

Sleep Tips: Traveling with baby or toddler

Traveling can be stressful. Traveling with baby or young children just adds an extra level of complexity. You need to worry about where they will sleep, how they will act in the car, plane or train during the trip, what to bring, etc. Below are my top traveling tips (with children) that I have used when traveling back and forth to the East/West coast with my twins.

- Bring your baby or toddler's lovey, wearable sleep blanket (light and heavy weight depending upon the weather in the region you are visiting), unwashed crib sheet (familiar scent), and sound machine. Bring your toddler's blankies, stuffed animals, favorite bedtime books and PJs. This will help your little one to feel more secure in a new place and have reminders of home.
- Talk to your toddler about traveling. If flying for the first time, talk to your child ahead of travel day and tell her about flying in an airplane. Bring along her favorite books, one or two new toys, and favorite snacks/sippy cup.
- Try to schedule a flight or car trip during nap time or around your child's bedtime if possible.
- If flying, for takeoff and landing, plan to help your child drink some liquid. Offer breast or bottle feed to your baby and a sippy cup with water or juice for older children. This will help to equalize the pressure in the middle ear.
- Some toddlers may not do well with new surroundings and may resist going to sleep or may be scared by unfamiliar environments and faces. Try to help your toddler get used to a new sleep space by spending time together in the new room before bedtime.
- Try spending an additional 10-15 minutes with your child at bedtime the first few nights. This will mean that you want to start bedtime a little earlier than you normally would at home.
- If taking a long driving trip, pack a travel potty for your newly potty-trained toddler. That way you won't ever be too far away from a toilet.
- If you need a crib, pack n'play, exersaucer, highchair, or bouncy chair, think about renting from www.babysaway.com. They will deliver and set up in most major cities as well as the Hawaiian Islands. **Bring crib sheets from home!**
- If your infant or child sleeps better in a dark room or tends to wake up early with the morning light, bring plastic garbage bags or dark fabric and tape over windows.
- If possible, schedule a few relaxing and restful vacation days in between busy, activity-packed vacation days. This is especially helpful after a busy travel day and right before a busy travel day.

- If traveling west to east and staying for five days or less, keep your infant/child on the same time zone. This is called "vacation time" and looks a little like this: For a trip to New York, put your child to bed at 10pm (7pm PST) and child will sleep later in the morning 9am (6am PST). You may need to darken the room since the morning light may wake up your baby or child early.
- If traveling west to east, and staying more than five days, move your infant/child to the new time zone. Your child's body (their circadian rhythms) will naturally adjust on its own from the sunlight and you don't have to make this adjustment before the trip.
- If traveling east to west, it may be more difficult since your infant/child will naturally want to wake up earlier. The first full day in your new destination, try your best to stretch out your child's naps and push out bedtime. Do this each day that you are there, and after a few days, your child will be adjusted.
- When you return from your trip, follow your same bedtime routine on your first night home and try to help your infant/child adjust back to regular bedtime. Remember that the time that it takes for your baby or child to adjust back to their natural clock and schedule depends upon the length of your trip and the total number of time zones travelled.
- Do your best to NOT start any new habits while on vacation. Consistency is key!

Questions?

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