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Travel with children

[HTTP://WWW.HUDSONFAMILY.CH](http://www.hudsonfamily.ch)

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The quest for continuous movement

Go through a field of sunflowers and they will all smile at you; even though each flower is different.

Be it flowers or families, they come in all colours and sizes. There are families who like to travel; whether forget-me-nots, roses or orchids. They travel with backpacks or suitcases, by public transport, camper, bike or even in their own sailboat. Or they fly.

Some are on a short holiday, others on the journey of a lifetime.

Some are modern nomads, others are hobby travellers. There are families with an only child and those with many. Babies, school children, teenagers. Hyperactive, quiet and disabled children. Single

parents, parents, couples, parents and grandparents.

Every family is different and each travel experience is different, too.



Michael, Nadine, Desmond and Lenny Hudson

Be it in the luxury hotel or the youth hostel, in a mountain chalet, tent or on a ship. Whether in Europe, Asia, America, Africa or even around the world, every family will find their way.

Travelling with children is not a visit to Disneyland, it is experiencing the world around us in all its colours: the growth of the sunflower, its heyday and its death. All at once and all in the same field of sunflowers.

It lets us understand and grow and makes us seek more questions. Travelling creates a strong union between the family members that will need no further words.

A guide book

We are a small Swiss family (half English) with two sons and love to travel. We (parents) have travelled alone, later as a couple and at last with our children. For several years we backpacked on four continents. We settled for some time in China and ran a small hotel where we welcomed many

travelling families.

The experiences we made during these years and the many encounters with other families, made this travel guide book. It is neither complete nor is it meant to be an absolute guide. It should rather serve as an inspiration, a motivation and an

aid when planning your next trip with your children.

Comments and questions are always welcome. We wish you all a memorable journey!

The Hudson Family

General travel tips for parents



Small experiences are often more unforgettable than world-famous sights: Desmond gets a visit from a tame monkey in Malaysia.

a visit to the swimming pool, an afternoon in the park with a playground, a ride in the city tram, a museum visit. Guaranteed you will meet interesting people, which in turn can be

more exciting and informative than to tick off all the local tourist attractions.

- Slow travel with plenty of room for spontaneous activity gives each family member time to “arrive” and to process new impressions. Set small targets rather than plan the whole trip in details in advance. When arriving at a new place, first just explore the area around the hotel. Slowly, once the children (and parents) feel at ease, enlarge the radius. **Less is definitely more.**

- Consider your children when you do the **planning**. What do they want? Beach, desert, adventure? Talk a lot to each other and process new impressions together (but be

careful not to overestimate them).

- Humour, humour, humour... approach life with humour and if you have a heated moment, react with “tickle trouble” rather than scolding. It will **defuse a difficult situation** fast.

- We bring a few **old favourites** of children when leaving home (cuddly friends, games, toys), but every now and then, we buy something new. Our boys were always very reassured when they spotted Spiderman or Lego in the new country.

- **Eating out** three times a day is often stressful for children and parents. Once we find a child-friendly restaurant, we always go back there (routine!). One to two meals a day we prepare ourselves (breakfast, picnics, etc.).

- **Cheap accommodation** (family run guest houses), street eateries and 2nd or 3rd class tickets are often more child-friendly than expensive hotels, fancy restaurants and 1st class transport.

„Mama, can we go and buy some more money, so we can travel for ever?“ „But Desmond, what do you mean; where can we buy money?“

„That’s simple, just take that plastic card from your money belt and push it into a cash machine... a lot of money will come out!“

(Desmond in Vietnam, 2005)

What have we learnt during our travels with our children? What does it take to make travelling with children a positive experience for the whole family?

- If the parents are **at ease, confident and feel safe** in their environment, the children won’t be far behind.

- On a trip almost everything is new, hence the up keeping of a **daily routine** is even more important than at home: a story at bedtime, fair, reasonable sleep and rest times, space and time to play, plenty of fresh air and exercise, good and regular meals.

- A **child-friendly program** can also be fun for the parents:

Travel preparations

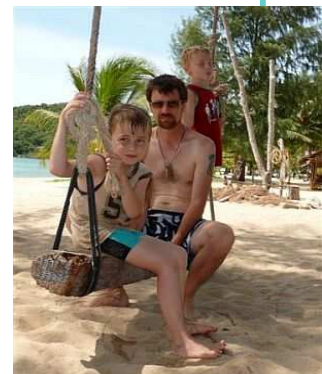
Where shall we travel next and how long shall we stay away? What questions do parents ask themselves when choosing a travel destination? Following, a list of randomly jumbled questions:

Information about the country
How is the political situation in the country of choice? Are there tensions and/or

foreseeable risks? Are there areas that should be avoided? Cultural, religious rules that must be considered (e.g. dress code)? What kind of history influenced today’s lives in the country? How children-friendly are the hosts?

Budget
Such a trip need not cost the world. In most cases the rule

applies that the more you travel around, the higher the costs. In many countries public transport is very cheap, but can still eat up a big junk of your travel budget when you want to cover



On a warm, sandy beach children (and their parents) can be happy for hours!

long distances and have to pay half or full price for the children. Entrance fees to national parks, monuments and



Outdoor activities are often the travel highlights for young and old.

museums are often, in relation to the local cost of living, high. To hire a local guide for a few days, possibly even with a vehicle, can be expensive, but it is sometimes worth the extra cost.

During our last travels, we decided to put quality over quantity. With the same money we could have possibly travelled a lot longer had we stayed more or less stationary in a rented accommodation. But we preferred to do more and to sometimes spend some money for an extra something for the children (i.E. Ocean World in Bangkok etc.).

It's not difficult to live a simple life whilst away (and often even rewarding in many ways) and to save some money with just a few basic measures. We often prepare our own meals, which saves money and makes a welcome change to restaurant meals: A picnic in the Park, bread and butter for breakfast, cooking on a camping stove, buy a take-away or use the kitchen at the hostel. Every evening we soak our dirty laundry in the collapsible travel bucket and wash it in the morning. There is always somewhere to hang a washing line... Rather than buying bottled drinking water, tap water can be filtered.

How much will it cost to get to our destination and how will we get there? How much are bus and train tickets (from

what age or size must children pay for a ticket), taxis, car hire, accommodation, food and a doctor visit in the host country? Do we need passports? Do we need a visa and how much will it cost? Can we apply for the necessary visas whilst we are on the road?

Administration

How long can we stay in the country? Can we travel from there to another country? Are other documents required? How can we buy the local currency? Traveller's Checks, credit card, ATM card? Would it be helpful to do banking on an internet account whilst away? How long will it take for the travel preparations?

Planning

From what point forth shall we involve the children (if it is too early, the wait may seem too long for the kids, if it is too late, the child may feel overwhelmed)? How can we prepare the children for such a trip (books, Atlas, storytelling, photos from the Internet, etc.)?

Climate

When is it considered high season in the country? When is rainy season? Low seasons bring fewer tourists and lower prices. Rain brings mosquitoes and other disease hazards. Snow makes high passes impassable. Avoid extremes of temperature or at least prepare well for it. Travelling with children in warm areas is often easier, as more can be done outside (long walks, eating in the garden restaurant on the beach, play, etc.). To entertain energetic children on a cold, wet day in a hotel room can be quite challenging.

Communication

What language is spoken in the country? Do the hosts understand English (or any other languages spoken by us)? Might it be helpful to enrol for a language course before the

departure? Would it be useful to teach the children a few words of the national language?

