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20 TIPS FOR TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN



By [SITE EDITOR \(HTTP://WWW.ROUGHGUIDES.COM/AUTHOR/SITE-EDITOR/\)](http://www.roughguides.com/author/site-editor/)
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Travelling with children can be a bit like taking a herd of wild goats on holiday. Whether they're your own or someone else's, factoring a child's needs into your travels involves a lot more than sticking on a CD full of pop music and making toilet stops.

Here two Rough Guides writers share their hard-won wisdom. First up, mum of two Hayley Spurway offers advice on travelling with toddlers, then Ross McGovern reveals how he manages to travel with older children.

HAYLEY SPURWAY'S TIPS FOR TRAVELLING WITH TODDLERS

TAKE YOUR TIME

The greatest thing you can take – whether at the airport, sightseeing or getting from A to B – is extra time. Toddlers love to explore and don't care for the time pressures of travel, so you're more likely to all retain your cool if you factor the faffing, gawping, stalling, toilet stops and tantrums into your timeframe.

BOOK AHEAD

Whether you're camping or staying in hotels, it pays to book ahead. Trying to retain the spontaneity of travel BC (Before Children) doesn't pay off if you arrive at your destination to find you can't bag a bed or pitch and have to hit the road again with tired, hungry toddlers melting down in the backseat.

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GIVE THEM A CAMERA

Giving toddlers their own (robust, child-friendly) camera encourages them to observe their surroundings and focus on what interests them. You might be surprised at the results from their knee-high view. Amongst pictures of feet and wheels, my three-year-old has shot flowers, animals, helicopters, boats, rocks and rabbit poo.

BE PREPARED FOR THE CLIMATE

It's simple advice, but children dressed comfortably for the weather and terrain will be happier in a new environment. With all the gear available, there's no excuse for dressing toddlers in ski-suits four sizes too big, forgetting their gloves, or leaving them barefoot on a beach where sea urchins lurk.



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PACK PULL-UPS FOR POTTY TRAINING

Planes and public transport during the potty training days can be a nightmare. As if you didn't have enough in your hand luggage, now you're expected to add a potty, three changes of clothes and bags of wet, stinky pants. Potty-training gurus may disagree, but if toddlers are still having lots of little accidents then I'm all for putting them back into Pull-Ups on the plane.

BE APP-Y

Thanks to toddler-friendly apps, there's no need to cram a toy box into your hand luggage when travelling by plane. By all means take a book and a magic scribbler (crayons just get lost down the side of seats), but the most compact form of entertainment is a device loaded with apps and games.

USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Most toddlers love the novelty of travelling by train, bus and boat, so ditch the hire car and use public transport where possible. In Switzerland, my two-year-old would repeat the names of the metro stops as they were announced – provoking ripples of laughter and making him even more excited about boarding the train each day.



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INVEST IN A CHILD LOCATOR

In my experience, toddlers aren't fans of reins, backpacks with a leash, or any infringement on their freedom. Keep tabs on them at airports, train stations and crowded attractions with a child locator. The child wears a small unit (strapped to a belt or shoe) and you keep the transmitter. If you lose your child set off the alarm and follow the sound to find them.

KEEP BUGS AT BAY

Whether you're travelling to Paignton or Peru, antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer are handbag essentials. A wipe of the cutlery in restaurants where you're unsure of hygiene, or a squirt of hand sanitizer when there's no washing facilities, can zap a few germs and prevent toddlers catching some common bugs.

DON'T FORGET THE MEDICINE

Whether they're out of routine, jet-lagged, or eating less healthily, kids always seem to get ill on holiday. Dampen the impact of broken nights, frayed temperaments and fevers by packing an easy-to-swallow medicine such as Calpol in the UK. Other basic ingredients in your first aid kit should include antiseptic wipes, plasters, sting treatment, and a thermometer.

ROSS MCGOVERN'S TRAVEL TIPS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

DON'T LET THE CHILDREN PACK THEIR OWN RUCKSACKS

We once went on a trip with our eight-year-old, who complained incessantly that her backpack was too heavy. The reason why? She'd brought along her entire collection of fossils "just in case". Do let the children have input but remember to edit this heavily before departure.



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KEEP THE ACTIVITIES COMING

If you're heading out on a long journey have a collection of toys to be handed out once an hour. Handheld puzzles, tiny colouring books, stickers, wordsearches and even tiny packs of Plasticine will pass the time on a long flight or car journey.

HAVE A NUMBER OF FAMILY GAMES READY IN CASE OF DELAY.

Punch-buggy and padiddle are popular, if violent, favourites for car journeys, whereas more cerebral ones like the Alphabet game are safer for air travel.



