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PARENTS**Missed naps! Late lunches! No routine whatsoever! How to enjoy an almost meltdown-free family vacation despite all the challenges.**

BY JUDY KOUTSKY

AGES
3-6

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As a mom to two high-energy little kids (boys ages 3 and 5), I know traveling with toddlers or preschoolers isn't always smooth sailing. Luckily, I've learned that being flexible and having a few tricks up my sleeve makes all the difference. Here are the secrets I've learned (the hard way) about how to keep everyone happy.

Rethink mealtime:

It can be hard to keep a consistent meal schedule when traveling, plus there are so many wonderful things to try along the way. A good option? Instead of giving your young kids three big meals a day, plan for six mini ones. That way you're keeping their blood-sugar levels from hitting cranky bottom, plus you're breaking up the trip by giving kids a little treat. (You can swap in some healthy options, like dried fruit and nuts.) Plus, there's nothing like a small snack to distract a preschooler from a temper tantrum. **Tip: Don't forget to pack some bland snacks like saltines or Cheerios**, suggests Theresa Pickett, an elementary-school teacher in Woodstock, MD, and mom of two young children under five. Some kids can get queasy bellies from car travel or tasting a variety of new foods, and something simple and bland is often the best remedy.

Plus: 14 Best Travel Apps, Games and Toys for Preschoolers

(<http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/parent-child/14-best-travel-apps-games-toys-preschoolers?eml=PCM/intraapp/20150129/PlusLink/PreKTravelGames>)

Bring a few of their favorite things:

While traveling someplace new is full of wonderful discoveries, it's good to bring along a few comforts from home to keep a preschooler feeling safe and secure. **Have your little one pack several of his prized possessions in his backpack: his beloved teddy, a soft blanket, even a much-loved toy**, suggests Joseph R. Sanok, a licensed counselor in Traverse City, MI, and father to a 3-year-old. Then sneak in a couple small new ones as a surprise. Another good tip? "Cut back iPad time the two weeks before traveling, so that if you have to engage the kids in screen time, it is new again," he adds.

Avoid rushing through the experience:

Make the journey part of the fun by planning stops along the way. “There is a tendency to want to get to your destination quickly, but letting kids run, eat, and play, will make the experience a lot easier and more memorable,” says Sanok. **For long road trips, that means stopping at parks or a kid-friendly museum after a few hours.** If you’re flying, spend part of the layover at the play area.

Plus: Why Little Kids Love to Travel (<http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/parent-child/why-little-kids-love-to-travel?eml=PCM/intraapp/20150129/PlusLink/KidsLoveTravel>)

Be flexible about sleep:

As much as you may want to stick to a nap and bedtime schedule, the time change, excitement level, and opportunities to take in the sights means **you need to relax your routine a tad.** Spending 45 minutes fighting with your toddler to nap and missing the character parade just isn’t worth it (believe me, I know from experience). Part of the fun of being on vacation is staying up a little later and snoozing in the stroller (or the car). The memories you’re creating with your young child more than make up for those lost zzz’s. Besides, you can get your child back on track on the trip home.

Drink and wash up:

Little children’s hands like to touch everything—hand rails, coins on the floor, toilet seats. **Keeping your kids healthy on the go begins with simple things: making sure they’re drinking lots of water and washing their hands often,** suggests pediatrician Tanya Altmann, M.D., author of *Mommy Calls*. Keep a stash of Clorox Disinfecting Wipes On the Go handy, too, recommends Dr. Altmann. They’re especially good on the plane to wipe down tray tables, arm rests, and plane windows (where little faces love to press their noses and peer out).

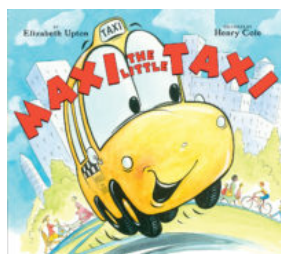
Plus: How to Get Kids Super Pumped for Vacation (<http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/parent-child/were-going-trip?eml=PCM/intraapp/20150129/PlusLink/TripReveals>)

Carve out pool time:

It’s no surprise that most preschoolers love water play. If you’re heading someplace warm, “make sure to **have your swimsuits in your carry-on luggage** and head straight to the beach even before you check in,” says Stacy Haynes, Ed.D., a psychologist at Little Hands Family Services in Turnersville, NJ. If you’re traveling to a chillier destination, make sure your hotel has an indoor (heated) pool. This is also a good back-up option for rainy days.

We hope these practical “how to” tips help you make traveling with your preschooler and/or your toddler a more fun and relaxing experience!

Plus: Find More Tips and Trip Ideas at Our Family Travel Hub (<http://www.scholastic.com/smartfamilytravel/?eml=PCM/intraapp/20150129/PlusLink/SFTDisney>)

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PICTURE BOOK

Maxi the Little Taxi (<https://shop.scholastic.com/parent-ecommerce/books/maxi-the-little-taxi-9780545798600.html>)

He’s little! He’s cute! But he’s getting all dirty!

This warm, charming story perfectly captures all the ups and downs of a busy little taxi’s first day on the job!

It’s Maxi the Taxi’s first day of work!
What fun it is to zip and zoom all around the town!

SPLASH go the mud puddles!

PLIPPITY-PLOP drips the ice cream and mustard from sticky little fingers!

Soon Maxi becomes so grimy and gooey that no one wants to ride with him.

Who will help this dirty little taxi discover what he needs most? It's a smart little boy who takes Maxi for a noisy, tickly bath in the car wash!

Contributors:

Elizabeth Upton first told Maxi's story to her son when he was three years old! She has a teaching degree from Teachers College at Columbia University, and her poetry has been included in several collections edited by Lee Bennett Hopkins. She currently works as a writer and a teacher in New York City, where she lives with her two children.

Henry Cole was born on a dairy farm near Purcellville, Virginia, and was an adored elementary-school science teacher for sixteen years. He has since illustrated over eighty popular picture books, including the multimillion-selling Moose series and other bestsellers. Mr. Cole has always loved art and science, which has made him a keen observer of details in nature. He now lives in both Florida and Virginia.

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