Transport

Will there be long journeys and if yes, can they be broken up? How good is the railway network (train travel with children is usually simpler than bus travel)? Are all places accessible by public transport? Should other options be considered: camper, boat, car rental or private car, bicycle, flights etc.

Attractions

What does the destination offer to children (and parents)? What is important to the parents and children? How can the children be occupied? Is there child-friendly trekking? Is it important that the children establish a good grade of fitness before their departure? Are there beaches, car-free places, forests or lakes? Are there times and places to relax?

On the road

What kind of accommodation does the country offer? What about the food? Could it be useful to get the children's taste buds acquainted to new flavours and spices?

Packing

What should be packed? Is special equipment required? Should you bring camping equipment? What gifts could be brought from home?

Parents with children who have special needs should consider whether the necessary medication or equipment has to be brought from home or whether it is available in the country of choice.

Organisational stuff

How long do we want to be on the road?



Lenny in a hot air balloon over the Karst mountains of Southern China.

Do we have to deregister at our council (in some countries it is necessary to let your council / government know that you are

not to plan too much, but to determine your route as you go along.



If the parents feel comfortable and secure while travelling, the children will feel safe too.

Health

Anyone who travels, may be exposed to an increased accident and health risk. To have a good insurance as a backbone is often the key to a carefree stay abroad and can save money in an emergency

situation, even a life in case of an urgent repatriation.

What are the health and other hazards in the destination area? How high is the risk of malaria? Other tropical diseases? What vaccinations are needed? Will certain vaccinations have to be refreshed on the road? What about the hygiene? Are good medicines available and are there good hospitals? What accident risks are there (most similar to home, such as roads, steep stairs, drowning)? How heavy is the air pollution, noise and population density? Are journeys over high passes needed (altitude sickness can be a bigger problem in children

than adults, take time to adjust)? Are there dangerous animals? Rabies? What rules of conduct are important for the children (i.e. don't drink tap water, don't touch animals).

Insurance

A travel insurance is always only for emergencies. Preventative check ups and operations, which can wait, are usually excluded. Always read the small print! Should you need medical assistance, your insurance will probably try and repatriate you instead, as, once you are back in your country of residence, they will not cover the cost of your treatment anymore.

Make sure you declare pre-existing health issues, as otherwise your insurance can refuse to pay in case of a related emergency.

A worldwide travel emergency insurance including cover for personal liability is available for as little as Euro 250 per person.

*„Lenny, happy like sunshine!“
our younger son kept repeating (he was just 2 years young) when he slid down the sand dunes in southern Morocco.*

away for a long time, hence no longer a resident of this country)? How can we get our children schooled along the way and what administrative steps are needed to take them out of school at home? Do we need to bring school supplies? What solution is best for the existing house/apartment (i.e. rent it out, sell it, hand in your notice) and the same for your job. Who will take care of documents left at home and who will send us a new ATM card once the old one has expired?

How should we say goodbye (party)? How will we stay in touch with people back home? For a long trip, it makes sense

Packing list for travelling parents

The following list should give a few tips for what a travelling family could pack. In no case has everything on the list got to be put in your luggage! What should be brought with you depends strongly on your destination, time and duration of travel as well as your personal needs and preferences.

Documents

Passports / ID cards: in most countries, children can no longer share their parent's

passports and in some countries, children's passports expire faster than adult passports.

Visa: Children need their own visa for most countries.

International Vaccination Card (yellow) and possibly, if available, a blood group identification card for emergencies.

Insurance card, emergency numbers and e-mail addresses (from the insurance company, the paediatrician, etc.).

Plane tickets, train tickets, hotel confirmations.

Certification of the parents: compulsory in some countries if third person travels with the child or a child travels with one parent alone.

Copies of all important documents: scanned copies can be sent to one's email account for emergencies.



Most children are fascinated by strange animals. But beware, some of them might be dangerous!

Safety

Sunscreen with a high protection factor: seek advice from the paediatrician or pharmacist. Long-term use is not good for children, better to wear loose, long sleeves and trousers and avoid the midday sun.

UV protection suits: great protection and dry fast.

Umbrella: for sun and rain, especially if you bring a buggy or a baby carrier.

Sun hat, winter cap: bring one that covers the neck and ears as well (hat with a rim).

Good sunglasses.

Bandana-cloth, cloth nappy or sarong: can be used as a mask in dusty areas, as sun protection around the neck, to cool down when placed in water, to stop mosquitoes, as a headscarf, as a sunshield in front of a window and as a toy.

Swimming help, i.e. arm bands: better to teach the child to swim before you travel.

Insect repellent (spray or roll-on): seek advice from a doctor or pharmacist. Some products are not suitable for small children or long-term use, compatibility test at home, long-sleeved shirts and trousers at dusk are the best mosquito repellent.

Impregnated mosquito net: if the children like to take things into their mouth, don't impregnate the net!

Mosquito coils, electric mosquito device: long-term use is not suitable.

Water filter, SteriPen, or purification tablets: Depending on your destination, teach your children not to drink tap water, not even when brushing their teeth, showering or playing

water games.

Address tag and whistle: Always update the address in the address tag (we bought one in a pet shop) and teach your children only to use the whistle in an emergency.

Prescription glasses and prescription in case the glasses need replacing whilst away.

And for the very little ones:

A strap to hold on to your child in a busy area and to keep them safe in a restaurant's high chair.

Safety plug for electrical sockets: especially in developing countries they sometimes have very dangerous electrical outlets.

Clothing & Footwear

Clothes should be comfortable, not show dirt too well and the child should enjoy wearing them. Prefer light-coloured clothing (dark colours attract the sun's heat). Several garments worn on top of each other are better than a single, thick sweater. If your child is still wearing nappies, choose clothes that make nappy changing easy under difficult circumstances.

Slippers or non-slip socks.

Sandals, flip flops, beach shoes: ideal for dirty showers and to avoid standing on dangerous animals in the water.

Hiking shoes or trainers: For safe walking on difficult terrain, prevents mosquito and other bites and scratches.

Bodysuits for babies, underwear, socks.

Long johns (or tights) are great all-rounder: comfortable clothing during long journeys, warming when worn under trousers, pyjamas, etc.

Shirts, T-shirts (short and long



On the Seg-way through rural China.

sleeve).

Skirt or dress for girls.

Long and short trousers or zip off-trousers: depending on the destination and the age of your child, shorts might be regarded as indecent.

Swim suit/trunks (or UV-suit), swim diapers.

Fleece sweater or jacket: even useful in warm countries, as areas or often cooled with air-conditioning.

Rain and wind jacket.

Ski suit, gloves, scarf.



Family transport!

Food

Plastic or metal bowl with lid: serves to store food and also to eat food from.

Small snacks for on the road (a good one are pot noodles, they can even be eaten uncooked).

Herbal tea bags, instant drink powder, and squash: a beverage that kids like and that reminds them of home.

Feeding cup with spout or baby bottle: clean regularly with a brush (toothbrush), sterilizing tablets.

Thermos and / or water bottle: bottle made of metal cannot break so easily and can be used for hot water too.

Cup: for playing water games, for drinking, or for washing the child if there are only bucket

showers available.
Pocket knife: for peeling fruit and vegetables and lots of other uses.



Halloween in China

And for the very little ones:

Bottle and spare nozzles, perhaps the version with the disposable plastic inserts (more sterile, but a lot of waste).
Thermos bag for the bottle or a bottle warmer: so that the baby milk retains the right temperature.
Instant baby milk powder if necessary: Available in most major cities in the world, but often sweeter than at home.
Baby food or blender (or a good fork/sieve).
Sterilizer, sterilizing tablets or camping stove with pan to sterilize in boiling water.
Baby spoons, cutlery.
Bib or cloth (or bandana/sarong).
High chair: seats that can be attached to a table, often do not fit. Most restaurant chairs can be stacked and thus make an ideal high chair.

