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## Surviving Holiday Travel



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You already know that a little pre-planning can help make the holidays less stressful. Shopping early for gifts allows you to search for deals and discounts, planning your menu ahead of time saves you anxiety from figuring out what to make, and getting those holiday cards out in advance stops you from scrambling last minute to take a family photo and getting them ordered and sent out in time.

Along with gifts, food and cards, travel is one more item you could add to your "better-when-done-earlier" list. Just imagine yourself relaxing in the weeks ahead of the holidays when

you've already accomplished everything on your to-do list.

Blissful.

Follow these tips for traveling with your family over the holidays, gathered from some traveling pros, and you'll not only potentially save some cash, but you all just might make it to your destination in one piece, too.

### **Book in advance—or at least book at the best times.**

It's best if you can book your trip at least 45 days in advance, says CheapOair's Mark Drusch. If that's just not possible, "airlines do tend to launch major fare sales late at night," says Drusch. "Plus, leaving on a Saturday can be a cheaper option for travelers as opposed to Fridays and Sundays.

Something else to keep in mind—sales for flights are generally put up online on Tuesdays, and airlines try to match sale-for-sale, says Gillian Telling, mom and editor-in-chief of *Budget Travel*. "Also, keep in mind that even though kids under two fly for free, in some countries they are still charged a tax. When we went to the Dominican Republic, we had no idea that we'd have to pay \$150 at the airport for our son, but they wouldn't let us on the plane otherwise."

### **Head off the beaten path.**

If you just want to travel with your family for the holidays, and you aren't headed specifically to Grandma's or Aunt May's, you'll generally find good deals during the holiday for places that aren't commonly traveled to during this time. "An example is that the Pacific Northwest and Northern California are not busy during the December to February period, so it's a good time to find deals to those locations," says Drusch.

Telling suggests also checking out the Dominican Republic, all-inclusives on the Mayan Riviera near Cancun and the Bahamas, all of which tend to be family-friendly and have good deals around this time.

### **Don't head out empty-handed.**

You know those teeny tiny packets of peanuts and pretzels you're offered on flights? Yeah—your kid won't want those, either. "Definitely bring snacks, and lots of them!" says Telling. "I'm always so worried I'll run out of food on the plane that I tend to overdo it. Also, some airlines don't actually have milk on board—just little creamers for coffee. So if you think you'll need milk during your flight, buy a few of those milk "chugger" bottles that they sell in airports before boarding."

**Avoid boredom any way you can.**

Whether it's a plane, train or automobile, the last thing you want when traveling with the kids is for them to be bored. "I always bring a few books with the lift flaps so they're somewhat interactive, stickers, crayons and some paper to color, a few little cars—nothing with noise," says Telling. "And of course the iPad. Some people are opposed to them, or don't have one, but if you want a little space and quiet and your child enjoys cartoons, let them watch them on the plane. A quiet child is a win-win for all!"

**Organization is key.**

According to [Families Go!](#), a family travel Website, less is more when it comes to packing with kids, and getting organized is essential. Keeping your carry-ons limited not only saves you from potentially losing things, but you'll also save some cash, since most airlines these days charge for even one carry-on.

**Don't be afraid to ask for kid-friendly seating.**

The best time to ask for family-friendly seating arrangements is at check in, says Telling. "But instead of just asking for bulk-head seating, say something like, 'Do you happen to have any seats that are a little more child-friendly than others?'" she suggests. Also note: you're not allowed to sit in the exit row with kids, so don't expect that to happen.

Additionally, while bulkhead is roomy, they don't allow you to keep a carry-on at your feet in a bulkhead row because there's no way to stow it. "So I always ask to switch if I have a bulkhead when traveling with my son, because I need immediate access to snacks, milk, wipes, toys, etc."