



TIPS FOR TRAVELING INTERNATIONALLY WITH KIDS

By Bruce Kirkby and Christine Pitkanen, “Big Crazy Family Adventure”

1. **Immunizations.** Visit a travel clinic three months in advance to ensure you have time for all vaccinations. Our advice: get both required and recommended vaccinations. More than once, we’ve been happy to have peace of mind that our children were protected during an outbreak abroad.
2. **Passports.** Ensure your children’s passports are valid for six months beyond your travel dates. Note: in some countries, infant passports are only valid for three years, so be careful.
3. **Long flights.** We didn’t fly on our most recent journey, but we’ve been on plenty of long flights in the past. Key strategy: bring an armful of new toys and books, stickers, pencils, crayons. Load your tablet with new apps. Kids have a tiny attention span, so you’ll need to keep them engaged from takeoff to landing. And bring some healthy snacks too. Waiting for in-flight meals to be served will surely lead to blood sugar crashes.
4. **Teach them how to say *hello, goodbye* and *thank you* in the local language before arriving!** They’ll love trying the new words, and it will open doors everywhere.
5. **Bring a bit of home with you.** A favorite stuffed animal, blanket or water bottle. Anything that will ground them and remind them of home, even on the other side of the world.
6. **Limit the toys.** A great strategy for bringing toys from home is to buy a small nylon sack (think large pencil case or toiletry bag) and leave your kids free to bring any toys they want from home... as long as they fit in the sack.
7. **Keep as many home routines in place as possible.** Breakfast, familiar snacks, mommy-time, TV time. Also, foreign cultures operate on wildly different schedules – notably dining late. Maintaining your family’s home schedule can be difficult, but worth its weight in avoided tantrums and exhaustion.
8. **Sleep and food.** These are the two keys to kids’ happiness anywhere in the world: keep your kids well fed and well rested and the rest will fall into place. Pick and choose late nights carefully. Build your agenda around your children. Don’t be too ambitious and pack the days full. Leave lots of down time. And always have snacks on hand for times when the next meal is nowhere in sight.
9. **Options, choices and plans.** Let the kids know your plans early, and even let them in on the decision-making process by giving them some options each day. Having them responsible for and aware of the itinerary will reduce whining immeasurably.

10. **Be open to serendipity.** Traveling with kids will open new worlds and new possibilities you could never imagine, so when opportunity knocks – a local invites you for dinner, a fisherman offers to show you his boat – go with it. These are often the most rewarding moments of any journey.
11. **Patience.** Traveling with kids takes patience, so pack yours. It's worth it, because nothing is so rewarding.
12. **A.P.W – Always Pack Wipes.** And hand sanitizer.
13. **Travel light.** Be ruthless as you go through your luggage. Only bring what you absolutely need. In this day and age, you can pick up almost anything you need anywhere in the world, so if you are not sure, leave it at home.

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