Hygiene

Wet wipes, a damp flannel in a plastic bag, ideal to quickly wash hands or face or a "hand-wash" gel.
Water spray: Fill with water and spray the kids on a hot day. Can do miracles on long, hot journeys.
Plastic bags: for the dirty laundry, dirty nappies, a vomiting child.
Baby oil, face and body cream, lip balm.
Mild soap and shampoo.

Tooth brush and paste, dental floss, mouth wash.
Nail scissors, clippers: nails and hair grow faster in tropical climate, long nails increase the risk of infection (when children scratch bites or carry dirt under their nails).
Toilet paper as an all-rounder.
Large towel: made from lightweight, quick-drying material or simply a sarong.
Hair clips.

And for the very little ones:

On a long trip, a child in nappies can be "easier" than a child who has only recently been toilet trained. In any case, always carry spare clothes and underwear in your hand luggage.
Disposable or cloth nappies: Disposable nappies are available in most cities around the world, but often expensive and a "clean" disposing is not guaranteed. They are often only available in small sizes for small children and contain more plastic, so children will sweat more and develop rashes easier. A disposable nappy in your baggage may be helpful even you're your children are out of nappies. When there is no public toilet around and your child needs one, just hide behind a bush, hold the nappy around your child, let him do his business and then dispose of the nappy.
Wet wipes or a flannel for the nappy changes.
Nappy rash cream.
Changing mat or sarong or towel.
Potty or just cut the lower part of a big drinking bottle: This might give young children who find squatting toilets difficult, a good alternative.

Sleep

Sleeping bag: for younger children a sleeping bag with sleeves (or opening for the arms to go through) and/or a thin "silk" sleeping bag.
Blanket: or sarong, towel, depending on destination.
Rice mats: can make a bed on the floor for children, can be used to sit on whilst waiting at a train station, etc.
Hammock: Does not take much space, can also be used as an extra bed away from the crawlies on the floor.
Pyjamas: or just sleep in underwear, t-shirt or long johns.
Favourite cuddly toy or other favourite things (i.e. dummy): Maybe you want to attach the favourite bear with an elastic to the child, so it won't get lost.

And for the very little ones:

Travel Crib: Can also be used for crawling children as a safe play area. As an alternative bed for the little ones, just put two armchairs together, bring an inflatable dinghy, or use a hammock.
Bed sheet: or sarong, beach towel.
Pillow: There are sleeping bags packed in storage bags that can be converted into a pillow, or bring your child's favourite pillow case from home and stuff it with clothes.
Dummy, music box.
Night light: illuminates a dark hotel room and reminds the child of the bedroom at home.

Transport for the little ones

Buggy or pram:
Depending on the terrain, choose a light model that is simple to fold. Consider well

When „Mama“ of the mud house in which we lived for a few days (on Lake Karakul near the China/Pakistan border) asked us if we wanted some horses to ride around the lake, Desmond had the idea to get a camel instead. Lenny wanted a small donkey, so when we left the next day, we made a very funny little caravan!



Hanoi's street children befriend our boys.

whether such a extra piece of luggage makes sense. Will the terrain be buggy friendly? Where can it be stowed when using a public bus/train? Can you strap the folded buggy to your backpack using bungee rope?
 The soft inlay of a pram: Can be used as a travel bed.
 Baby carrier: Can be heavy and hot for long trips, select a model with sun and rain cover, possibly baby carrier with wheels.
 Car seat: if car rental, camper holidays: check in advance whether there are seat belts on the back seats!

Entertainment and Miscellaneous

The toys of travelling children should be small, light and not easily broken (so that the luggage can be stowed without sweat). If the toys contain small pieces be careful on busses etc., parts may get lost.

A toy should be versatile, so that your child won't get bored with it too easily. And of course it must be easy to wash, because dirt can be difficult to avoid when travelling. Do not forget to consider your destination's history and culture when choosing a toy: A plastic soldier with a machine gun or a naked Barbie beauty may not be appropriate in some countries.

Make the decision what to bring together with your children. Consider what would happen if it got stolen. Should the favourite Teddy stay at home?

A very handy thing to have during times when the children (and parents) are tired from a long journey or when the parents need time for packing the bags is a portable DVD player.

Small gifts (e.g. pens, balloons,

etc.): Children are often given presents from local people. It's nice for them to be able to also give something back to the hosts. A little something from home can also be a good ice-breaker.
 Some new toys packed separately: to make a long journey more entertaining.
 Some favourite small toys from home.
 A fly swatter with balloons: makes an excellent "light tennis".
 Sand and water toys, snorkel gear, inflatable beach ball.
 Board games, playing cards, travel kite.
 Hand-craft things: with a little imagination (something that will be there in abundance during your travels) great toys can be crafted with your child (such as a fishing rod, bow and arrow etc.).
 Activity books, colouring book, reading books, comics: also for bed time story reading, possibly books or maps about the visited country.
 Homework, school books.
 MP3 player / DVD player with integrated screen, audio books, CDs, DVDs, socket adapter.
 Computer game.
 Camera: it can be interesting to let your child document his travels in his/her own way. Getting together before bed time and looking at the photos or films of the day may not only please the children!
 Voice recording device: to record a diary of sounds and music during the trip. Play back is fun!
 Baby phones: Give the parents the opportunity to spend time outside the hotel room once the child is asleep.
 Laptop / Internet: might be handy for long-term travellers with school

children or to stay in touch with friends at home.
 Musical instruments and notes.
 Diary: Some children can digest their day better if they finish their days by making their own image of the happenings (stick tickets in a book, write notes, make drawings etc.), it's also a great souvenir, a daily diary making can be a nice family experience.
 Collapsible water bucket: good to play with water, washing clothes and for a baby bath.
 Washing powder or soap, little brush, washing line (rope), clothes pegs: with children, there is always plenty to wash!
 Torch: possibly a headlamp to keep your hands free, also for reading in the evening when the child is going to sleep.
 Binoculars, wrist watch.
 Backpack for your child: might give a positive feeling of "participation", but can also add to your responsibility for looking after another bag when the child is tired.
 Pack system cubes, i.E. Eagle Creek Pack-it Cubes: Can be very handy as each member of the family knows where their clothes are. You can make one cube with toys and games and when you arrive somewhere, grab the cube before you head to a restaurant.
 Tarp (plastic sheet): to make a protection from the sun and rain, put on the ground for a picnic or crawling mat for a baby.
 Camping equipment: tent, mats, cooking stuff, etc.



Huge leaves in the jungle of South East Asia.

Often children like simple things more than anything else and can spend hours playing with them. Our boys used Styrofoam pieces (which they had found in a park) as frisbees, made boats from plastic bottles and birds with pegs and paper and transformed their Sarongs into the cape of a king, a hammock for their Teddies and folded and knotted as a ball.

Packing list - travel medicine

Consult your paediatrician, tropical medicine centre or pharmacy to assemble a first aid kit that will suit your needs. Start early in advance to inform yourself about necessary vaccinations, as some of them have to be done over the space of several months. Also, a refresher “first aid” course will not be a bad idea.

The kind of medication you should bring with you will depend on your destination, season, type of travel and condition of the child (disabilities, allergies, chronic diseases). In many countries, homeopathic medicine isn't available. Other drugs can be bought nearly anywhere in the world.

