

Traveling With Grandchildren: Lessons from the Field

By Betty Rauch

My husband and I take each grandchild at age 10, on a special trip just with us. We have travelled with two of our three: Paris in 2013; Stonehenge in 2016. #3 gets his special trip in 2018.

Here's what we have learned:

It's a little scary for a 10-year-old to go off to a strange place without parents, so if you are travelling with a grandkid that young, be prepared to be with a child exhibiting both excitement and nervousness/discomfort. Don't forget to bring the kid's snuggly bedtime animal or blanket.

Important: you may need a notarized letter from your grandchild's parent/s attesting that you are permitted to travel with the child. We had this document and only needed to show it once. But given the sensitivity to child trafficking, it's best to have it with you.



Four or, at the most, five days is long enough for a wonderful adventure and short enough so that homesickness does not fully set in. In both cases, we had arranged to meet the whole family for a brief vacation after our special outing – so our grandchild knew that in a relatively short time the parents would again be on the scene.

If you can, travel business class. Kids are dazzled by the amenities!!

Stay at a hotel. Hotel people like to see kids with their grandparents and usually make a sweet fuss over little guests. And, you'll have support and assistance in case of emergencies. (Be careful: Chic boutique hotels are often not so pleased to have children.)

Do not take a second room – the child will definitely end up in yours! It's far better to have the hotel put a pull-out bed or a cot in your room.

Plan your days carefully and in advance. Your little traveler is not going to be interested in the same things that you are – and experiencing a new city or country through the eyes of a child is a wonderful, joyful experience. Most cities have websites with areas that feature kid-centric suggestions.

If you are in a different time zone, your grandchild is going to get tired. Schedule just two kid-focused excursions a day: palaces and dungeons and castles. Zoos. Barge trips on rivers.



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Playgrounds. Parks. About museums: mummies and armor and weapons and big jewels are fine. For most kids, art is a big bore. Don't take them on a forced march through an art museum. Plan to stop for a quiet lunch. Don't forget to shop for trinkets...and ice cream. And remember, kids need downtime. If you want to plan something for the evening, do not do too much during the day. We found that part of the fun for our grandkids was just hanging around the hotel. Most of all, it is a remarkable experience to be off on an adventure with one grandkid.

When away from parents and sibs, you will see your grandchild in a very different light. And you will be creating wonderful indelible memories – for the child AND for you!

