

TRAVELING WITH KIDS

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Traveling long distance should be as much fun for kids as it is for adults. Yet many times that is not the case. Here are some things to consider. Are you going somewhere where your kids will have fun e.g. to the beach or to a theme park? You can bet that a weeklong trip to see your old Aunt Tilly will not engender any enthusiasm by anyone but you, and even then it will probably be a stretch. Have you planned for weather changes? What if it buckets down with rain for a week? Have you got a plan B? How are the kids going to fare cooped up in the car for the 9-hour drive? Have you thought of things for them to do? Do you think your three year old will sit still in the plane for 5 hours? What about other passengers sitting next to your family?

If you are thinking about a fun vacation, here are some tips. Don't tell your kids your plans until you are sure you can get the time off work and enough money to allow you to have a good time. As parents, discuss a number of vacation options that include fun things for the kids to do. About four weeks before the event tell the kids and let them have input into the choice of vacation. If they get pocket money suggest they save some of it for spending money there.

Think about the actual trip. This is a vacation so rushed travel is no fun for anyone. Make it leisurely and be determined that you are all going to have fun. Leave the work laptop and work cell phone at home. Make sure the kids know your behavioral expectations for a FUN trip e.g. no arguing and fighting in the car, no touching stuff in stores and keeping close to parents at all times. Try to keep the kids to home routines as far as possible. Leave at a reasonable hour, and make sure everyone has a good breakfast. Ensure you will all be comfortable in the car. Give your kids a little lunch pack (minimal candy) so they can graze along the way. Schedule regular pit stops and things to see. Watch fluid intake or the stops may become frustrating.

Make sure that the kids get out and run around to expel some of their pent up excitement. To alleviate the inevitable, "Are we there yet?" question every five minutes, give them a simple map so they can follow progress. Remember if you are getting sore and weary because of the travel, your kids will feel twice as bad. If you are becoming frustrated, the kids will feel it too and the fun part will dissipate.

If you are traveling by plane, take little backpacks with fun things for the kids to do and eat. Place these under the seat in front so you don't have to keep fishing in the overhead bins. Try to time it so your toddler is very tired or very alert so they either fall asleep or can be happily occupied during the travel. As cabin pressure changes, ear pressure does also. Make sure you have fluid for a small child to drink while the plane is ascending or descending.

I have often wondered why parents take children under 5-6 years old to big expensive theme parks. Small children can become totally over-stimulated and get tired and cranky very easily as parents 'make the most' of their day at one of these parks. Think about what a child will remember long term and go on trips that are going to allow them to take time out, rest and sleep and therefore really enjoy themselves. A miserable child makes those around them uncomfortable too. We have all sat in close proximity to a tired, hungry or sugar laden child at some time or another. Vacations can be fabulous when we think ahead to make sure that our little people are appropriately catered for.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.