

5 Great Tips for Traveling With Your Children

Written by Rachel Roland

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Rachel Roland is a mom on a mission - exploring beautiful Arizona with her two little companions, Jeremiah and Sarah, in search of the best restaurants, attractions, and products for you and your children. See what she has in store for your family today!



(Oh yeah, we love the portable DVD player!)

After all the recent press surrounding a family who was [kicked off a flight due to their uncooperative toddler](#), I felt compelled to share the tips and tricks that help our family travel - even with the little toddlers!

1) Preparation is key! Not only preparing what you're going to be traveling with, but preparing your children for travel. If they haven't been on an airline before, start talking about things that happen at the airport. Discuss waiting in line for checking in, or waiting for security, and start thinking of games you can play while waiting. We like to play 'I Spy' or the guessing game (someone gives clues to what they're thinking of) to pass the time. Waiting in line can be difficult for even the most patient grown ups, so if you can, plan your flights (or car trip) during off-peak times. Be sure to talk about how the children will need to sit in the airplane - and bring their carseats if you're able to. Sometimes the familiarity of a carseat can comfort a little traveler and help them stay calm. Flying or driving during naptime can be hit or miss - so this is something you'll need to plan depending on your child.



(Jeremiah and I, Cancun 2011)

2) Pack like it's the end of the world. Not really, but especially when travelling by air, you have no idea what you'll be up against. Layovers can turn into overnight stays with bad weather, and delayed flights can turn your trip to paradise into misery. When my children were still in diapers, I always packed the number of diapers I thought I would need plus 5 more. I'd throw in an extra shirt for me, along with changes of clothes for both kids. Now that Jeremiah and Sarah are older, they both have their own backpacks that I fill with small toys, games, crayons and paper, and of course, snacks. As you can see, we do not shy away from electronics in the airplane - a DVD player can be a lifesaver. I also like using a laptop in the car - it has a bigger screen.



(Jeremiah and Sarah have travelled enough to get their own carry ons!)

3) Leave time for the unexpected. Rushing through the airport can frustrate and upset the most experienced traveler, so make sure you arrive with enough time to check in, go through security, and have a nice window before you need to board your plane. We like to walk around and explore the terminal with the kids before boarding, to give them some time to get out that energy only children seem to have! It also gives you a chance to make a last stop in the bathroom and pick up any forgotten items in the shops. If you're driving, plan time for extra bathroom stops or even stops to just stretch your legs. These are great ways to break up long drives, but can also add hours onto your total trip time.

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(Sarah in Washington, 2010 - seriously, how cute is she?!?)

4) Whatever you do, stay calm. I'll never forget the trip back from Washington a few years ago, when Sarah was a wee baby. She screamed for what felt like the entire flight. I felt so mortified and embarrassed that my baby was being so loud - she was maybe 5 months old, so there wasn't much reasoning with her, and when I stayed calm and didn't let myself get worked up, she responded. This is true for older children as well - the more upset we become, the more upset they become.

5) When all else fails, pull out all the stops. A toddler tantrum in a restaurant is one thing - you can (and should) remove the child. A tantrum at 30,000 feet is a whole different animal. I have, and I would in the future, *give my child whatever he or she wants* at this point - **as long as it doesn't interfere with the comfort of surrounding passengers.** Kicking seats, grabbing people, running the aisles are absolute no's, but candy? Yes. You want to put stickers all over your shirt? Yes. My shirt? Absolutely. Whatever it takes so the whole plane doesn't have to be subjected to a child screaming - because no one can get away. This is an airplane-only rule - I figure the 10-20 hours we spend on a plane every year is okay - I certainly don't parent this way on a daily basis!

In the end, the chances are very good that your child will travel fine - most kids love the experience and all the different things to see. We have always traveled with our children and it's been a great experience for them, and I think you should do the same. Don't let the fear of what 'could' happen hold you back - just be prepared!!



I'm Rachel - a mom, wife, and 'green' blogger at [Small Steps On Our Journey](#). If you want me to come visit your place of business, have any questions on this article or suggestions for a future article, you can email me at rachel@smallstepsonourjourney.com or tweet me at [@rachelroland](#).