The following list is arranged by possible symptoms and mentions several alternatives for each treatment, some can be applied simultaneously. It is solely intended as a guideline and will in no way replace the advice of an expert.

Keep the descriptions of each medicine for reference or write the most important information on labels that you stick directly onto the medication sticker. Your travel kit should be kept away from the children, just like at home.

General

Books about travel medicine and diagnose (such as "Where there is no doctor"), Internet addresses and insurance details and emergency contacts.

A hot water bottle.
Tweezers, scissors.
Pre-packed first aid kit with sterile syringes for emergencies.

Cotton wool, bandages, plasters.
Spoon for medical syrups.
Thermometer.
Malaria tablets (only if necessary and only after consultation with your tropical doctor).
Multivitamin tablets or Spirulina (for destinations in which a healthy diet for children can not be guaranteed).
Pre-packed set of homeopathic medicines (attend a pre-travel workshop on homeopathy).

Diarrhoea / vomiting

As prevention: remember a few rules “peel it, boil it, cook it or forget it”.

Perenterol® or similar for restoring the digestive tract. Drink plenty, preferably with rehydration salts, start again slowly with food, bananas, white rice, helps with vomiting also warm water with honey and lemon juice.

Antibiotics, when travelling in areas without medical help.

Constipation

Drink plenty of water, eat figs, linseeds.

Injuries / sprains / small burns

Caution: Keep in mind that wounds might infect easier in tropical climate.

Dr. Bach's Rescue Remedy®.
Disinfecting solution and cream (i.E. Bepanthen plus®).

Travel sickness / jetlag

Suck on a piece of fresh ginger, drink ginger tea.
Airplane take off and landing can be a problem for small children (because of air

pressure). Give your child something to suck on. Eat light food before and during a long journey.
TraWell® (travel



Making friends with a snake in the snake hospital in Bangkok.

sickness chewing gum) or similar.

Insect bites / itching

As prevention: insect repellent, mosquito net, long sleeves, long trousers, good shoes, citronella-oil (dab skin with a cotton ball).

Fenistilin® gel and antihistamine drops.

Anxiety / tension / nervousness

Give chamomile tea.

Flu / cold / fever / pain

Sage tea, lime juice, put on socks that were soaked in vinegar to bring down a high fever.

Fever and pain relieving medicine (such as Tylenol® drops or Becetamol® chewing tablets).

Nasal spray (e.g. salt water sprays).

Cough

When it is a dry cough, put a cut onion half next to the bed.
Cough drops for children.



On sea kayaks in Vietnam.

Sore throat

Sore throat lozenges, silk scarf.

Inflammation / ear infections / bronchitis

Onion compress.
Antibiotics (when travelling far from a good doctor), anti-

inflammatory drug.

Eye Inflammation / irritated eyes

Put damp (but not hot!) black tea bags on the closed eyes.
Homeopathic eye drops (in one use portions).

Toothache

A cold “ring” to bite on for teething babies.
Painkillers (paracetamol).
Pre-packed dental first aid travel kit.

F A Q about our travels

How do you finance your travels?

In Switzerland we have a saying: "Save, save and build a house". We have slightly adjusted the Swiss way of doing so and traded the “house” for “travel”. We live a simple life, not only because we love to travel, but because it’s the way we are and the way we believe we can help to preserve this planet. When settled in Switzerland, we don’t have a car, rent a small apartment, we are vegetarians, don’t often eat out and buy a lot of our stuff in second hand shops. And once another adventure is dangling like a carrot in front of us, saving money becomes very easy.

Don’t forget, if you depart during the first few days of a new month, and you have worked right up to the end of the month before, then you will have a whole month’s salary, as well as possibly a pro-rata holiday payment and maybe some overtime money towards



The first trials with chopsticks.

your travel budget.

Once on the road, we reduce our expenses with a few simple measures: i.E. we do our own

laundry in a foldable hand basin, filter tap water and we prepare one or two meals a day ourselves instead of going to restaurants all the time. Travelling slowly is another way to reduce your costs, as the biggest expense is most likely the actual “moving” about and of course we choose public transport over flights and walking over taxis when ever possible. This is usually not only cheaper, but a lot more fun too!

In most cases, depending on the country, we travel with an approximate daily budget of € 40-50 (for the four of us), but we are not fixated on this and don’t indulge in daily book-keeping.

If work comes up during our travels, we will consider it. I worked as a language teacher in China and we also managed a hotel in the same place. I also make some money with travel writing every now and then. However, we never actively look for work.

And once the money runs low, we settle down again and start from scratch, which can also be very exciting.

How do you handle your finances when on the go?

Our Swiss ATM card (debit card) actually works nearly everywhere we have been. When we first set out, we also carried a credit card. Later,

when it expired and we didn’t want to have a new one shipped to us with DHL, my mother just told us the card number over the phone, which allowed us to use it for Internet bookings and payment.

In China, we went through a lot of trouble to buy some US Dollars travellers cheques, because we thought that we would need them in the remote areas of Pakistan. However, we ended up being able to draw money on our ATM card throughout all of our travels and didn’t once need to fall back on the checks.

We always carry a small amount of dollars in cash. One note in each bag and money belt. Should one bag get stolen, we will always have some cash left to organize help.

We manage our account online, which is very practical. A few times we paid something using Western Union and doing all this by Internet.

Are you “de-registered” in Switzerland?

Switzerland has a system that demands Swiss residence to “de-register” as residence when they leave the country for a longer time and give up their address. This means that you pay all outstanding bills,



In our camper in Mexico: Lenny learns to drive.

including your last tax bill and pair of nail scissors (which also



When we arrive in a new place we first sit down on our backpacks, drink some water and get barings. Only once we feel that we have „arrived“ we start looking for a place to stay.

serves as a cutter for other things), dental floss, which also serves as a string, one razor and sunscreen.

We always pack a fleece, good shoes, a rain cover, a mosquito net and a light

sleeping bag (and a bag full of Lego). We are equipped for almost all cases. If it gets colder than what our clothes allow, we just buy some hats and gloves locally and give them away later.

How do you stay in touch with home?

While we try to let friends and families know that we are doing well, we also appreciate to be away and to profoundly dive into a new culture and the life on the road. If we keep standing at home with one foot, it becomes difficult to open up for a new world. We love to give a so-called Poste Restante address to friends and family at home and love the excitement when picking up letters and parcels at a post office in the foreign country. (This is of course difficult because we often don't know in advance where we will at what date ...). We also send regular emails, before we had a blog, we sent photo CDs home to our families. We use Skype to call home and our website to keep in touch with friends and family. We don't carry a phone.

Are you insured?

In Switzerland health insurance (and personal liability insurance) is private, but compulsory. Only when you de-register as a resident you can quit the insurance. To keep the Swiss insurance and add an extra cover for abroad, would be too expensive for us on the

road. We are currently insured with a reasonably priced budget insurance over the Internet (www.worldwideinsure.com is one of the few affordable, European insurance companies that will insure Swiss (non EU citizens)). However, it only covers us for emergency medical costs. Beware: such insurance covers would try and repatriate you in case of an emergency. In such case, they pay only the difference from a normal plane ticket to an "emergency" ticket. And once you are back in your home country, the insurance will not cover your expenses. Being Swiss this is a bit difficult, as a Swiss is not automatically insured once back home (like for example English people are with the NHS). Swiss law requires health insurance companies to accept new members, but only if they are registered with a council and in Switzerland to settle, not just to visit due to medical treatment.

