



Travelling With Young Children

By Nazima Versay Kudus

In 2010, when my husband was on his sabbatical leave to the United Kingdom, he brought along our family. While we were there, we decided to do some traveling since we were in the region. Armed with three young children aged from 4 to 10 who had different behaviours ranging from obedient to active and inquisitive, we took them on a trip to Belgium, France, The Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Italy, Vatican City, Switzerland and Austria. Here I would like to share some tips that fellow parents can benefit from when travelling with young children.

Long flights, road trips and bus travels

can make children particularly restless. Thus it is important to keep them occupied and entertained. Before travelling think of suitable activities that can be done when in different modes of transportation. Examples of road trip games are 'number plate game' and 'I spy'. If using a tour bus, allow your child to make friends with his or her age group. On long flights, other than enjoying the in-flight movies, bring along a light toy and occasionally engage your child in child friendly activities on iPad. Should your child have to use this gadget, put on a headphone on him or her so that the fellow passengers are not disturbed.



Book tickets for entry attractions in advance. Not only can you enjoy discounts, but also time and most importantly avoid the lines. A stroller and an anti-lost wrist harness are also very useful during sightseeing. Avoid carrying valuables when holding a child in crowded places. This is easy prey for pickpockets. Most pickpockets work in a group to plan and execute distractions. When we were in Rome, my husband was pickpocketed 500 Euros when he was attending to our youngest child.

Always make sure you arm yourself with easy to store and favourite travel snacks such as crackers, granola bars, fruits, cereal and drinks. Bring along Ziploc bags so that you can keep unfinished snacks. In Europe, nowadays it is quite easy to get Halal food. There are always kebabs or shawarmas stalls sold in the cities. Alternatively, Muslim travellers can simply go for food in the supermarkets marked 'vegetarian' for consumption. When trying out local food, ensure that it is hygienically prepared. Getting diarrhea or stomachache can be common when travelling. It is best to bring along medications for common illnesses.

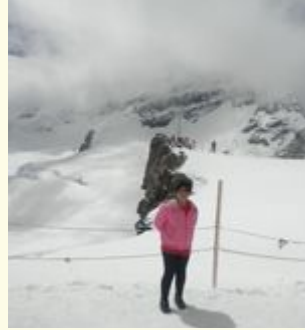


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Prepare appropriate clothing when you are travelling in Europe. Sometimes it can get very warm and there are times when it can be windy, wet or cold. Check the weather forecasts should you need to bring umbrellas or any warm accessories. Keeping children from being exposed to severe colds is important so that they would not get sick easily.



Travelling is a great way for children to be exposed to different cultures. I was frequently asked by my children questions such as, 'Why are ancient Greek statues naked?'; 'Why do the tourists toss coins in the Trevi Fountain'; 'Why is the Pope not there after queuing for hours to get into the Sistine Chapel?'. Since there were no smartphones back then, I have to skim through the tourist brochures for answers.

Adults and children do not share the same interest when travelling. Visiting museums and historical attractions may not appeal to young children. When travelling it is important to include activities that fascinate children too. Playing in a playground at a stopover somewhere is more fun. The rides of Disneyland Paris thrilled them more.



There are of course a lot more tips than these. Above all, preparation and patience are important when travelling with young children. However, experimenting with something completely different on the spur of the moment can add to excitement too. Now that my children are all grown up, maybe it is time to pack the bags and hit the road (perhaps this time without them)!

