



Tips for traveling with children

Turning traveling with children into Child's Play...

Excerpts from "Living Out of a Suitcase", by Anita Pagliasso-Balamane

When traveling with small children bring each one of them a small, cloth drawstring bag that is easily made out of scrap material. Fill it with little things kids enjoy playing with like a new box of washable markers or crayons depending on age of child, small coloring book, paint with water book, box of raisins, fruit roll-ups, or other healthy snacks, their own pack of gum, small travel pack of Kleenex, an easy to read book, a flexible (if possible) character to play with or other small toy. They love digging in the bag finding things and they can use the bag throughout their trip.

Instead of listening to lots of "buy me this, buy me that" routines when you travel, tell them how much you will give them for souvenirs at each destination, and then they get to decide how to spend their money. This has proved to be extremely successful.

Upon arrival after flying, purchase a small Styrofoam cooler before going to the hotel. Most hotels, campgrounds, etc. have ice available - often for free. Purchase groceries in a local store. Refrigerated items may be stored in the small cooler, even on the road.

When traveling with children, purchase postcards from your vacation destinations, let them write on the back about their thoughts and experiences. Punch a hole in the top corner and assemble them onto an expandable ring. You will have an enjoyable time reflecting back on past vacations experienced during childhood years.

When traveling with children ALWAYS carry a current photo of each child. This will prove invaluable if you accidentally get separated. As a service for our client's, **RENAISSANCE TRAVEL** will laminate your child's fingerprints with a current photo.

If you are in a crowded place or attraction, arrange for a meeting place in case you get separated.

When flying with small children, carry on a plastic, restaurant drink cup with a lid and a straw. The flight attendant will gladly fill up your child's cup for you. This is a comfortable way to avoid spills.

With older children walkie-talkies can be invaluable for keeping track of everyone in busy tourist areas. Look for the ones with the widest range. Kids will have fun using them as well.

Save and reuse those plastic zip bags that your new bedspread, pillowcases and curtains came in. They are great to carry makeup, medicines, and crayons for the kids, even a snack or possibly a change of clothes. The small ones are just the right sizes for several uses on the plane or in the car.

Make a sleeping bag style roll of each of your children's daily vacation outfits with the socks, shirt, etc. secured with a rubber band. You won't believe how much easier it is for them to find their outfit each morning. They pull out their rubber-banded outfit with all the pieces together. Even the little ones can get it out of the suitcase and put their clothes on unattended. No more, "Mommy, I can't find my socks!"

Parents taking children on extended trips or abroad should make an appointment with the pediatrician well in advance to be sure their children get pre-travel check-ups and are up to date with all childhood vaccinations.

Call the airlines at least two days ahead to get meals for children. This is especially important for those who have allergies or who are just finicky eaters. Bring along plenty of your children's favorite foods, beverages and snacks for long flights as well as reading material, games and other activities they enjoy.

A 24-hour supply of food and beverages is recommended for infants and toddlers in case of major delays.

Children often experience earaches as a result of changes in air pressure during flights, especially during take-off and descent. Bring chewing gum and encourage them to yawn, chew and swallow. Children flying with even a mild cold should take a decongestant prior to takeoff and landing.

Pack all important medications and those that might be needed during flight (prescription drugs, allergy medications, Tylenol, etc.) in a carry-on bag.

Check with the airline to see if you are permitted to bring an infant seat or fold-up stroller on board.

Make sure older children know the address and telephone number of where you are staying and all other emergency information. Give younger children a card with the same information.

In hot climates, make sure children wear hats and other protective clothing, drink plenty of fluids and regularly apply sunscreen with at least SPF30.

There are special preparations of insect repellents made specifically for children. In the areas where the risk of mosquito bites is high, it is important to apply the sunscreen first and the insect repellent next, as the vapors from the insect repellent are necessary in order for them to work.

Keep in mind the pace of travel for children is often quite different from that of adults. Younger children generally need a much slower pace with plenty of food, beverages and rest stops.

Pack an entire day's worth of clothing, a change of clothes, disposable diapers, and food in a Ziploc bag. Make one bag for each day of travel. Then put one on baby and a spare in the diaper bag!

Make a countdown chain out of construction paper. Let them tear off one link off each day to really build the excitement of the trip.

Take disposable items such as bibs, anti-bacterial wipes and plastic eating utensils. When you are done with the items, just toss.

When only one parent is traveling with children outside of the country you must have a signed and notarized letter from both parents stating that permission is given to the accompanying parent, or temporary guardian, to take the child out of the country. Also include the necessary medical release forms.

Discuss the security clearance process with your children so they will not be frightened or surprised. Don't travel with toys that could be mistaken for weapons. If you have photo IDs for your children, bring them.

Take individually wrapped hand wipes. They are great for faces, hand and even stains on clothing. Stain remover wipes work well for traveling.

Books on tape are always a hit!

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