**„At last we are travelling!“
said Desmond.
We had just arrived in Mexico. He hadn't regarded the two months in the USA as real travelling.**

leave the country. Once you come back, you re-register as a resident in the town where you settle. And of course when you have children who are at school age, this means, that they are no longer obliged to go to the school of your residence.

How much luggage do you bring and who carries what bag?

During the past travels we carried two large backpacks (70l and 60l) and a small day pack, a hand bag and both of us parents a money belt. Our boys didn't have their own packs. We decided against it because we did not want to have the extra responsibility of looking after another two pieces of luggage. We pictured a situation in which we get off a bus after a twelve hour trip throughout the night, just to find that one of our children had left behind their pack with their favourite bear...

Now, that our boys are older, they carry their own bags.

The first time we set out, we had packed a lot of stuff that we later gave away and reduced to a minimum. The longer we're on the go, the more "simple" we become e.g. we just carry two sarongs for the whole family: they are used as towels, sunscreen, toys, blankets, a skirt and more. Also we reduce cosmetics to just a bar of soap, a shampoo, four toothbrushes, toothpaste, a



Our boys receive many presents from friendly locals: in Mongolia they got some great slippers.

How do you school your children whilst travelling?

We teach our children ourselves. In Switzerland there is unfortunately no great home schooling infrastructure like in other countries, so we rely on tips from teachers and on simply checking the material we find in Swiss books. We teach our boys in English, German and Maths for about 3 hours a day. More about our schooling on the following pages.

How do you prepare for a trip?

That's different each time. We knew for a long time that we wanted to travel with our children and had some vague ideas of what we wanted to do and where we wanted to go. However, we don't really plan

a trip. How long we will be away and where we will go, we decide spontaneously whilst on the move. More significant issues about health for example, we take very seriously and prepare well. I refreshed a first aid course, had long discussions with the paediatrician and even attended a paediatrician's seminar, read the whole super long publication on Tropical Medicine from the WHO, talked extensively with a specialist in Homeopathy and got information about the subject from many sources. I kept reminding myself that in the worst case, far away from everything and everybody, I might have to almost be able to replace a doctor.

Once we travel, we let go of planning and preparations and just rely on faith and a good foundation. We listen to other travellers and locals. Sometimes we are lucky and overhear interesting tips. i.E. in Thailand we once talked to a local photographer and asked him what his favourite picture was. He excitedly talked about this wonderful waterfall in the jungle. Our ears pricked. He showed us the place on a map. So next we set off. We had no idea how to get there, but just boarded a bus that was heading the right direction. Then a next bus and so on. It took us three days and many bus journeys, a taxi, a ride on a raft a three hours trek through the jungle, but it was worth the effort. The waterfall was spectacular, even better, the journey there was superb in itself.

Information about visa, health risks, climate, etc. we usually get from the Internet. We very seldom book accommodation in advance (only if we know that in the big city we'll arrive in there is a notorious shortage of budget accommodation and we arrive late). In that case we will book a room on www.hostelworld.com.

Usually, when we arrive somewhere, we first put our backpacks on the floor, sit on them, have a long drink and gain a foothold. Then we look around us, follow a tout, another traveller, a recommendation or we ask local people. Sometimes we travel with a guide book, but



Desmond is stroking a deer in the animal rescue centre in Cambodia.

often not.

Now that the boys are a little older, we try to involve them in the foreign culture.

Are your children vaccinated and what with?

Our children have been vaccinated with the standard vaccinations for children in Switzerland. In addition, we had them vaccinated against rabies (only on the first trip when the children were still small, because a sick animal is more likely to attack a small child than an adult and because bites are more dangerous when close to the brain). In any case, it is still absolutely necessary to seek immediate medical attention if the children got bitten or scratched by an animal. Being vaccinated just simplifies the after bite procedure. Hepatitis A is very mild when children have it (just like a minor cold) and once the child has gone through the disease he/she will be immune for life. Hence, we never had to vaccinate our children for Hep. A. The risk that children get infected with hepatitis B is extremely low. We had our children vaccinated, but when their blood was tested for antibodies, they hadn't actually developed enough, so they are

not protected. We avoid Malaria areas as much as we can. The Malaria risk is often very regional, in forests, swamps etc. and only during certain seasons. It's important to get very detailed information about it.

What kind of accommodation do you choose?

The simpler the accommodation, the better and not just for the travel budget. Small hotels are often run by families – and we are often included as

temporary members of that family - the children feel comfortable, maybe it has animals and/or a garden and the hosts are usually more flexible when it comes to putting an extra bed or so. We

often take a room with one double bed and an extra mattress on the floor. The boys and I share the big bed, and Michael takes the mattress. Or sometimes we are lucky to find a room with two double beds. Sometimes, Lenny and I share a single bed, Michael sleeps on the second single bed and Desmond in the hammock. Or the children sleep on a blanket on the floor. A solution can always be found somehow. Now that the boys are older, they could also even have their own hotel room.



Lego: they are light and small and easily washable and they make a good past-time for young and old...

Heaven on earth is, when a hostel has a restaurant or sitting area in front of the rooms. Then we parents can sit there in the evenings when the kids are in bed, rather than being stuck in the hotel room with a head torch on to read a book whilst the boys are going to sleep.

We often take sleeper trains or buses, or even sleep on the deck of a ship. Such nights are very exciting highlights for the children and have the advantage to cover a long distance while sleeping. Hotel rooms often offer little details



Have the children always remained cooperative even during long trips?

Homesickness has never been a problem for us. Maybe because our boys have been on the road for so long that they don't really know "home" or perhaps because they have inherited our genes.

When travelling, children will also see ugly things.

that parents don't notice, but children love: an old, creaking cupboard that can serve as a hiding place, a bunk bed; it all offers adventure for the children. We almost always choose a room with a communal bathroom (a bathroom that is shared by many rooms). Firstly, it is usually cheaper, but it also attracts fewer mosquitoes in the room, a communal bathroom is likely to be cleaned more regularly, the "sewer" smell stays away from the room and it can be a fun "outing" for the children to go for a shower. If there is no shower, a bucket with a cup will do just as fine. When we stay somewhere for a bit longer, we sometimes opt for renting a small house or apartment. To take a break every now and then and to "settle" down with a homely household is very important on our travels.

We usually choose a room with a fan and not aircon. If you sleep in a very cool room, going outside is more difficult than if the body gets used to the heat.

At the moment we are travelling in a camper, which has many advantages when it comes to sleeping and eating arrangements.

Amazingly, even very long trips are never a problem for them. Before the 79 hour train ride through Siberia, we were a bit nervous and when Lenny asked five minutes into the journey if we were there yet, we became panicky. However, this moment passed by quickly and in the end, our boys didn't even want to get off the train anymore. Once you settle on a train or bus and you accept the fact that this will be your home for a while, time goes pretty fast. We play board games, make drawings, talk, look at photos (on the digital camera), prepare meals (we bring boiled eggs, cucumbers, noodles, sauces, etc. and make a little feast), look out the window...

In Russia, we once again made the experience that travel in the lower classes of public transport is easier with our children than second or even first class travel. There is much more going on, children are allowed to play and make noise. If chickens and pigs share the bus with us or the people around us eat their picnics (and sometimes even invite us), time passes much more quickly. At the beginning we tried to limit the hours on busses and trains and covered long distances at night. We also try to always have a long travel break after a strenuous

journey.

To eat in restaurants all the time can become a drag. We try to make an effort and prepare at least one if not two meals ourselves in the hotel (e.g. oats with milk, salad and bread, yogurt, dried and fresh fruits, etc.).

