

Mum hacks: Travel with tots

There's no way to make that long-haul flight shorter, but *Kate Farr* offers these tips to make it more comfortable.

You know the score: travelling with a kid or two in tow seems to quadruple your baggage. How is it possible that such tiny people require so much kit to cart? If there's no more space in your case and you're fed up of the knots in your spine that appear after every "relaxing" family break, then here are a few travel hacks that can help you pack smarter when travelling with little people.

If your little one is still at the age where breast pumps, bottles and dummies need sterilising, then cold-water sterilising tablets are the travelling mum's friend. Rather than drag a steam steriliser and adaptor plug on your holidays, cold-water sterilising is quick, simple and works anywhere you have access to water.

Milton Tablets come in packs of 28 and can be safely reused for up to 24 hours, meaning that you've always got clean items to hand. Your author has used this method to safely sterilise in hotel rooms, on planes and even on a Sri Lankan beach!

Muslins are already on every mum's essentials list, but they really come into their own when you're on the road. Buy the largest size available, then use on-board the plane as a cosy-yet-lightweight blanket, or to swaddle restless sleepers. Pack two to three clothes pegs and pin your muslin to the headrest covers in front and behind to shade small eyes when the overhead lights ping on. (Sadly, I've not yet found a good solution to a poorly timed announcement from

waking a newly sleeping bub!) This humble cloth is also a makeshift stroller sunshade, a comfortable stroller liner, a knot-able bag for sticky or sandy clothes, an emergency outfit... Basically, don't leave home without one.

Even if you're usually a screen-free family, don't be shy about deploying the good old tablet option, especially if your flight is long-haul. But rather than simply relying on cartoons and films, turn your gizmo into a one-stop classroom by downloading picture books, puzzles, audio books (and please use headphones or face the wrath of your fellow passengers!), photo slideshows and even virtual colouring-in pages to keep small passengers entertained and – crucially – quiet. Once you're at your destination, kids can utilise cloud storage to collate a virtual scrapbook of their holiday. Just check those Wi-Fi charges before letting them loose!

The final say comes from family travel expert, Nicola Burke, of Jetlag and Mayhem (www.jetlagandmayhem.com), who suggests a couple of common sense luggage tips: "Always use packing cubes, available from any local market or online, and don't pack blind! Use a packing list (Jetlag and Mayhem have a handy printable version) and check things off as you go along." Nicola also recommends getting older children involved with the process from start to finish. "Let them be part of the action and involved in as much of the planning as possible, from packing their own bag to researching what they'd like to do when they arrive at their destination."

So, bags packed and family travel hacked, it's time to enjoy your trip! 

