



PLAN
THE

perfect GETAWAY

Take the stress out of preparing for your holiday with our genius travel hacks

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Yes, summer's here and it's time to look forward to a well-deserved holiday – whoop! 'Family holidays are really special,' says Karen. 'They may not be the nightlife-filled expeditions of the past but, instead, you get to switch off digitally and spend quality time together. Trips away are a chance to bond and build

memories that will last for a lifetime.' And whether you're heading off to Thailand for a backpacking adventure, or jumping in the car for a laid-back staycation in the UK, by following our pre-trip planning steps you can make sure you've covered everything, so that your holiday will run smoothly and be remembered for all the right reasons!



**MEET THE
EXPERT**

Karen Edwards is founder of travelmadmum.com and [instagram.com/travelmadmum](https://www.instagram.com/travelmadmum), and has travelled to more than 40 countries with her two children ➔

Step
one:

Time to get planning...

'We all have different ideas of the perfect holiday,' says Karen. 'This summer, our plan is to travel from London to Mongolia in a camper van – but not everyone would enjoy that! So, take some time to look at what's on my list, and then decide what's the priority for *your* holiday...'

✓ HAVING TIME TO MYSELF!

If you could do with some 'you time' on your break, get the conversation started now, and explain to whoever you are going on holiday with – whether that's your partner, family, or even friends – how much you'd appreciate a little time to yourself. 'Talk about this *before* you go on holiday, so you don't have expectations that aren't met,' says Karen. That way, you're more likely to *all* enjoy yourselves. The other option is to choose a resort with a kids' club or crèche, so that your baby can be looked after while you put your feet up. Take a look at travel companies like totstotravel.co.uk, totstoo.com, clubmed.co.uk or markwarner.co.uk.

✓ GETTING TO RELAX

Unless you're desperate for soaring temperatures or Insta-worthy snaps of a tropical beach, then it might be worth staying in the UK. 'Sometimes the most relaxed holidays with youngsters to be had are here, in a self-catering apartment,' says Karen. 'You don't have to deal with flights, passports, or not being able to speak the language. You can cook your own food, do your own laundry, and you can choose accommodation with a microwave and dishwasher, which makes life easier if you're formula feeding; airbnb.co.uk is the go-to option, but I also like using booking.com.'

✓ FORGETTING THE CHORES

Sometimes the best thing about being on holiday is just having someone to look after *you*! It can be bliss to forget about cooking the meals, changing the beds and cleaning the rooms, and means you get to focus on what's *really* important – having fun with your family. If you want more space, look for an apartment within a hotel complex, so you get the benefits of hotel life but with a bit more freedom and space.

✓ ENJOYING THE OUTDOORS

Perhaps the best way to really break from the usual routine is to completely change your surroundings – and camping is a great way to do that. After all, when you're under canvas, surrounded by the best the natural world has to offer, you suddenly get a new perspective. Karen says: 'It's worth asking for a pitch near trees, so that you know there's some natural shade. Bring a portable cot for your baby that is slightly elevated from the ground, so it doesn't get too cold. And if you're still feeding your baby at night, take an airbed with bedding, rather than a sleeping bag. That way, you can both keep warm in the early hours!'

'We used totstotravel.co.uk for a holiday to Lanzarote – they found us perfect accommodation with a gated, child-safe pool, and sourced all the equipment we needed: highchair, potty, toys, the lot! It made everything so easy and we didn't have to worry about lugging all the baby gear with us.'
Rachael Stevens, 28, from Horsham, is mum to Freddie, two



Step two:

Sort the serious stuff

All booked? Now it's time to get the holiday admin ticked off your list, so you can concentrate on making some fun plans!

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Everyone (including babies) needs their own passport, which must be valid for at least six months after you return home. If your surname is different to your child's, bring his birth certificate, and if you're not travelling with your child's father, consider bringing a letter of consent from him, which can make any checks at border control run more smoothly. 'Finally, check if you'll all need visas for the country you're visiting,' says Karen.

INSURANCE

'It is vital to get insurance,' says Karen. Make sure it covers medical treatment, repatriation, belongings and cancellations. 'Look at the small print before you choose: make sure you're insured for conditions specific to you, including allergies and, if you're pregnant, ensure you're covered for pregnancy and (just in case) for birth or coming home with a baby!'

