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### [Traveling Around the World with Kids](#)

by: Carrie Katz



[The Highams](#) in [Mauritius, Africa](#)

Many people worry that traveling with kids is impossible. Our guest travel expert and Realtravel blogger [John Higham](#) is here to tell you the good news: not only is family travel feasible, but it's easier than one might think. As a person who got to travel as a child, I can personally attest to the plentiful rewards that come from expanding horizons during youth.

After spending a year traveling around the world as a family, the Highams set out to write a book about their experiences and the lessons they had learned. Read more about the project on their site [Armageddon Pills](#).

Here is an excerpt from an article John wrote for us for our extended travel theme this week:

#### **Home Is Where Your Stuff Is: Around the World with Children**

In June, 2005, my wife and I quit our jobs and packed up our home. Over the next 52 weeks we visited 28 countries on five continents, crossing 24 time zones. Along the way we saw the beauty of the Swiss Alps , the grandeur of the Great Wall of China and the ugliness of the Cambodian Killing Fields . We stayed in the humblest of inns of the Bolivian Altiplano and witnessed the dazzling lights of Hong Kong.

Think you might want to do something like this? You've come to the right place. Be confident that the most difficult part will be to step on that first airplane, full of anticipation and anxiety.

## **What is the Magic Age for the Children to Travel?**

We've known families who have taken babies and toddlers out on extended trips, and as long as both parents have the energy to attend to the constant physical needs of a child this young, there's no reason to rule out traveling with very young children. But if you want your children to remember much of where they've been, it's probably best to wait until they are a bit older. One criterion in our family was that our youngest child had to be able and willing to read long books – there's lots of down-time on the road. I couldn't even imagine tackling a trip of this magnitude with children who couldn't keep themselves entertained with a good book. At the other end of the age window, we wanted to leave before our oldest was in high school, as we felt that missing a year of high school might be stunt them both academically and socially. We ended up leaving when our children were 8 and 11 – old enough to understand what was going on, but young enough that they weren't embarrassed to be hanging out with their parents.

## **Set Reasonable Expectations**

If you're thinking of striking out on the road with your children, keep in mind that your itinerary is not going to be exactly the same as if you were traveling with only adults. Many children will declare that museums are b-o-o-o-ring, and if you've seen more than a couple of castles in Europe, you've probably seen enough. Rather than try to see every last temple and shrine in Tokyo, why not find Thunder Dolphin, one of the world's coolest roller-coasters, conveniently located in downtown Tokyo? Or play paintball in Panama City. Make a point to discover the best chocolate (Bariloche, Argentina) and the worst ice cream (Turkey).

You'll meet a whole different set of people than you would meet if you stayed on the typical guidebook's museum/nightclub/shopping circuit. And these interactions with real people – people who have nothing to do with the travel industry – will be some of your most cherished memories.

## **Take it Slow**

Ever had a day where you took a ferry ride at 7:00 in the morning, visited an archaeological site at 10:00, took a tour of an ancient church at 1:00, went on a cycle tour at 3:00, and took in a concert in the evening? Your kids won't put up with it, and if they're miserable, everyone in the family suffers. ([more...](#))

## **But Why Do Extended Travel With Kids?**

Well, first of all, it's hard to get a babysitter for a whole year. If you want to continue your adventurous lifestyle, you're just going to have to bring 'em with you! And really, what's more important than spending time together as a family? Because as anyone with school-aged children knows, between work, school, soccer, piano lessons, Cub Scouts and gymnastics, it can become impossible to find enough time to spend together. But traveler beware! After only a few days of traveling together, I remember sleeping in a tent with a rather small elbow in my back all night thinking "What have I done?!" It's true, all that togetherness was a bit overwhelming at first. Yet it was only a few weeks later that our family had mastered the art of communicating by quoting lines from favorite sitcoms. By the time we returned we had spent 365 solid days within two feet of one another, and our modest-sized house seemed so unnaturally large that we couldn't bear to be in separate rooms.

## **Won't We Miss Our Stuff?**

There are far more reasons to plan a bout of extended travel than getting to know your spouse, children, and even yourself better than you ever thought possible. Our society puts a very high value on material possessions. So high, in fact, that getting caught in the chase of acquiring more, many people are unaware of what they have. Traveling to a developing country is the best way to demonstrate to the younger generation that as long as you have something to eat, something to wear, and somewhere to sleep, you are among the world's elite. The iPhone is, like, totally optional.

## **Won't I be Putting My Children in Harm's Way?**

The world is a small place, and it's getting smaller. It's tempting to try and understand that world through the lens of mass media, which would lead us to believe that around every corner lurks a terrorist who is bent on annihilating every Westerner he sees. After spending a year traveling with our kids, we learned that our world is a much more complicated and wonderful place than what you might believe by watching the six o'clock news. We felt welcome everywhere we went, from Oman to Beijing... ([more...](#))

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To read the rest of The Highram's travel tips article, including useful discussions on topics like financial and health concerns,

how to compensate for missing school, trip preparation, how children can help plan the travel itinerary, and more, read their entire entry: [Home Is Where Your Stuff Is: Around the World with Children](#). You can also read about their year traveling around the world on their blog, [World-the-Round Trip](#).

### **Resources:**

[Family Travel Ideas](#)

[John Higham's How to Plan a Round-the-World Trip](#)

[Top 10 Tips for Traveling with Young Children](#)