

FAMILY RESOURCE

C O N N E C T I O N

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“When it comes to planning a family vacation, the more prepared you are, the happier your children will be!”



Great Family Vacations

Taking children on vacation can be a daunting task for parents. Countless questions course through your mind: How long will it take before they become bored? What happens if they become ill? How long can we keep them happy in the car? On the plane? Will there be kid-friendly places to eat?

In an attempt to lessen some of these fears, here are a few simple guidelines for making family vacations fun, tips for traveling with small children in the car and on the plane, and things to do when you finally reach your destination.

Simple Tips to Keep Your Vacation from Turning into a Trip

How many times have you said, “If only I had thought of that?” Well, here are a few things to know or bring on your family vacation so that you will be prepared for every possible situation. Remember, the more prepared you are, the happier your children will be.

- Have a family meeting to determine where everyone wants to go. You might be pleasantly surprised at the choices children make. Once the destination is determined, go to the library and check out books related to the destination. Look them over with your children and watch their excitement grow.
- Extend a business trip to create a family vacation. Kids enjoy learning more about their parent’s work and what it entails.
- Plan ahead. Ask the children to join in the planning process. But also be prepared for disappointment — illness and other calamities may force the vacation to be placed on hold.
- Pack more than you will need. You may believe you are packing for a small army, but it will be worth it in the long run to bring those “in case” items. Keep some clothing close at hand for kids to change into if you are driving at night or have a long flight.
- Fill a “grab it” bag with crayons, coloring books, and crackers to bring into a restaurant or other place where you might have to wait.
- Give children their own backpack to hold the essentials they believe they will need in the car, on the plane, or in the hotel room. You may be surprised at the cool and quiet activity items your children will pack to keep them occupied.
- Know how much your children can endure. If they can only process one activity a day, do not force them to do more than that.

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Mission

To open “New Horizons” of self-esteem and potential for the little people entrusted to our care, their families, and our employees by providing and continuously improving the best child development on the planet!



- Ask your pediatrician for a referral. It will be comforting to have the name of a doctor when you are in a different area.
- Try to get a nonstop flight even if it costs a few more dollars. You may also want to call the airline and find out which flights have the fewest number of passengers and book your family on one of those.
- Find a hotel with a pool. After a day of activities, children often have a reserve of energy to spend at the pool or the beach.
- Look for hotels that offer Kids Clubs and activities as these offer parents a chance to relax, even for a few hours. The break can be beneficial to all.
- Pack some disposable cameras or buy an inexpensive camera for each of your little ones. It is fun to see what children view as important memories of the vacation. If you have a video camera, why not let school-age children use it to tape their own vacation video?

Car Tips

Are we there yet? I'm hungry. I have to go potty. I'm bored. Sound familiar? If you have ever traveled with young children you know how difficult it can be to keep children entertained during a long car trip. The following tips and games will make travel by car fun and enjoyable for everyone.

- Break your trip up into small segments during the day. Stopping at parks is always a good idea and you can explore little towns along the way. This will give the kids the opportunity to get out of the car and run around. If you are driving vast distances, do a lot of the driving at night, after dinner, as the children will be sleepy.
- Depending on your children's ages, keep an atlas and maps in the car for them to follow along so that they can see where they are going. Have them pick places they would like to visit along the way.
- Play "I Spy," the license plate game, or an alphabet game such as "I'm going to Tahoe and I'm bringing with me an aardvark, a banana, a computer, and a doorknob, etc."
- Consider giving each child a tape recorder and headset. Older children may enjoy their own portable CD players, MP3s, or iPods for listening to their own music.
- Storytelling audiocassettes may also be a great boredom buster. One good title is *Tell It Again and Again* from storyteller Naomi Leithold.

Plane Tips

Limited space, overcrowding, and less than desirable food make air travel challenging for adults. For a small child used to having room to move about and lots of things to do, air travel is particularly stressful, especially after a long delay in an airport. The following tips are meant to make plane travel less arduous and more enjoyable for both parents and children.

- Pack extra food for your children. Crackers, cubed cheese, juice, a bottle of water, pretzels, raisins, and cheese crackers will help them when hunger sets in.
- Remember to pack chewing gum. Even if you do not normally allow gum for your children, chewing gum will help relieve pressure in the ears. For babies, a bottle or a pacifier also does the trick.
- Pack an extra set of clothes for each child for those unexpected, yet common spills.
- Take your time getting off the plane. This will help ensure that nothing is left behind and you will feel less frazzled as you disembark. Conversely, be prepared to get on the plane when the crew makes the announcement for people traveling with small children. You and your family can get settled into your seats, grab pillows and blankets, and stow away your stuff before the other passengers have even stepped foot onto the plane.
- And, as soon as your children fall asleep, take a nap yourself. Read a book and take a few minutes to relax. You deserve to pamper yourself for those few stolen minutes.

Things to Do Once You Reach Your Destination

With children, it is the simple things that sometimes become the big memory makers. Once you reach your destination, consider exploring the new area by visiting local zoos, parks, or beaches. Get a local paper and look for free concerts or plays that may be in area outdoor parks or picnic areas. To beat the heat, look for a few indoor cool-down activities like visiting a bead store to make vacation necklaces or a ceramic store for painting a vacation treasure to keep. Hunting for shells and other treasures on the beach can also be a special time with your children. ♥



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