

"Today, passengers, we're flying direct to Wiggles World!"



Up & up AWAY

All aboard! Taking the world by storm with bub as your co-pilot doesn't need to be hard

When I told a friend, who's a seasoned mother and traveller, that I was taking my newborn to Europe for two months during my maternity leave, she smiled and imparted this advice: "Holidaying with a baby becomes much easier the moment you accept this fact: **YOU'RE NOT ON HOLIDAY!**"

Like an increasing number of women, I thought an extended trip while I was on maternity leave made perfect sense. I had months ahead of me with no work commitments and the airline ticket for baby Greta would be ridiculously cheap. It also seemed like the perfect time to visit my sister in the Netherlands and show off the newest addition to my family.

There was just one thing that made me nervous: the small matter of travelling with a baby.

But, as I learnt, surviving Europe with an infant is simply a case of knowing the rules and learning the tips from those who have been there before...

Baby's passport

All Australian citizens require their own passport to leave the country regardless of their age. In other words, your baby needs one, and that means she'll also need a photo.

All the requirements for an adult passport photo apply to an infant's. She can't smile or show teeth and must be looking directly into the camera. Try to book in a time when bub is most content.

Both parents are required to sign the passport application, even if one has sole custody or the baby only has a relationship with one of you. So allow enough time to get the other parent's signature, keeping in mind any potential delays.



BREASTFEEDING *If you're able to, then do. Aside from the health benefits for baby, what can be more convenient than ready-made food on demand? Try to breastfeed during take-off and landing; the sucking action may help to equalise the pressure in your baby's ears, reducing the chances of her becoming distressed.*

Flying with a little one

Rules regarding airfares for infants differ between airlines. For international flights you'll generally pay around 10 per cent of a full-priced adult fare for a child under two years, but they must share a seat with an adult. In most cases, only one infant per adult is entitled to the discounted fare.

On long-haul flights, babies may be

provided with bassinets, which are

attached to the bulkhead. Numbers are limited, so make sure your airline accepts bookings or check in early to secure one.

Bassinets are an absolute godsend on long flights! The child is positioned close to you and can see you at all times. Baby Greta loved it – she spent the entire flight sleeping or sitting up smiling at all the other passengers.

However, because of their size, the bassinets aren't really suitable for babies over eight months. They can also only carry a child weighing up to 11 kilos.

Packing for bub

Babies travelling on discounted fares are still allowed luggage. Most airlines permit 10 kilos of checked baggage (this can be added to your luggage allowance if they don't have their own case), one piece of hand luggage, a stroller and a portable cot. Find out from your airline if these need to be checked in.

To reduce your load, pack only what you'll need for the flight and a few changes of clothes. Nappies, formula, wipes and food can all be purchased at your destination.

Also, consider what you might be able to borrow when you arrive. My sister lent us her portable cot and a friend loaned us a car seat. These two items alone drastically decreased the baggage we needed to carry.



Challenges at customs

While travelling with bub is easier than you may think, there are difficulties. For identification purposes, immigration officers will insist your baby is awake, even if that means waking them. Some will also insist on checking nappies. You're within your rights to request any search of your baby be in a private room by a female.

Also, if travelling in the UK, customs officers will ask to see you drink from bottles of milk you're taking on the flight.



Food and drink

Feeding your baby solids overseas means buying food pre-packaged. Thankfully, there are now several brands of organic baby foods on the market. When it comes to formula, the real issue is the water you mix it with. It's not always going to be possible to get your hands on cool boiled water when you need it, so why not make it yourself? If your

hotel room has no tea facilities, ask the concierge if they have a kettle you can borrow or hire, or buy one on the cheap and just leave it behind when you check out.



Getting around

This is not the time to show off your 4WD mega-pram with its state-of-the-art suspension, power steering and coffee-cup holder. Instead, invest in a cheap, light stroller that's easy to fold up and carry around.

There are going to be times when your baby becomes tired and grumpy and wants a cuddle – and inevitably it'll happen when your hands are full. A baby carrier will save your sanity. When bub becomes clingy, simply strap her to your torso. Invest in one that's easily fitted, adjustable and ergonomic.



JET LAG

The general rule is: follow the sun. Try to stay awake when the sun's up and sleep when it's dark, and your baby will adjust fairly easily.

Still nervous?

Travelling around Europe confirmed my suspicions: people love babies. I never struggled with Greta as someone always helped. And while I wasn't on a holiday as I once knew it, together we created priceless memories. **Margaret Ambrose** COSMO