

## NEWSLETTER

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### WHERE SHOULD WE TAKE THE KIDS?

Summer is approaching. The sounds of, "Where shall we go this year?" are heard in the land.

Parents today are bombarded with advertising about activities and places indispensable to every loved child. Parents are made to feel guilty if they don't make sure their children partake of these. And, to make things worse, children are brainwashed by TV and start wheedling and whining for this stuff at an early age.

A few suggestions before you buy a bunch of non-refundable air tickets.

- o Think about the AGE and DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE of the kids when deciding on a destination. News flash: many of the places touted for children are NOT appropriate for young children. So before you decide on an expensive theme park think about vacation activities that ARE suitable for preschoolers. A 2-year-old will be happier playing on the beach with a pail and shovel than standing in line at Disneyland--or even sitting in a stroller there as preschoolers are not into long waits.

- o Choose the MEANS OF TRAVEL carefully. Plane? Again long waits often beyond your control. You have to tote all the paraphernalia you will need on board from formula to sweaters to toys and books. You need to take a car seat on board to assure safety for young children. Automobile? Automobile travel can take much longer but parents are in charge of the pace and can stop when a child is restless or rambunctious.

- o Plan the PACE of travel carefully taking into account what you think your children can handle. Book air flights early in the day or at times the children are likely to sleep. Try to get nonstop flights to minimize chances of delays or missed connections. If you are driving, stop every two hours for the express purpose of letting the children run around and letting the driver stretch.

Safety tip: when you stop and are unbuckling, be sure an adult holds the hand of all children until they are in a safe place to run around. Young children who have been cooped up can't wait to be free and may dart away. Places on the highway where you will stop are likely to be high-traffic areas.

- o Think about the children's COMFORT and RECREATION while en route. Take

along more than you'll need in the way of diapers and bottles. Bring blankets, pillows, and a change of clothes. Let every child pack a backpack of books, games, and toys. Keep an extra supply of books and coloring books in your tote bag--a new distraction is like money in the bank.

In the car teach your children simple road games like keeping track of animals or cars of different colors on each side of the road. Older children can play co-pilot and map out the route, keep track of expenses, etc. If you have more than one cooped-up kid sitting in the back, there's bound to be some squabbling. If the driver is ever disturbed or distracted, stop the car. My children knew that if they acted-up Mom would stop the car until they settled down. For some reason, my stopping the car was a sobering experience. Car snacks are a mixed blessing. I always took water and many parents bring along snacks. I found my own children did better without food in the car. We had our snacks at the frequent rest stops which gave the children something to look forward to and kept the car clean. Most families find it works best to stop early and let the children play or swim before supper. Cross-country driving is tiring and a family should limit hours on the road for safety reasons.

o Consider a stay-at-home vacation when your children are young. Take short trips around town, go to the zoo, have a picnic in your own back yard or on the living room floor. Give your child the two most important gifts a parent can give: YOUR TIME/ATTENTION and CHILD-CENTERED ACTIVITIES you do together.