

Traveling is a tricky endeavor when you're trying to keep baby on a sleep schedule. There's always something exciting going on, friends and relatives who are anxious to see the baby, and they have no idea how hard you've worked to get your little one sleeping through the night. As tempting as it may be to let baby skip a nap, or let bedtime fall back an hour or two, so that you can fit these extra activities into your trip, I highly recommend you resist the temptation and stick to the schedule as closely as possible. Changes in the routine are the quickest way to end up with an overtired baby. Overtiredness will almost undoubtedly bring about reemergence of those sleep challenges you've all worked so hard to overcome. So with all that in mind, let's take a deep dive into traveling and sleep.



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Getting There

- **Plan your travel during your child's "day."**

  Resist the temptation to book an early morning or later evening flight. Night sleep is the most important. If they can get a full night of sleep before traveling, it will make your travel day much smoother! If the entire journey lasts longer than the 12-daylight hours, then additional 'naps' of 45 minutes each until your desired/available bedtime is fine at your destination. Just be sure to wake up your child at the hour in the morning to set the body clock in the new time zone.

- **Use naps to your advantage.**

  If you have a shorter drive and your child sleeps well in the car, plan your drive to take place around nap time

- **Make it special.**

  Get some special toys/snacks you can use along the way. Don't give them everything at once, space them out throughout your travel day to keep things exciting for them!

- **Relax your rules.**

  If a snack is the only thing that will keep them happy, keep giving them snacks! Travel days are hard on everyone. Sometimes simply surviving it is the best goal.



Airplane sleep tips:

- **Just get through it!**

  Do what you need to do to keep your child happy. It's completely OK to break the rules!

- **Dress for success**

  If you are taking a red-eye, have your child in their PJ's to encourage sleep.



Room Setup

- **Room Sharing**

  If you will be sharing a room with your child, try to create some kind of partition in the room so that they can't see you from their bed. (Hang a blanket from a line running across the room, rearrange furniture to create some kind of a wall,etc.). This is especially important for babies under 2.5 yo.

- **Get yourself a Slumberpod!**

  The Slumberpod is a great option for travel! It fits around a pack n play, crib or toddler bed and keeps your child's sleep environment completely dark. If you have a Slumberpod, you don't have to black out the room or worry about a partition between you and your child. You can watch TV too!

- **For babies under 2.5 years old**

  Sleep should always be in a crib or pack n play if it still fits her/his size.

- **Older toddler/Preschooler (2.5 yo and older)**

  If your toddler sleeps in a crib but that is not an available option on your trip (or a pack in play is too small), try to create a defined "sleep space". You can do this by moving furniture around or bringing along a portable toddler bed. Since they are used to the boundaries of the crib, a defined sleep space will help them feel secure. Be aware that sudden freedom at night (that they aren't used to) may give you some trouble!
  If your child is already in a big bed, make your expectations very clear to them. Keep the rules exactly the same as at home. If you expect them to stay in their bed until morning, tell them!

Sleep Environment

- **Try to match your sleep environment at home as much as possible.**

  If you use a sound machine and/or night light at home, bring it with you (or use a white noise app on your phone). Bring along loveys, PJ's, anything that is familiar to your child. It will help them feel secure while sleeping.

- **Keep it dark!**

  You can bring black trash bags to cover the window,or use travel shades.



Sleep Schedule

- **Stick to a schedule...within reason.**

  Maintaining your little one's regular nap times and bedtime will help them sleep in an unfamiliar environement, but remember to have fun and make lasting memories while you are away. Your child (and you!) will enjoy your trip more if they are well rested.

- **Three cheers for crib naps**

  If your child is still taking daytime naps, try to get in at least one crib nap (or Pack n' Play) per day. (Ideally the first nap for babies who are taking 2 or more per day.).

- **How much is too much?**

  Aim for most bedtimes to be on time or within a half hour of your little one's regular bedtime. The occasional late night won't derail their sleep too much, but try to keep it within 30 minutes of their usual bedtime and avoid more than one late night in a row.



- **Know what to expect**

  Struggling to fall asleep, night wakings, early waking, overtired behavior, are all common situations when traveling. Do your best to be patient and understanding, and keep in mind that it's frustrating for your child as well.

- **Routine**

  Use the same bedtime and nap routines you use at home. It may be tempting to deviate from your routine, but a familiar bedtime routine will help your child feel secure and fall asleep more peacefully.

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- **Get creative**

  Plan a drive around nap time, plan activities during your child's awake time. If you are out past bedtime, and if you're likely to be out at a friend's place past bedtime, bring along a Pack n' Play and try to find a dark, quiet area for your little one to sleep.

- **Communicate!**

  Be clear with your friends and family with you that you've made sleep a priority for your child. Ask them to work with you and schedule activities around their sleep when possible.

- **Bedtime**

  Your child may need some wind down time before starting the bedtime routine. Remove your child from the environment and engage in some quieter, one on one play with less stimulation. This will help them calm down and prepare to sleep.

- **Parents rule**

  If a parent is around, they should be the ones to do the bedtime routine. Keeping it consistent will be very helpful for your toddler or preschooler.





Time Changes

- **Traveling for 3+ Days**

  Get on the new time zone immediately (this should take 1-2 days depending on the time difference) This will mean some extended awake windows, an early or late bedtime, BUT the quicker you get on the new time, the smoother your trip will go. Wake her/him up same time at home in the new zone.

- **Traveling for Less than 3 Days**

  Try splitting the difference between your home time and the new timezone. For example, if there is a two hour difference, go with a 1 hour difference while you are traveling.



- **Tips for International Travel (6+ hour time difference)**

  If you arrive in the morning (local time), spend some time outside right away. The sun will help regulate your child's circadian rhythm or biological clock that regulates their sleep

  If you arrive in the evening or at night (local time), move straight to your bedtime routine and into bed.

