not too light. Having what you need eases stress, but only if provisions don't weigh you down. Take changes of clothing for everyone, including yourself. You don't want to arrive at your destination smelling of sour milk. Bring a stroller if space allows: they're handy for carrying more than the baby. Many airlines check baby gear free of charge. Consult the airline website for details.

If you'll need to heat milk or baby food, find lodging with a fridge and microwave or bring an electric teapot. In transit, offer room-temperature options, like applesauce and cheerios.

How you pack is important, too. Easy access is key. Make an "in transit" kit to stow under the airline seat or near baby's car seat. It's not what you have, it's what you can find that matters. You don't want to unpack everything to find the wipes!

Routine is soothing, so preserve everyday rituals – like bath time and breakfast – if possible. Trying new things is fun, but it can be unsettling. Take it slow.

### Ants in Their Pants

Traveling with toddlers and preschoolers is challenging. Kids can't roam free in transit, so try to maximize movement during travel breaks.

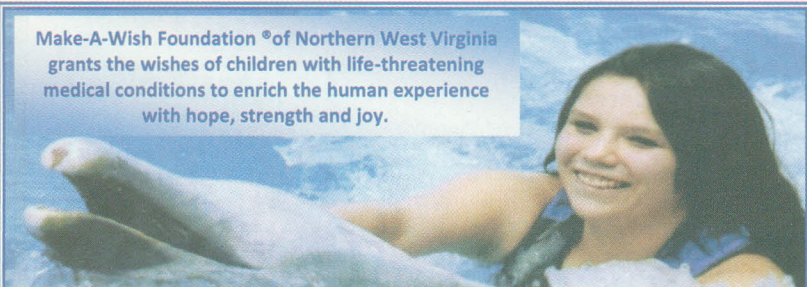
On the road, think parks, playgrounds and rest areas. Pick up food to go, then use your map or GPS to find play space nearby. Keep a blanket in the car to turn pit stops into picnics. Inflatable beach balls and Frisbees are fun anytime, anywhere.

Going up? Don't book the shortest airline itinerary. You'll want ample time to take a walk and stretch, use the restroom, and eat a snack before boarding your next flight, especially if you'll have a squirmy toddler on your lap.

Use training pants for long stretches of travel time if your child isn't 100% accident-free. Some kids won't go there, but if yours will, pull-ups can save your sanity and your seat!

If your child will be bedding down – on the floor – bring a sleeping bag. Let him pick one he likes and practice at home first. Familiarity reduces stress.

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Too much go-go-go wears everyone out. Leave room for rest and relaxation in your itinerary to avoid end-of-day meltdowns. Well-rested travelers have more fun.

### School-Age Adventurers

Let school-age kids participate in travel planning. Use online maps to explore routes, and let them suggest activities they would enjoy. Build a travel notebook containing itinerary and activity information, such as hours and admission fees.

Help kids brainstorm items they'll need. Print a checklist for each child, and have them set out items for inspection. Double check that they have the necessities, then pack them up together. Emphasize their responsibility for keeping track of belongings, too.

Kids will need snacks along the way. Bring non-perishables from home if you can. You'll save money and they will eat healthier. You don't want to buy chips and ice cream every time you fuel up.

In transit, video games and DVD players can keep kids quiet, but they don't stifle family interaction, unless you count back-seat fights over the DS. Make travel time memorable with family games and sing-along music.

Vary vacation activities as best you can. If you take in a museum in the morning, hit the park in the afternoon. You can't please everyone every minute, but striking a balance across the entire trip is what counts.

### Teen Travelers

If your tween or teen doesn't want to be seen with you in public, a family trip may sound like a stretch. Tailor your plans to their concerns and you'll enjoy the trip and each other.

Expect tweens and teens to pack for themselves, and follow up to make sure they have the essentials. Reinforce the need to have the right clothes for each situation. She may want to glam up when she spies a cute boy on the beach. That said, short shorts aren't for out-to-dinner.

Entertainment items come in small packages now: think iPod, digital camera, cell phone, laptop. Score points by funding new tunes or book titles before the trip. Encourage tweens and teens

### Terrific Trip Planning Resources

Buy travel toys and treats in age-based kits from [www.familytravelkits.com](http://www.familytravelkits.com)

Score more than a hundred travel games and fun ideas at [www.momsminivan.com](http://www.momsminivan.com) Most are printable!

All-inclusive resorts have something for everyone. See listing at <http://www.familygetaway.com/travel-offers/listing.php?ctid=9>

Browse what's-to-do in hundreds of locations listed alphabetically at <http://www.vacations2discover.com/destination.php>

Take this inflatable nursing pillow on the road, and don't forget a cover up! <http://www.mybrestfriend.com/products/travel-pillow>

Privacy is priceless, and (probably) cheaper than you think. Find family-friendly vacation rentals at [www.vrbo.com](http://www.vrbo.com)

### Going Up?

#### Visit these sites before your family takes flight.

TSA screens all airline passengers, even kids. Familiarize yourself with current TSA rules at [www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/children/](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/children/)

Don't bring clunky car seats aboard aircraft. Learn about the CARES restraint system and find stores at [www.kidsflysafe.com](http://www.kidsflysafe.com)

Layover at one of these kid-friendly airports [www.familytravelforum.com/how/advice/11216-Family-Friendly-Airports-Make-Great-Layovers.html](http://www.familytravelforum.com/how/advice/11216-Family-Friendly-Airports-Make-Great-Layovers.html)

to document their experiences digitally. This stokes creativity and facilitates that "what I did on my summer vacation" essay down the road.

Plan for alone time. Give tweens and teens breathing room by renting a condo or vacation home, or booking adjoining rooms at hotels. Can't afford that? Find alternatives. Honoring personal space pays off.

Within reason, help older kids stay connected to friends back home. You don't want to watch your

daughter text her boyfriend during a Broadway play, but it's not reasonable to expect her to unplug from her social network completely either. Social media and cell phones can preserve their relationships and your sanity.

*Heidi Smith Luedtke has traveled overseas and cross-country with her kids and lived to tell about it. Follow her blog on parenting as leadership at [www.leadingmama.com](http://www.leadingmama.com)*

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