CREATE ID BRACELETS

Having an ID bracelet for your child will give you peace of mind when you're on holiday – and it's also worth creating one for your youngster's favourite cuddly, just in case!



Ladybird Child iD Bracelet, £3.99, littlifelife.com

VACCINATIONS

If your child is due any routine childhood vaccinations, try to arrange them for at least a week before you travel, just to make

sure he's in peak condition for his holiday. And remember, *you* may need vaccinations too. 'If you're breastfeeding, make sure you tell the doctor before you have the jabs,' says Karen.

ALLERGY CARDS

If your child has a food allergy, go to allergyaction.org/translations/ to print out phrases and words that explain his condition in different languages.

SCAN YOUR DOCS

Scan all your important travel documents and email them to yourself, just in case anything gets lost while you're away.

HOLIDAYING WITH KIDS Special

Step three:

Get smart

Embrace tech and smart kit when planning your trip, to make life much easier when you're away...

BUY THIS!



● **Mountain Buggy Nano, £199, mountainbuggy.com**
Weighing less than 6kg, this lightweight buggy is compact enough to tuck into a car boot or even an overhead luggage compartment. To make it newborn-friendly, pair it with the Mountain Buggy Cocoon, £59.

● **CoziGo Sleep Easy Travel Cover, £59.99, amazon.co.uk**

'This is a sleep and sun shade for use on your baby's buggy and on bassinets when you're flying,' says Karen. 'It blocks out bright lights and the distraction of all the people walking up and down the aisles.'



● **JetKids by Stokke BedBox, £139, stokke.com**

'This is an amazing piece of kit,' says Karen. 'It's a ride-on suitcase with plenty of space inside, but it can also turn your aeroplane seat into a bed. It genuinely helps toddlers to get a proper night's sleep in the air.'



SAVVY SITES

- Stay safe and healthy abroad: fitfortravel.nhs.uk
- Ask for directions, or to have your baby's food heated in a restaurant: translate.google.co.uk
- Keep an eye on flight delays or cancellations: *Flight Board* app
- Navigate for free: *Google Maps*; *Navigate & Explore* app
- Get tips for travelling with a tot, from jet lag to packing: jetlifebaby.com

'Zooming about is a guaranteed way to keep Theo happy. So we pack his scooter, so we know we have a way to make him smile - and it makes getting to places so much easier!' **Charlotte Smith, 30, from London, is mum to Theo, 18 months**



Step four:

Get packing!

'Wherever you're going, you'll want to pack as lightly as possible and still have the essentials with you,' says Karen.

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ways to save space in your suitcase

Use packing cubes. These fabric containers help to squash your clothes down so they take up less space and they keep your stuff organised. And if you're packing bulky items like jackets or baby blankets, use vacuum bags to squash out the air and maximise your space.

Invest in Turkish/hammam towels (aka peshtemals) for your trip. Made from premium Turkish cotton, they're large, soft, absorbent and thin, which means they dry quickly and fold up really small - great for packing light.

Swap bottles for solid shampoo and conditioner bars - they'll save space and reduce your plastic use. Win-win! You can also get solid shower gel, solid perfume, solid sunblock and solid moisturiser from brands such as Ethique and Lush.
Lush Seanik Shampoo Bar, £7.50, uk.lush.com

To protect against mosquitoes, the Incognito range (lessmosquito.com) is DEET-free, effective and suitable for babies from six months old,' says Karen.

Tip

If you don't want to lug all your baby gadgets with you, do a quick online check to see if there's a company that rents out baby equipment in the area or country in which you're staying. Just type in 'baby equipment hire' and the name of the closest big city.

Tip

If you're away for a while and want to wash your clothes, pop a couple of plastic folding hangers in your luggage. In hot climates, even heavy items like jeans will dry overnight if they're hung up.