  Get plenty of sunlight exposure throughout the day as well as lots of active play. Utilize naps and follow appropriate awake windows in order to make it to an appropriate bedtime.

  If your child is wide awake in the middle of the night, let them stay up for 1hour. Keep the lights low and do some calm playing or reading (no screens!). After an hour, put them back into bed. This may be necessary for2-3 nights.

- **General Notes:**

  Some children will handle time changes better than others Be patient as your children adjust to time changes (it generally takes our bodies 1-2 weeks to fully adjust)



When You Return Home

- **General Tips:**

  Be patient. Give your child a couple days to adjust back to your time zone.

  With babies, use their awake time as a guide for their sleep until you are back on schedule.

  If you notice any regression upon your return, address it immediately. The longer you wait to do something, the worse it will become.

  Follow the steps below based on the level of regression your child is experiencing.

- **Sleep Regressions on Return**

  After you return from your trip, it's always the hope that your baby will bounce back to their established sleeping habits! Unfortunately this isn't always the case. If you find that your child has regressed, use one of the methods below, depending on the extent of the regression.

- **Minimal Regression:**

  When you put your child down for bed, implement a "leave and check"response. Lay them down and leave the room. If they start to protest, wait 10 minutes and then go in and offer some comfort. Leave the room and repeat if necessary until they fall asleep.

- **Moderate Regression:**

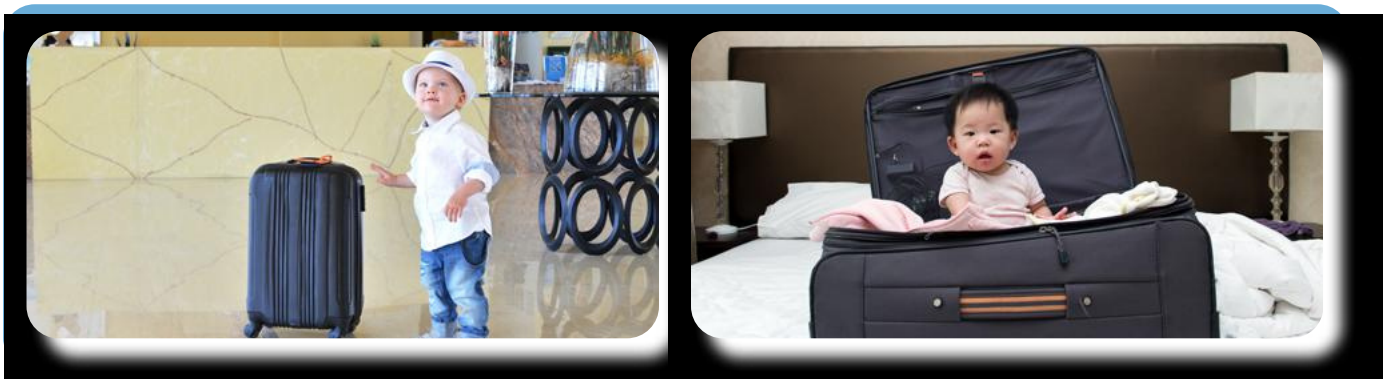
  Use a more rapid sleep training approach. If you want to be in the room with them as they learn to fall asleep on their own again, stay by their bed 1-2 nights, then ease out of their room. If you want to do regular check ins, jump right into 10 minutes between checks.

- **Severe Regression:**

  In this case, your child has developed significant attachment to outside support in falling asleep. You will want to start from scratch and re-sleep train. As always, please reach out for support through this process if you need as their development stage changes time to time.







Packing List

- ☐ Slumberpod or trash bags and painters tape or travel shades
- ☐ Diapers & Wipes/Pull Ups
- ☐ PJs/Sleep Sack
- ☐ Blanket/Lovie
- ☐ Toothbrush and Toothpaste
- ☐ Night light
- ☐ Sound machine/download a white noise app
- ☐ Favorite Book/Toy
- ☐ Toddler clock
- ☐ Pack n play/toddler bed/sleeping sacks
- ☐ Clothes – shirts, pants, socks, underwear
- ☐ Cold weather – jackets, hats, gloves
- ☐ Warm weather – hats, sandals, sunscreen swimsuit/swim diapers/beach towel
- ☐ Shoes
- ☐ Items for meals – bib, utensils
- ☐ Food/snacks
- ☐ Sippy cups/bottles/water bottle and bottle cleaners
- ☐ Breast pump and accessories
- ☐ Extra outfits for travel day
- ☐ Travel documents – Passport/Birth Certificate

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Final Thoughts

Some babies are simply more flexible than others. Some will do fine with a completely interrupted schedule and not miss a beat. Some are more sensitive to overtiredness and change in routine. You will quickly find out where your baby falls on the “adaptability” spectrum.

Remember that this is a short season of life. Soon your child will be old enough to have the stamina to enjoy some long,memory-filled days on vacation. This time of making sleep one of your priorities on vacation will pass in a few years.

With your toddler, try to provide them with a strong sense of security while traveling. Give them details about your day,what you plan to do and who you will be with. Explain where they will be sleeping and where you will be once they go to bed. Over-communication is the key. Try to find places to give them control. Let them make choices along the way – whereto eat, where to set up their bed in the room, who will read their book at night. Involve them in the process.

Traveling can be hard with children. If you find yourself anxiously concerned about how things will go, sleep schedules, etc,it can impact your level of enjoyment on your trip. Try to relax your expectations. Things won’t be perfect, they won’t look like home, and that is okay! Once you can come to terms with that, it will make the trip much more enjoyable! Most importantly, let the little things go and HAVE FUN!!

