



WRITTEN *by*
HALEY SHAPLEY

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Shining, shimmering, splendid, the world is waiting to be explored—here's how to do it with kids in tow.

Long flights, unfamiliar cuisines and days packed with walking may not seem compatible with children, but international vacations and kids can be a match. Sure, you might have to adjust your travel habits a bit—think less hostel hopping and more ice cream bribes—but taking your family to a new country preps your little ones to be informed citizens of the world, not to mention creates wonderful learning opportunities and amazing bonding experiences.

LITTLE DECISION-MAKERS

Eighty-five percent of U.S. parents give their kids at least some say in deciding where they want to go on vacation, according to a survey from HomeAway, an online vacation rental marketplace. It can be worthwhile to get their input—60 percent of parents think doing so ensures the kids get more out of the vacation, 53 percent say involving them in the planning process gets them excited about the trip, and 24 percent use vacation planning as an educational opportunity. So if your children are old enough, start your trip research by asking what interests them—it can't hurt to have their buy-in for your next big adventure.



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ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

How do you pack all your baby's stuff? How many activities should you cram into a day? And when does it make sense to splurge versus save? Here's what those in the know say:

"My recommendation is always to pay for convenience, whether it be Global Entry, private transfers or private guides. It will make traveling as a family much more enjoyable to have extra assistance. Additionally, have your guided tours customized for the family—perhaps a scavenger hunt through Rome hitting all the hot spots and eating gelato along the way."

—Susan Butler, founder, *The Travel Butler*

"Parents, especially those with babies, always overpack. While there are a few key things you need—a baby carrier, a portable crib and maybe a stroller—you don't need to pack the entire nursery when you travel. Many everyday items, like diapers and wipes, can be picked up at your destination. Even better, ship those items to your destination via Amazon.com or other mail-order services so they are waiting for you. Pack enough diapers to get you through your travels to your destination and the first day or two in case you are delayed en route, but leave the rest at home. Rent any big gear you think you might need at your destination as well. If you can rent a condo or grab a hotel with a washer/dryer on property, you can pack less clothing and do laundry while you travel, which will save space in your suitcase, too. The only thing you want to make sure you pack is medication and any specialty formula if your baby requires it. The rest, leave in the nursery. It will still be there when you get back. You will be amazed by how much you can live without while traveling with a baby."

—Keryn Means, founder, *WalkingOnTravels.com*

"Exposing children to different cultures and having them experience different smells, surroundings, foods can only benefit them. Besides making sure passports are up to date and any necessary visas and shots are taken care of, I would suggest knowing your children's (and your) limits as far as how far they can walk, deal with time differences, and what type of food is available. One or two activities should be planned per day, and there should be some time open for spontaneous activity. Also consider picking a property with a pool and have drinking water and snacks available."

—Jeff Traugot, travel agent, *Traugot Travel Dreaming Up*



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DESTINATIONS

When the whole world is your oyster, it can be tough to decide where to go. The perfect destination for your family depends on your interests and travel style; here are a few ideas:

ROMANIA

The Romanian countryside is the stuff of fairytales, which makes this Eastern European country appealing to children. Castles, horse-drawn carriages, farm stays, bat caves and all sorts of other delights await. Any vampire fans in the fam will love Transylvania, but you don't have to be enamored with spooky stories to enjoy the medieval landscape.

BELIZE

This small Central American country has a wide variety of terrain, from island beaches to tropical forests to pine savannas, so you can experience a lot without traversing huge distances. English is the official language, which makes communicating fairly easy in comparison to other Latin American countries for those who don't speak Spanish or other local languages.

KENYA

Forget the zoo—when it comes to seeing animals, you can't beat a safari. Kenya is a fantastic location for that, particularly the wildebeest migration from July to October. Watching animals in their natural habitat will make a lifelong impression on your little ones (and you), and a safari can be a great way to explain the circle of life. ■