There is really only one thing that stresses our children a lot when we are travelling, it's the constant attention they get from local people. Especially from overexcited young women who start screaming when they see our blond boys or who take pictures of them, even pinch their cheeks. We try to recognise these situations before they get out of hand and give our children the right to say no to touching and photos.

On our latest travels we experienced very unusual adjustment problems. More about this on the following pages.

How do your children react to cultural differences?

When our children were smaller, they took everything as it was, without question. They assessed and never compared. A man wearing a long skirt, a cow running through the restaurant, a moon that is "hanging" in the sky the wrong way round ... Nothing was strange to them. They made friends immediately with all the children, the language or culture were not important. Even deformed beggars were simply accepted the way they are.

Now, at school age, their view of the world has changed. They evaluate and judge, ask questions and demand answers.



Every now and then we do something just for our children (and truth be told, we usually enjoy it just as much...).

They want to partake and understand the world. They feel feelings of frustration, injustice and lack of



Peaceful hours at the Golden Palace in India.

understanding. They don't just smile at anybody, they first test if this person is meaning them well. Making friends has become slightly more difficult and communication more important. On the one hand, their world has become smaller and lost unconditional wonders, on the other hand, it has become more interesting and enriching and interesting

conversations with people from all over the world take place.

Do you have one last tip to make a long journey with children successful?

Routine. This is the golden rule. When everything has changed around your children and the only familiar thing left are the parents, siblings and cuddly toy, a daily

routine offers major support. If your child is well rested, fed and happy, the parents will also be able to relax. And if the parents are cranky, undecieve, unsure or even quarrel with each other, the children will react badly to that immediately.

Travelling at a slow pace is another ticket to success. When we first arrive at a new place,

we first spend a day or so just exploring the area around the hostel. We find a nice park, school grounds or similar and let the boys play. Slowly, we enlarge the area of exploration. Our focus remains on child-friendly activities (i.e. a picnic in the park, an afternoon at a playground, a trip with rented bicycles) and prefer encounters with interesting people to world famous tourist sights.

Another measure that we take and that works well for us is to have regular holidays from travelling. Whenever we all feel tired, we put on the breaks and stay in one place (e.g. on a beach, with preference in a house where we can cook ourselves) for one or two months. Once well rested, we carry on with the trip.

„Are we there yet?“ asked Lenny five minutes into the train journey. We still had 78 hours and 55 minutes of travelling in front of us...

What do our boys do during long journeys?

We are often asked if our children do not get bored on long journeys. To prevent the big travel boredom, we have equipped ourselves with a few gadgets and rules (they apply now for our camper travels, but were very similar when we travelled by public transport).

- We usually try not to drive for more than five hours a day and after a long travelling day, we take a few days “off”, if possible.
- Halfway through a long journey, we take a long lunch break.
- We try to take a break in places where the boys can get out their kick scooters and let off some steam.
- Both boys have their own MP3 players; they often listen to audio books (i.e. The famous five) or watch short

wildlife podcasts.

- If we are still on the road after 4 p.m., they are allowed to play on their Gameboys.
- We have MANY books with us (mostly graphic novels – comics, what ever you call them), that’s one thing we don’t mind spending some money on. The boys often read for hours, sometimes I read to them too.
- Sometimes we take turns with who can sit in the front and who sits in the back. When I sit in the back with Lenny, we play Trump cards.
- Desmond often just looks outside lost in thoughts, looking at the passing landscape.
- If we are searching for something (i.e. a sign or something), we involve the boys in the search. “Who spots the first?”

- And of course we will show the guys – if they are interested – where on the map we are going and where we have come from.
- A small snack, a drink or simply a candy now and then can improve everybody’s mood on a long travel day.
- Games like “I spy with my...” can offer a short and welcome change, but our boys are past the age where they are excited about this for a long time.
- We have met families who put a small DVD player with screen in the back of their cars to entertain their children with films. We don’t own such a player, but it’s surely not a bad idea when the landscape is a bit dull.



Rescue an injured dog. In Thailand.

Worldschooling on the go

- Find a **quiet place** so neither the children nor you will be distracted.
- Try **different ways** of teaching and then stick with what works best for you and your family. Don't be disheartened if your school days are not always just fun.
- For a long time I thought it better not to give the boys the extra pressure of "exams", but it turned out that a little "test" now and then works wonders. Because of the nature of our little home schooling class, they have no peers to compare themselves with. An exam, repeated a few days later, gives them a good way to see their own progress.
- Give a little **homework**. It's a good way to practice more independent study. When home schooling, our children get used to a one to one teaching, so having to do something without the teacher looking over their shoulders,

isn't a bad thing.

- A **work task plan** over a few days works very well for us. That way, the boys will be able to set their own



Animals, animals and animals. Our boys love animals.

priorities and adjust their speed and efficiency.

- The great advantage of home schooling is that you have the freedom to be **imaginative** and to react immediately on your child's needs and weaknesses. If I pick up on a small problem, I immediately create an exercise to practice this issue more. Not having a class room full of children allows a lot of

spontaneous teaching.

- Learn the **topics that surround you**. When in China, teach about Chinese history and culture, not about the Romans. When in Spain, learn Spanish, not French. When in nature look at trees and plants, not at urban architecture. Integrate the rich environment into your lesson plan.

- Have **discipline** even if you don't always feel like it. At the same time enjoy the flexibility and freedom home schooling offers you.
- Ask your children **what they want to learn** about and make a lesson on their interests too. It will be a lot more fun to combine the "must learn" with the "want to learn". In our home school we have regular **holidays** (every few weeks), but each time only one or two weeks. We found that frequent, short breaks work well for us.

Lenny recently said philosophically: „When we lived in China, the bottle of water was full. This can cause problems. Maybe somebody wants to steal the water or poison it. The bottle could Tipp over and spill. Now, we are travelling again and the bottle is empty.“

Travelling is not a holiday!

Don't we all enjoy spending time with our children? And when we travel together, we are really close. Family life.



Our boys love „street food“.

experience and creates a close bond between the family members. And yet, family happiness isn't guaranteed just by booking a long distance ticket. It takes more for a successful trip. A friend of mine recently wrote: "Just because we are travelling, we don't become angels." Wise words.

During the years that we spent on the road, but especially in the period in which we ran a small hotel in China, we met

several families who were disappointed with their trip. Even some who were on the verge of cutting their time away short. They had expected a relaxing holiday, instead, they faced arguments and tears.

After having had to face surprising adjustment problems ourselves on this current travel and as a result felt doubts about our trip, it is time to pursue the question of the *recipe for success*. What makes family travel a positive and enriching experience for all family members?

Great, yes?

Travelling with children is a valuable and enriching



Every few months we take a break and stay in one place. And when we do so, we can also buy a few larger toys.

sterile hotel room or a miniature tent space. On the other, more positive side, children are often excited and happy for hours just getting to know all the little details in their new environment that are so different to home.

Everyday activities become challenges.

Clearly, when we travel, we have less daily chores to deal with, but those who have to be done take up a lot more time. Just scrubbing our laundry by hand takes up a big chunk every other day. If we have to buy a specific item, i.e. children's shoes, it can become a rather hard challenge. Meals must be organized by either finding suitable restaurants or food needs to be bought and prepared. Buying onward bus or train tickets can take a whole day. In India it once took me eight hours to send a small package by mail. And that before we even had children!

In many countries the clock ticks slower and things that seem mundane at home suddenly become high hurdles. In our well known environment, we know where to buy what, who provides which service and we follow a well-established daily routine. When travelling, everything is strange and must first be learned and inquired.

