TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN CHECKLIST

So, you want to plan a hard-earned family vacation. But where do you begin? And how can you make sure not to forget something important along the way? With the Travel Mamas handy-dandy Travel with Children Checklist, that’s how! From first steps to one month prior projects, week in advance assignments, day before departure to do’s and day zero duties, we’ve got you covered.

First Steps

- 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 at Kayak.com, which checks 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 The Weather Channel’s Vacation and Travel Planner at 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 overschedule and 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 or 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 driving, plan your road trip. Plug in destinations at Mapquest.com to design a multi-stop trip to see 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 traveling with young children!
- Book your hotel or other accommodations. Research the Internet for the best price and then call the hotel directly to book. Most hotels will match any online pricing. Be sure to ask for discounts, such as...

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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 Projects

- 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, arts & crafts, toys, games, and activities for your trip. Check out the Travel Mamas Store for our recommended travel items. For pre-packed travel kits, check out TravelKiddy.

Week In Advance Assignments

- Start laying out clothes, reading materials, and beauty supplies for all family members. This way you’ll have time to wash or purchase needed items.
- If you discover you have too much paraphernalia to lug with you, order necessities to be shipped to your destination from JetSetBabies.
- 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.
- Call to suspend newspaper delivery while you’re away.
- 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 To Do’s

- 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, lovies, 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. Print out 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.

Day Zero Duties

- Drop off pets as needed.
- Throw out any refrigerator items that will go bad while you’re away.
- Take out the trash to avoid a returning to a foul-smelling home after your vacation.
- Pack up the circled last-minute items from your Travel Mamas Packing List.
- Load the car. Don’t forget the kids!
- Enjoy the journey!