



# TRAVEL MAMAS

## TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN CHECKLIST

### First Steps in Vacation Planning

- Ask friends and family members with similar tastes for travel suggestions, keeping in mind your budget and your children's ages and interests.
- Read travel blogs and purchase a guidebook or two about destinations that you're considering to determine which locale works best for your family.
- If flying, determine if flights to your desired destinations are within your budget. Check flight prices with Google Flights and Kayak.com, which check multiple travel search engines for you at once. Some airlines, like Southwest and foreign airlines, are not included in these searches so go directly to those airlines' sites as well.
- Look at your calendar to make sure your desired travel dates don't conflict with any work, school or extracurricular activities for any family members.
- Check Weather.com to make sure you understand the weather conditions during your stay.
- Get older children involved! Look at travel blogs, websites and guidebooks together or assign one day or attraction to each child to research.
- Determine all family members' must-do vacation sites and activities.
- Develop a rough daily itinerary, making sure to include time to eat, rest and play! Be sure not to over-schedule. Try to alternate mellow and busy days.
- Research accommodation options. Highlight options in your guidebook, then look up your favorites online. Go directly to the hotels' websites to peruse photos, packages and prices. Then check out reviews on travel blogs and at Hotels.com and TripAdvisor.com.
- Ask your boss and your spouse's boss for time off for the selected dates.
- For older children who will need to take a lot of time off from school, check with their teacher about the dates and how to deal with missed homework and tests.
- Schedule any necessary pet or house sitting services.
- If flying, book your flight. If using miles, you need to book as far in advance as possible. Once you determine which airline has the lowest price and/or least number of stops, book directly with the airline of your choice.

- If driving, plan your road trip. Plug in destinations at MapQuest.com to design a multi-stop trip and determine how many miles/hours between each stop. Don't try to cover too much ground in too short a period of time for sanity's sake. Build in stops for play time, especially when road-tripping with young children!
- Book your hotel or other accommodations. Research the Internet for the best price. Many hotels will match online aggregator pricing. Be sure to ask for discounts, such as AAA (which often pays for itself in travel savings). Don't be afraid to negotiate for extras such as free daily breakfast or a room upgrade.
- Book your rental car. You can save money by bundling hotel, air, and rental car through one search engine but you might prefer to book directly with each and ask for discounts.
- Print out all reservations and tickets and store them in a vacation binder or folder.

## One Month Prior to Your Trip

- The further and more exotic your destination, the earlier you will need to start packing. Print out a Travel Mamas Packing List. Add items to the list under each category as needed.
- Flip through closets and drawers to determine what clothing you need to purchase for the trip. If you will be traveling somewhere where the weather is drastically different from where you live, then you may need to buy new swimsuits or jackets for kids who have outgrown theirs.
- Purchase clothing for the trip online or at a store.
- Purchase travel gear and activities to keep your kids entertained during the trip. Check out Travel Mamas' recommendations for travel toys and travel games for ideas.

## Week Before to Your Vacation

- Start laying out clothes, reading materials, and beauty supplies for all family members. This way you'll have time to wash or purchase last-minute needed items.
- Confirm pet and house sitting arrangements.
- Write out any instructions for pet/house sitters. Keep a copy of instructions on your computer so you can update it as needed for each trip. Make sure sitters have house/mail keys.
- Suspend any regular deliveries for while you're away, such as newspapers and other subscriptions.
- Fill any needed prescriptions.

- If you're going on a beach vacation, schedule a pedicure for those tootsies that will be on display.
- Pay any pending bills.

## Day Before Departure

- Finish packing. If possible, start this process early in the morning. You might be astounded by how long it takes to pack up all the sippy cups, books, loveys, and snacks for a trip with children!
- Check items off your Travel Mamas Packing List as you go to make sure you don't forget anything. Circle items you plan to pack the day of the trip.
- Don't forget to pack up the diaper bag or activity kit for the kids. If traveling with young children, print out the Travel Mamas Airplane Kit for Babies and Toddlers to make sure you don't forget anything.
- Water any plants one last time before you go.
- Write out a schedule for the next day (including targeted nap times for babies and young children). Build in time needed for tasks like dropping off the car at an off-site parking lot before a flight.

## Vacation Departure Day

- Drop off pets as needed.
- Throw out any refrigerator items that will go bad while you're away.
- Take out the trash to avoid returning to a foul-smelling home after your vacation.
- Set the thermostat to an appropriate temperature and unplug appliances to avoid wasting energy while away.
- Pack up the circled last-minute items from your Travel Mamas Packing List.
- Load the car or secure a ride share/taxi.
- Lock all windows and doors, and set home alarm.
- Enjoy the journey!