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AVOID SWEETS

Resist the temptation to keep them going on a long journey by feeding them sweets. Pack a mixture of savoury snacks like cheese cubes, breadsticks, fruit and bagels – anything to avoid arriving in a strange city with children in the middle of a sugar rush.

ENCOURAGE THEM TO KEEP A TRAVEL JOURNAL

Get your kids drawing and listing things they've seen and interesting foods they've tried. Who knows, this might also encourage them to try different foods. Collecting postcards from places you visit and asking them to write themselves a message on the back means they can reach adulthood with a library of memories all their own.



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REMEMBER THE MEDICINE

It should already be on your travelling list, but having kids along means carrying a small first aid kit is all the more vital: plasters, antihistamines and sachets of painkilling syrup can save a lot of stress later on. Antimalarials are also available in liquid form.

BRAND THEM

If you're going to be travelling through busy, crowded airports or transport hubs, write your mobile number on your child's arm in biro in case they get lost.

CHECK YOUR PASSPORTS

Children's passports only last five years and they have a habit of running out when you're not looking. Allow at least four weeks to renew one. The cost of a last-minute passport is astronomical, and particularly galling if you only realise it's necessary when already in the ferry queue at Calais. Don't ask us how we know this. We just do.



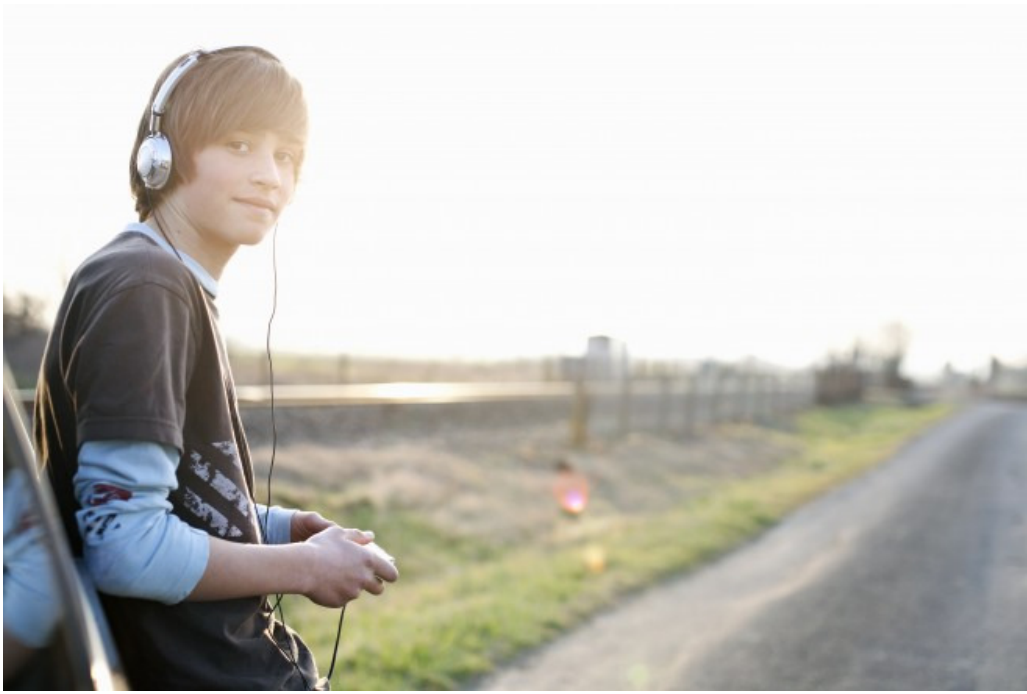
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REMEMBER THE BABY WIPES

Even if all your children are long out of nappies, don't forget the baby wipes. They're useful for washing hands, cleaning toilet seats, and wiping down restaurant tables. In the same spirit, little bottles of hand cleanser can be a lifesaver in some countries, but check the travel regulations for liquids well in advance.

ENGAGE AND INVOLVE OLDER CHILDREN

The best way to avoid a soul-destroying sulk from your teenager is to involve them in the planning of the holiday and ask them for input on what they'd like to do. You might be surprised to hear it's not spending all day on the internet.



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Real Family Trips



Great post. Thanks!
"Happy kids mean happy parents." ;)

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Brandon Stoff

Great article! I love the - getting the older kids involved more! That is great! Have them plan part of the trip out - or give them some responsibility! Planning a trip to Florida? Check out my site that will help you plan your trip! www.floridatripguides.com

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Ricardo Ribeiro Marinho · Chief Executive Officer at American Vis Corporation

Hi, About the locator, I am launching this campaign with a very nice child phone GPS. It is at the <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/hera-gps-watch-phone-for-children> or go to indiegogo.com and search for hera, I hope it can help.

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