At this point, I would like to mention that precisely such challenges constitute the charm of travelling and the fulfilment of those guarantee a deep feeling of satisfaction. Queuing up and searching for things will often bring us closer to the people and customs of the host country.

Emotions go haywire. Many of us experience a shorter and more nervous

temper during travelling, particularly in the first few weeks. After all, we are far away from our usual "safe" environment and have a profound responsibility for our family (and the success of the trip). When travelling, we have to re-establish a way of letting off steam and finding a necessary inner balance, something that we often take for granted at home: maybe we are used to do regular sport, have a satisfying job, meet with friends, follow a weekly training course, have places we can withdraw to or offload our children with the grandparents. Although we may relax deeply whilst on our trip, we never quite manage to forget the pressure of keeping our children safe and sound and protect them in the unknown territories. Many external influences can add to the aggravation: the time differences, the strange food, lack of routine, disturbed sleep and noise, wet heat and pollution... it only needs a nagging child and an emotional explosion becomes hard to control.

Travelling can bring out feelings and thoughts we don't know in everyday life and we sometimes seem to have our hands full understanding and learning about ourselves.

Bringing the children's wishes under one roof with your own needs requires an extra large portion of patience, awareness and time.

Why do children suddenly crave for attention?

Once everything familiar has gone and even the parents seem out of their comfort zone,

Lenny, who has travelled in around 25 countries recently said: „My favourite country is Switzerland. It is so clean and well organised there and everything is green and there are mountains...“

And what important factors should be considered?

Letting go takes time.

Saying good-byes at home, but also a kind of "letting go" upon arrival at the destination can be difficult and take time. Space for new impressions must be created. When hotel guests arrived straight from their last working day in their home country, they usually needed several days, if not weeks until they managed to relax and until they were ready for the unknown.

Children can spoil our plans.

Children do not always comply with our plans the way we hoped for. Some families had predicted a full program for their stay at the hotel, yet soon noticed that only a compromise between playing time in and around the hotel, short walks, swimming in the river and the program of the parents would satisfy all family members. If you travel with children planning is probably best done spontaneously and each day welcomed as it comes.

I am bored! Children on the road need more entertainment.

Are you blessed with children who can play quietly in their rooms for hours? Once on the road you might find your children being bored easier and demanding more entertainment. After all, they had to leave a large part of their toys and books as well as their friends behind and exchanged them for a tiny,



On a donkey on Lake Karakul, North west China.

children often need (even) more affection, patience and reinsurance than they do at home. More than once we have experienced stressed parents wondering why their normally independent, outgoing know-it-all child all of a sudden shyly hangs on their trouser legs.

The family structure must be redefined. In the well-established everyday routine each family member has its place and knows its tasks (and retreat possibilities). Once you hit the road, family life becomes more intense and most of your time will be spent together. This is of course wonderful, at the same time, it takes getting used to. The position of each one, indeed, the whole family structure have to be redefined. A new routine will establish slowly.

Adjustment problems can affect anyone. Adjustment what? we would have asked until recently. In the meantime, we have learnt our lesson through a personal experience. Seemingly out of the blue, one or more family members can become troubled by the constant change and foreign cultures and revolt them unconsciously (or consciously).

"Lenny happy like sunshine!" our younger son kept saying when he was a mere two years young and backpacking with us for his first time (in Morocco). That's the way we know our boys. Even the more helpless were we at the beginning of our recent journey when such difficulties arouse. We contacted a good friend who is also a competent child psychologist and asked her for advice. She soon came back with interesting news: The condition has a name "adjustment disorder" and can

occur in adults and children alike and in many different life circumstances, such as moving house or a separation of the parents.

During a visit on a tiny farm in Cambodia, Desmond takes a piglet for a walk.



They are normal reactions to changed circumstances and express themselves differently in each individual. The symptoms of the adjustment disorder are very similar to those of a depression: lack of energy, indecisiveness, confusion, aggression, social withdrawal, fear of the future, insomnia, loss of appetite and more. . However, they will disappear without further doing once the adjustment to the new situation is done. Parents who follow a clear line play a crucial part in the recovery. It mother and father are insecure with the current situation, the children will follow suit. The affected child will feel better when it knows that his/her reaction is "normal". Room for retreat, defined structures and rules will also help.

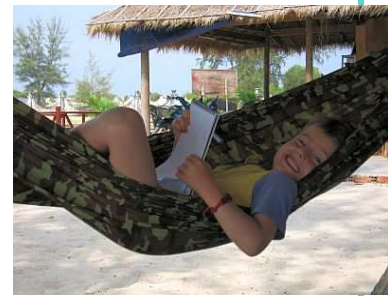
The health of our children is a sore issue.

Despite the best preparation, competent medical books in the luggage and a good emergency travel insurance, the scary thought "What would happen if a child got sick or had an accident" creeps into the parents' minds every so often. We usually trust the universe that all things will be fine, yet, we also know moments when we were worried profoundly about the

health of our boys. Who would we contact if a child needed fast help? How would we find a (good) doctor? And how can we communicate?

I won't forget one particular moment... it happened in rural China, Lenny was just 4 years young. The boys and I were on our way back from the park when Lenny all of a sudden started screaming in pain. I lifted him up, he stopped breathing and bent backwards, wiggling. What should I do? Desmond was too young to go and get help and none of the people passing us stopped. Horrible scenarios shot through my mind. Then, Lenny vomited. Once, twice, three times and when he was finished, he felt better. In such moments, the world stands still.

Don't know it, won't eat it! Our boys aren't great eaters at home, but whilst living in China their menu literally reduced to a few bowls of white rice a day. They longed for Mama's cooking and Swiss food. Eating a healthy diet whilst on



the road is even more important than at home, because travelling tugs at our reserves. Providing optimal nutrition for our children not always easy.

Relaxing in the hammock.

And that leads us to the second issue about "food on the road": Restaurant visits. We love them when we're in good company, when we can stay sat for a long time, talking to friends or our partner and eat some fine food (and don't have to cook it ourselves).

But eating in restaurants three times a day with our children,

entertaining them whilst waiting for the menu, the meal and lastly, the bill and doing so for months, even years? When we travel, we try to prepare two meals a day ourselves or have a picnic in the park. In the



Middle East we even carried our own little stove. Cheap street eateries are usually more entertaining and offer a faster service than classy restaurants and once we find a good location, we usually go back there again. Being able to cook ourselves is one big plus point for travelling in our own camper.

Too much attention makes people shy.

We parents are thrilled to meet new people and get to know strange cultures. And most of the time that goes for our

children too. Yet sometimes it gets too much, because in many countries, little ones attract all the attention. Foreign children are readily admired, stared at, touched (more than once between their legs...) and photographed (even when

Organising treasure hunts is fun for the whole family.

eating or sleeping) at any occasion. There were times when our boys blew kisses to their admirers. Months later, their initial joy had passed and the constant attention became a nuisance. "Leave me alone," Desmond and Lenny more than once shouted at the curious locals. Unpleasant situations. Children are honest. If something does not agree with them, they will show it, no matter if they hurt their hosts' feelings.

To prevent too many wary times on long trips, we take a "holiday" every few months. For a few weeks or even a couple of months, we withdraw to a quiet place with good, fresh air, rent a small house or apartment and spend quality

family time together. We cook ourselves and eat "at home" and talk about the previous travel experiences, look at pictures and digest. And we move on again when we are all ready.

Travel with the awareness that you are not on holidays.

Those who don't expect a perfect time without frictions, will not be disappointed. Any long trip will turn into some sort of a daily routine at some point with difficult moments, frustration and compromise. And moments that are so heavenly beautiful and deeply satisfying as a family that all small problems will be quickly forgotten.

