

What you need to know before travelling with kids

Going on a vacation or travelling long distances with the family is one of the most exciting ways to enhance the family bond. However, travelling can get a little tricky when there are kids or infants in the family.

Often people avoid long trips or vacations when they have children because they think it is going to be too much trouble. Though the parents' fears may be legitimate, the travelling experience can be made interesting, easy and enjoyable if you know more about the factors that affect kids while travelling.

Being prepared and anticipating potential problems in advance will mean that travelling with kids is not that difficult.

Change of Conditions

One of the factors you need to be aware of is 'change of conditions'. When travelling, especially on long trips, there are lots of new and unfamiliar circumstances.

The purpose of going on holidays is to get out of the daily routine and whilst adults enjoy the change, for children, it is different altogether. Not doing things kids do regularly can result in confusion, uncertainty and insecurity. In fact, this is often the opposite to what they are used to experiencing, because during their formative years parents are taught the importance of maintaining a routine.

Up to a certain age, children don't understand why they are not at home and why they are travelling. They don't interpret the words; 'vacation', 'holiday', 'entertainment' etc. the same way adults do. So remember that your children can be troubled by the changes that they have to face. They don't have their beds to sleep in, they don't eat sitting at their regular place at home. If you notice, even at home they will stick to the same dining chair for every meal. This makes them feel familiar and comfortable. So when you throw your kids into a totally new environment they can find it hard to cope.

Food

Another potential problem is that children don't get to eat their regular food, especially when traveling abroad. This can mean a child who is normally a good eater becomes fussy or refuses to eat altogether.

To alleviate the situation try to keep to their food timings as much as possible and also seek out food they normally prefer.

You can also start introducing them to new foods at home, which they may experience during their travels. It's a good idea to get them excited about the fantastic new things they're going to try.

My friend Katie did exactly that before taking her 4 year old to Greece. Approximately 3 months before their flight she had a 'Greek Night' once a week where they would have

olives, souvlaki (which is basically just delicious meat on a stick), Greek salads, tzatziki (yogurt and cucumber dip) and other delights. By the time her daughter arrived in Rhodes she felt proud that she knew the names of the Greek dishes she was being served and confident in what she was eating.

If you're able, have a food back up plan by packing some of their favorites. This may not always be possible if your trip is overseas where strict quarantine regulations apply.

Jetlag

Due to jetlag, or any situation where the child does not have the comfort of their own bed, it is likely they will not get enough sleep. When children are sleep deprived, you know there is usually trouble. They get irritated even with minor provocation and they become less able, and willing, to adjust to new environments.

Consider your travelling times and plan to align them with naps and night-time sleep so the entire family's body clock does not suffer.

Boredom

There is one major area that many parents fail to address and that is how to deal with boredom! Every parent dreads the question, "Are we there yet?", as it usually signals the beginning of the end of temperate behavior.

You need to understand that children don't always fancy the things you do. For example, you may enjoy the beauty of a long scenic drive, but your child is yet to learn how to appreciate nature.

When your child has become bored, they don't know what they want. It's best to prevent your child from reaching that stage. Once your child gets bored, they will stop enjoying even those things they normally like doing.

Children can also feel guilty about frustrating everyone and for being stubborn, so don't make it worse by telling them how bad they are and how much trouble they are causing the family with their tantrums.

The basis of all the problems and boredom is unfamiliarity. For adults boredom results when there is no change in the things that they do regularly. We get bored doing the same things over and over, but kids get bored when they aren't engaged in activities they're used to.

To help them cope with the situation, reduce as many changes as possible. Carry their beloved blanket, their favorite toys and you may want to consider buying travel games you play *before* the trip to determine if they are a 'hit' or 'miss' with your child. Then you only take the games that are most engaging which saves on space and the frustration.

Moreover keep them involved, assign them responsibilities, and make them feel part of everything that is happening.

Be Prepared for Medical Issues

Carry the required medication and consult your family physician prior to packing medicines. Both kids and adults are more vulnerable to colds and flu while travelling due to change of climate, temperature, air-conditioning etc.

If you are traveling to a non-English speaking country it can be challenging to communicate the symptoms to obtain the correct medication. I can still remember the time I was standing in a chemist in Nice, France miming blowing my nose and coughing to explain my family member's symptoms. Humorous for them no doubt, but not so enjoyable for me knowing I had a coughing and splurting child in the hotel room.

By being prepared *before* you embark on your travels you will minimize mayhem and maximize fun.

Happy trails!

"Fun Activities For Kids" shows you how to keep your children entertained for hours. Keep it handy when traveling and you will never face the dreaded, "Are we there yet?". For more information on how to prevent boredom on rainy days, while traveling, during the holidays or when you JUST NEED SOME TIME OUT visit:

www.planfunactivitiesforkids.com