

## Travel With Children

Traveling with little ones has got to be the absolute worst part of family vacationing. Here are some suggestions for making the trip easier on your precious babies...ok, ok...tips to make the trip easier on you.

1. **Snacks** - You must bring snacks. Notice I didn't say "healthy" snacks like good parenting advice should say. When you're traveling the goal is peace and happiness for all - if this means your child eats m&m's and pop tarts so be it. Obviously, you don't want your little one to get a tummy ache from stuffing his face with chocolate, but make sure you pack plenty of snacks that Junior will enjoy and appreciate. For some this may mean carrots and raisins, for some this may mean fruit snacks and dry cereal. The last thing you want during a road trip is a fight with your child about the importance of healthy snacking. You want him to be happy and occupied and a snack is often the best way to cure a case of crankiness.
2. **Water** - On this one I will suggest you go with a healthy option. Especially on long trips, you feel better if you're sipping on water versus something sugary. Plus a water bottle can be refilled for free anytime you stop and you don't have to worry about trying to keep it cold while you travel. (Always use refillable water bottles vs. disposable - benefits your budget as well as the environment.)
3. **Activities** - Make sure your child has several different options for fun activities. Books, hand-held electronics, coloring pages, favorite stuffed animal, etc. If you have more than one child try to bring toys that don't have to be shared or establish a turn-taking schedule ahead of time to avoid fussing. On very long trips you could have a "no toy time" periodically to encourage the kids to take in the scenery and contribute to the family discussion or to play a travel game - then they will have greater appreciation for their activities when the "family time" is over.
4. **Movies** - You shouldn't sit your child in front of a TV all day - I get that. All the more reason to sit them in front of a DVD player during long road trips. All that time at home spent developing their young minds will cause them to be totally absorbed in their favorite (seldom viewed) Disney movie (or several movies) during a car ride. Better yet, buy a brand new movie and surprise them with it half way through your trip.
5. **Safety** - Pack plenty of water - especially in hot weather. Pack warm blankets - especially in cold weather. Pack a First Aid Kit. Never leave children alone in a parked car - even if you can see them from the window. Bring a cell phone charger. Plan periodic walk breaks to ease aching muscles and irritable attitudes.

The most important way to make the best of a long road trip is to mentally prepare yourself. Know ahead of time that your precious angels will cry and scream and fight and complain and talk back and whine. It just happens when you're stuck in the car for hours and hours. Close your eyes and take deep breaths and remind yourself that their temperaments will improve once you arrive at your destination. And, pack some m&m's for yourself.