



## THE OLIVER'S TRAVELS ESSENTIAL HOLIDAY WITH TODDLERS 10 STEP SURVIVAL GUIDE

We've teamed up with mother of four and bestselling parenting author Sarah Ockwell Smith to create this essential guide for all parents taking their first holiday with a toddler.

Life with a toddler, while wonderful, can be utterly draining. Holidays therefore, provide a much needed and much welcome break for frazzled parents. A chance to put your feet up, soak up the sun, relax around the pool and finally pick up a book that isn't a parenting manual or beginning with the words "That's Not My.....". Visions of your toddler paddling happily in the sea, delighting at the passing fish and chowing down on the local delicacies fill your mind, fuelled doubtlessly by the perfect, smiling, relaxed families that adorn all the holiday brochures and fill your TV screen each time a holiday advert comes on.

Sometimes, in fact a lot of the time, however this picture-perfect vision becomes anything but reality. It is not uncommon for the perfect holiday to quickly descend into tears, tantrums and sulks – and that's just from the parents! This ten-step survival guide explains why holidays with a toddler can be stressful – and more importantly, what you can do to plan and enjoy the happiest, calmest holiday possible with your little ones.

### 1. Readjust Your Expectations

Your toddler needs routine and ritual to feel safe. Taking them away from their everyday routine can leave toddlers feeling anxious and stressed. Tantrums, sulks and meltdowns on holiday are often their way of saying "Help, I'm freaked out by all this change!". Those perfect families in the adverts don't exist, don't aim to be one of them. Lower the bar a bit when it comes to your expectations of your toddler – and ultimately yourself too.

### 2. Choose Your Holiday with Your Toddler in Mind

The shorter the flight the better, flight times that correspond with naps and not bedtimes, family-friendly areas (and family friendly dining in particular), air-conditioned bedrooms, plenty of shade, lots of entertainment and countries with as small a time-zone difference as possible are key.

Last but certainly not least, consider the right accommodation for your toddler. It might be worth booking a villa instead of opting for a hotel room – the extra space and privacy mean your kids can run wild without the stress of winding up other guests.





### 3. Packing the Practicalities

The more you can plan and pack at home the better. Midnight jaunts to find a special type of milk or infant paracetamol – with products in a different language – are not fun.

Take any medication you use at home, and more sun cream (and after sun and calamine lotion) than you could ever imagine using.

Along with their clothing (sun safe suits and a hat they will actually leave on their head), take as much from home as you can to cover all eventualities.

Take favourite soft toys and comfort objects, blankets, even a pillow to help settle for naps, a few favourite books and toys and any music or light shows you use at bedtime.

### 4. At the Airport and On the Flight

Paying for a 'skip the queue' upgrade at security is an absolute must and if funds stretch, a family friendly lounge pass can pay dividends in starting your holiday calmly.

Hold onto your buggy until the very last moment, don't check it into the hold at check-in!

Pack a hand luggage bag for your toddler with new toys and books. If all else fails though, don't be afraid to use screens an iPad pre-loaded with favourite videos is worth its weight in gold.

Stock up on snacks for your toddler to munch on during the flight, don't rely on them wanting to eat the plane food!

### 5. Jet-Lag and Other Sleep Problems

Toddlers dislike sleeping at the best of times, but on holiday – in a new environment and with jet-lag to boot – it's usually the first thing to nose dive.

Allowing them to snooze in their buggy or a carrier at night while you enjoy the evening entertainment is far less fraught with stress than trying to use hotel babysitting services.

When it comes to jet-lag, the best solution is to observe the local time-zone as much and as quickly as possible. Try to eat according to the local time, not UK time, and get as much natural light as possible as soon as you can in the morning.

### 6. Eating Abroad

Toddlers and adventurous eating are not words that usually go together.

**Don't stress their eating on holiday. It's OK that they only eat white, beige or yellow food.** All toddlers are naturally neophobic. That means they are genetically wired to refuse all new foods. In a clever quirk of nature, this reluctance to try anything novel protects the toddler by preventing them from accidentally consuming something that may be poisonous.

### 7. Boundaries and Consistency

Holidays are usually a time to relax and let things go a little. Should the same apply to discipline? Should you say "yes" to things you normally say no to? Should you buy everything your toddler asks for? In one word – no. Yes, holidays are a great time to let your toddler explore, to have more autonomy and to bond with them. They are not however a time to become permissive. Toddlers need boundaries and most of all they need consistency from you. Simply, while you need boundaries to keep them safe, they need your boundaries to help them to feel safe. Just make sure that you discipline as gently and compassionately as possible.

### 8. The Elusive 'Me Time' and Relaxation

Me-Time and toddlers just don't mix well. It's much better to aim for family time with a few snippets of time alone to top up your emotional wellbeing tank whenever you can snatch them. Couple time however is not a particularly realistic aim. Toddlers need time to build bonds with new caregivers and the standard one or two-week holiday really doesn't afford that time. Instead, it's more realistic to plan time alone for just one parent, while the other cares for the toddler and take shifts. The toddler will be happy they are with at least one parent at any given time.

### 9. What to do When They Tantrum

It's often not a case of "if", but "when", so prepare these three steps:

- First off, stay calm, make sure your toddler is safe and not in any imminent danger.
- Try to find a quiet spot to move to while you sit with them until they are calm enough to have a hug and talk through what happened.
- When the tantrum's over move on. Don't dwell on it, get back to enjoying your holiday together.

### 10. What to do When You Tantrum

Parents do it too! Holidays, especially ones that don't go as planned – are a common environment for fraught relationships and fights.

However, holidays are a great time to get into new habits, downloading a mindfulness app, or a "how to handle stress" book to take with you can pay dividends, because ultimately, you're the one with all the power to change and enjoy the holiday as much as possible!