Despite all (or maybe because of it all), travelling with children remains a unique experience that we do not want to miss.



Possibly the biggest water fight in the world: Thai New Year in Bangkok.

Children's highlights per country

Children see the world with different eyes. Again and again we are amazed at what little details they remember and which big (for us) experiences they have forgotten. The Great Wall of China is fading in their memories, yet the yummy candy floss that the funny man made by turning a device on the back of his bicycle (next to the Great Wall) will possibly stick in their mind forever.

It's an easy task for us parents to keep our children excited during our travels; we just have

to take the time to listen to their wishes.

On the following pages we list a few countries (in alphabetical order) that we have travelled in and some of our boys' highlights there.

China

Nearly every town in China has a green park and most of the times a few children's attractions there. Often there is a trampoline or a few small pools with plastic fish for the children to catch. Many

Chinese towns have pedestrian areas. Long train journeys in sleeper compartments are very comfortable in China.

Disney Land in Hong Kong, Dragon dance in the Kowloon Park, exploring caves, bamboo rafting on the Yulong river, trekking and bicycle tours, cooking school, Segways, swim in the rivers, kayaking on the



Lenny's fifth birthday in a home stay in Russia.



Exploring caves in China is exciting!

Tatao National Park, play with the children on the mosque garden and handing out sweets, watch a movie in an open air cinema late at night, beach life, take a piglet for a walk, do a motorbike tour.

Malaysia

Malaysia is a perfect country for travelling families.

Countless, fantastic playgrounds, often with free swimming pools, The Youth Park on Penang with three tropical swimming pools, gardens and wild monkeys and monitor lizards, the museum of science in the Petronas towers, Little India (eating street food by hand), fish massage in Kuala Lumpur, wild hornbill birds, monkeys, millipedes and other animals.

Morocco

Riding donkeys, sliding down sand dunes, SPANA project in Marrakesh, mosques (traffic free zones), camel market in the south, strolling through the Souqs and looking at all the strange things.

Mexico

Beaches, collecting shells and stones, swimming, snorkelling, playing with the grey whales, eating tortillas, many nice street dogs, swimming with sea lions, watching pelicans.

Mongolia

Nearly the whole country is one big car free „play“ zone for children. In spring many animals have babies, which is great for children.

Lots of animals, holding lambs and kids, horse trekking, breaking the ice on the frozen lakes, snow ball fight, wild camping, „open“ toilets, sleeping in yurts, climbing up a volcano, collecting stones, riding on a rain deer.

Pakistan

Trekking in the mountains, sleeping in mountain huts, fresh apples and dried apricots, watching mountain polo, a lot of friends and presents.

The Philippines

Tarsiers in the Tarsier centre on Bohol, living on a beach, spending lots of time in a hammock, playing with plastic knights from the Cornflakes boxes, sleeping on the deck of a ferry, finding sea stars.

Russia

Sleeping in a Siberian log-cabin, sweet pancakes for breakfast, trekking on Olchon island, a sauna, three days on a train, cats at the home stay.

Syria

The crusader castle Krak des Chevaliers, the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, eating ice cream and sweets in the Souq around the mosque (the Syrians are masters at making sweets and cakes), exploring the ruins of Palmyra and watching a race between a camel and a rickshaw, yummy bread with Nutella, a room with a bath tub, jumping through the sprinklers in Hama.



Our boys love riding in the back of a pickup truck. In the picture above we got a lift from a friendly driver in Syria.

Turkey

The Blue Mosque in Istanbul has a beautiful, traffic free area, ice cream that is sticky like chewing gum, underground cities in Cappadocia, the rock formations around Goreme, hot baths in Pamukkale, the Gladiator museum in Selcuk, cheese pizzas that look like long boats, lemon spray that is given to refresh tired travellers on overnight busses, a TV in the hotel room.

balloon, eating shaved ice, watching Mama as a teacher, horse carts and chair lifts in Yunnan, see Yak cows, tea ceremonies, eating with chop sticks, hostels with electrical blanket, watching the men make fresh noodles, slide down sand dunes in Dunhuang, camel, horse and donkey trek on lake Karakul, sleeping in mud huts and yurts, public shower houses in Tashkurgan, playing pool, ping pong and badminton. Long overnight journeys on busses and trains, settling down for a while. Having a dog as a pet.

India

Sharing a „container“ room with a mouse, eating with hands, pieces of liquorice wood thrown away by locals that our boys cut with their knives and used as paint brushes, cycle rickshaws, chipmunks in the park, „shooting“ the canons in the old fort, cows in the streets, tea and yoghurt from clay pots.

Jordan

Ride camels through the desert, ride on a donkey in Petra, eat with hands in street restaurants, yummy breads and cakes, the huge play ground in Aqaba, run up and down the ramps in the market in Aqaba, glass bottom boat ride on the Red Sea, sleep in a tent in the desert (Wadi Rum), play with other travellers in the guest house in Dana, Humus and Falafel.

Cambodia

Stroke deer in the Phnom

Thailand

Thailand is an ideal country for travelling families.



Drinks with ice in plastic bags, the snake show at the Red Cross snake hospital in Bangkok, Ocean world in Bangkok, going to the cinema on Siam Square, river boats instead of town busses, looking at temples and lighting incense for Buddha, Hanna tattoos, watching the public aerobics in the parks at 6 p.m., great Thai massages, chocolate fondue at Svensen's, wonderful beaches, snorkelling, living in a small stilt house on the beach on Koh

Pha Ngan, elephant trekking, sleeping on night trains and the night ferry, watching the trained monkeys get the coconuts, the Songkran water fight (Thai New Year in April), Banana „rotis“ and sweet corn

Over several months we kept going back to visit the baby elephant „Champion“ and let him play with our children.

on the cob, fruit shakes, driving on a scooter through the palm tree forests.

USA

Collect stones, swimming in the huge pool in Texas, playing crazy golf, GoKarting, climbing on the big boulders in Joshua Tree Park, watching the squirrels dig tunnels, huge selection of food and snacks in the super markets.

Vietnam

Sleep on a junk in Halong Bay and jump into the water from

it, sea kayaking, exploring caves, the show in the Russian circus and the water puppet theatre in Hanoi, riding in cyclos, eating mock meats, war museum in Hanoi with the real airplanes, fun parks in the bigger cities, motorbike tour, a room with a fridge, bath and TV in the Hanoi Guest House, going on the scooter with the hotel owner every night to buy ice creams.



And a lot more highlights that will follow...

Desmond was just 5 years young when a monk from Cambodia asked him if we also wanted to become a monk one day. Our son replied: „No, I will become a Buddha instead.“



Useful addresses

Web sites:

Safe Travel for medical information:
www.safetravel.ch (German and French only)

Collection of links to other travelling families
www.familiesontheroad.com

The Miller family. Many beautiful stories and tips:
http://edventureproject.com/

The German Clavin family. Many great tips (and beautiful

photos for travelling with kids:
www.weltreise-with-kind.de (in German only)

Amy and her family on the go:
http://worldschooladventures.com/

Emiel, a Dutch father, about his travel experiences with his children: http://vandenboomen.wordpress.com/

Website for families who are uncommon:

www.uncommonchildhood.com



Affordable Travel Insurance:
www.worldwideinsure.com

And of course our own site:
www.hudsonfamily.ch

Books:
Where there is no doctor. Medical Guide, by David Werner.

The Hudson family - A guide book to travelling with children

http://www.hudsonfamily.ch/en
E-Mail: famhud@gmx.ch

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The quest for continuous movement.