Step
five:

Make the journey a breeze

WHEN YOU'RE TAKING A PLANE

- Get the best seats. 'If you're flying with a baby, when you book your flight ask if you can have the front-row bulk-head seats,' says Karen. 'If you get them, ask the airline to give you a bassinet (a plane cradle) for your baby to sleep in. You'll have to check the policy for the age, weight and height of infant the bassinet holds, because each airline is different – but, usually, priority is given to younger babies.'
- Research your airport. Once you know where you're flying from, research the airport to see what facilities it offers to

families. There may be play areas, a parent room, a meet-and-assist service, a porter, and even a kids-eat-free restaurant offer.

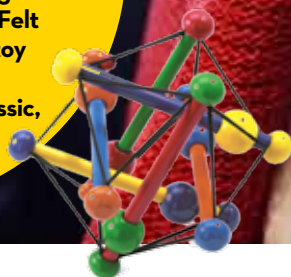
- Order a 'toddler meal'. 'Most airlines provide toddler-specific meals, but you have to order them in advance,' says Karen. 'But, if you can, give your tot a meal in the airport before you travel, and take a bag of familiar snacks with you for the flight. That way, if he hates the plane food, he won't be hungry.'

When travelling with a baby, you're allowed to take enough baby food, milk and sterilised water for the journey,' says Karen. 'There's no limit – so take enough to cover the flight, plus extra in case of delays. Not all airport security staff are aware of this, so it's worth printing out the official guidelines – visit gov.uk.' You might be asked to taste some of the liquids or food, too.

FUN THINGS FOR A TODDLER TRAVEL PACK

- A sticker book ● A colouring book and crayons ● A picture book
- Window gel stickers ● Stacking cups
- A puppet ● Safari animal figurines
- A toy phone ● A Fuzzy-Felt picture board ● A bead toy

Manhattan Toy Skwish Classic,
£14.99, jojomaman
bebe.co.uk



TIME IT WELL!

'On a short-haul flight we travel during the day and don't stress about routine,' says Karen. 'And on a long-haul flight we travel at night and hope that the kids sleep as usual. We always try to coincide the start of our car journeys with morning nap-time. If the kids nod off as soon as we get on the road, we know we have a stretch of time when they won't be fidgety, hungry or needing a wee! By the time they wake up, we're ready for a break ourselves.'

THINK SAS - SNACKS, ACTIVITIES, SLEEP!

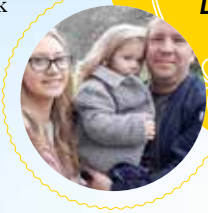
'These are the three key things that make a journey go at its best,' says Karen. 'Always have water and a bag of snacks, and bring a bag of age-appropriate toys or activities. It's better to get new things that your youngster hasn't seen before – and, if you want to take it up a notch, wrap up every item! Or you can buy brilliant pre-made travel activity bags from keepemquiet.com.'

TELL TODDLERS WHAT TO EXPECT

If toddlers know in advance what's going to happen during the day, they feel far more relaxed. So, if you're going on a flight for the first time, read your tot books about flying, show him pictures of a plane, inside and out, and – if possible – take him to the airport to see what it's like before your departure date. 'And give your youngster an idea of how long you'll be travelling, in a way he understands.' You could say, 'We'll be arriving at Nanny's when the sun's gone to bed and it's dark.'

WHEN YOU'RE TRAVELLING BY CAR

● Make sure your car is in good condition before you head off on a long journey – and have a breakdown policy that covers you for the UK and for any country that you're visiting. 'If you're renting a car in another country, check in advance to see if they require you to have an international driving permit,' says Karen.



'Our easiest holiday has been a UK staycation. We knew we could pick up anything we'd forgotten, and because we were relaxed, the kids were calm, too.'
Lily Connolly, 30, from London, is mum to Hugo, six months, Bluebell, two, and Oliver, seven

● Put a sheet down over your back seat and put the car seats on top of it. This will make it *much* easier to clean out all the crumbs at the end of the journey.

● Every one to two hours, have a break. Experts recommend that two hours is the maximum that a baby should stay in a car seat at any one time, while newborns shouldn't be in a car seat for more than 30 minutes at a time, and should always have an adult sitting next to them to keep an eye on them.

AND... RELAX!

So you've made it to your destination, sanity intact, you've managed to remember everything you need, and now all you need to concentrate on is having fun. We're sure you've got that covered, but check out *M&B* next month for some more inspiring ideas on how to make the most of your summer!

