

PARENTS STAY SANE

Holiday Travel with Kids



Holiday Travel With Kids

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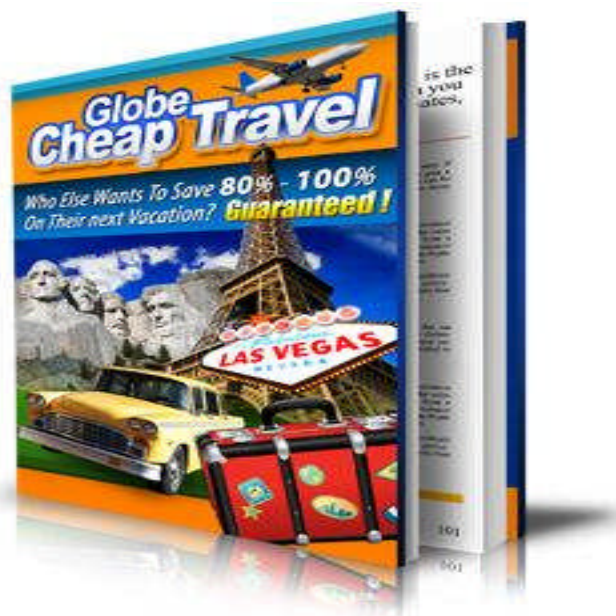
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Holiday Travel With Kids

“Mommy, Are We There Yet?”

We’ve all been on trips where crying children, sibling fights and repetitive complaints have turned a trip into a nightmare to be endured, rather than enjoyed. We’ve forgotten favorite toys, wished we brought crayons, and realized we forgot to buy a bite stick for that insect sting (or left it on the bathroom counter).

We’ve had kids get sick, hungry, angry, bored, miserable and tired. (At one time, we’ve probably even *been* those kids!)

But history is not doomed to repeat itself. We can turn a potential nightmare trip into one that’s a fun, family bonding experience – yes, even the sort the commercials like to portray.

All it takes is proper planning – and a few good, tried-and-true tips and resources!

But there’s more to traveling with your children than just keeping them entertained. Things to think about and plan for include:

- Physical safety
- Security
- Keeping them fed and well-hydrated
- Providing medical first aid and care
- Packing efficiently

- Obtaining and carrying correct documentation
- Being aware of conditions in developing countries (if we are traveling to one)
- Safety precautions for different types of vehicles – usually planes, trains, buses and automobiles.

The Art Of Packing

Only one “rule” applying to adult travelers also applies to children: **Pack as light as you can.** After that, depending on your child’s age, there are vital differences.

So how do you pack lightly – and yet still bring absolutely everything you need to keep your child comfortable and happy? **The secret is in the list** – but not just any old list (especially not the sort you leave behind).

First of all, let’s consider what form that list is going to take. And start it well ahead of your trip.

Here are some ideas that have worked for other families...

The Computer List

If you have a **favorite list-making program** on computer, this is where many parents start listing items they are going to need for an upcoming trip. The risk with keeping your list on computer and making it all by yourself, however, is that no one else “gets a say” (or **they forget to remind you they need an important item.**)

By all means keep that list on computer in your “Our Trip” folder – along with your itinerary and e-tickets and other important electronic documents. But do provide a **secondary list location** where other members of the family can manually add their two-cents worth.

10 Tips For A “Team Effort” Packing List

If you have two or more school-age children, a magnetic white board attached to the fridge is the way to go. Failing that, a plain old ordinary list, left in a prominent, semi-permanent place.

1. Use **different colored** washable or erasable marker for each child, to act as a quick visual “cue”
2. Have a color for you too!
3. **Divide** the list into “**Must Have**” and “**Would Like To Bring**”

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4. Explain in advance that there will (or won't) be a rigid number of items per child – but there *will* be a cut off point, load-wise

(One popular plan is to get each child a backpack for “extra” on-the-road items – and to stress they will have to carry and be responsible for it themselves. In other words, if it doesn't fit in their one designated backpack or tub, it doesn't go.)

5. Pre-load the list with essentials (using **your** special-color marker, so they know this is mom's decree). This will accomplish **2 things**: not only will you know the items you deem essential are safely on there, so you can't forget them – but seeing items already on a list is a known cue to help people “get started” on their own ideas.
6. If one or more of your children is very young, either fill out the list for them or designate one of your older children to be their “writer”
7. Call a family meeting. Go over the list before the trip, to make sure nothing has been missed.
8. If one child wants to bring too many items, help them by negotiating about what's reasonable and what's just not going to work. Explain why.
9. The day before the trip (if possible) **get involved** in helping each child pack. Make checking off the items on the list with their special markers a fun project.

The Organized List

If your children are too young for this – that is, they’re babies or very small toddlers – quietly start the list yourself. Keep it in a prominent place (for example, on the fridge or beside the phone) – and keep it out of reach of your toddlers!

Dividing the list into categories seems to work for many moms. Some suggested categories:

- **Medication**
- **Vital Toys**
- **Favorite Books**
- **To Be Purchased For The Trip**
- **Bedding**
- **Clothing**

21 Things Not To Forget

Depending on where you are going, there are different “must have” items parents inevitably forget. Here are some suggestions to help you eliminate these aggravating omissions:

1. Footwear for wading in lakes with rocky bottoms
2. “Anti-Bite” stick for children
3. Special sunscreen for children
4. Sunhats
5. Allergy medication and inhalers