

Flying with Kids: Staying Safe and Sane

by Christina Holland-Radvon, PassPorter Message Board Guide (Moderator)

When it comes to family travel, no one plans or worries quite like a parent. I should know -- I'm an expectant mother, nursing a toddler, and I'm a travel agent. Planning and worrying are what I do best.

Traveling with children can present some unique challenges. Here are a few of the toughest situations when it comes to flying with kids:

The most important thing you can do to smooth the way for a fun and hassle-free flight is to book a non-stop flight during the time of day when your children usually nap. Mid-week, mid-day (naptime, yay!) is considered an off-peak time. Consider booking your flight then to take advantage of that quiet time of day. If this doesn't work into your schedule, don't get discouraged! Get creative!

Keeping your kids busy and distracted is that much easier with handy little travel gadgets like portable DVD players. I've found them on sale for as little as \$150 -- less than I would usually pay to rent one for a ten-day trip! Other tried and true distractions include photo albums made just for little hands (be sure to include photos of grandma and grandpa or the puppy you're leaving with a neighbor), magnetic memo boards for mess-free drawing, and fun tactile experiences like blind-folding your toddler and asking him to name different objects that you put in his hands. Feathers, beanie animals and other favorite stuffed toys, matchbox-type cars, and favorite snacks like Cheerios or teddy bear graham crackers would be perfect for those little hands to touch, feel and giggle over. You can even ask a flight attendant for an ice cube to put into your toddlers palm. With or without the blindfold, he'll be fascinated by the melting ice. Just remember to watch him carefully so he doesn't try to eat it!

Seating arrangements and take-offs/landings are probably the two greatest concerns of flying with young children. Whether or not to buy a ticket and bring a safety seat for your infant is a personal decision. Weigh the benefits and disadvantages carefully before you decide. Yes, the extra seat is more expensive and the safety seat is kind of a pain to tote around along with the rest of the luggage, but your child has their own space (and so do you) throughout the flight. You can also be assured that your child will be safe in the event of extreme turbulence if he is safely buckled into his own seat.

Bring along something child-friendly to give your child to suck to ease them through those take-offs and landings. Pacifiers and bottles of

water work well for bottle-fed children. Breastfeeding works great, but can be difficult if your child is buckled up in their seat. You can learn how to nurse your child while he is buckled in, but learn how to do so by practicing at home long before your trip. Another option for exclusively breastfed babies who are adverse to the feel of an artificial nipple is to use your pinky as a pacifier. Be sure your hands are very clean by washing them in the restroom as soon as you board the plane.

About The Author: Christina is a PassPorter Message Board Guide.

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