



IDEAS

The past several years the Lord gave me the idea of have a vacation surprise for each morning that we were together. I was on the lookout for things that would bless my family. Because I was able to look before our trip time, the Lord led me to some great bargains and I was able to bless my family without spending a lot. Some of my ideas for last year were: one day there was a new family game, which we still play and love; another day was a new book or puzzle to read or complete together; one day was a shopping adventure; one day was a supply of everyone's favorite candy; another was a small favorite toy or treasure for each person- the possibilities are endless. Everyone anxiously waited after breakfast to see what that day would hold. I would tell you my thoughts for this summer vacation..... but my oldest reads girltalk and I do not want to spoil the fun!

Cindy

This is a little random, but consider having some special cups or plates just for summer. I remember at my grandma's summer house there were these plastic cups in different, (very 70's style!) a blue, a yellow, a few shades of pink, and ALL of my siblings and cousins remember those cups with great fondness. It was just something that unequivocally meant SUMMER! During our stay we each picked a color and that was our cup! This can really work with almost any tangible item, just make sure to associate with summer vacation! Fun for now, and reap HUGE benefits later!

One tip for general vacation time: Depending on where you are going, at some point each day, designate the "Quiet Time" hour. (or more). This works best if you happen to be at a summer house or relatives house, or close access to your hotel, anywhere with multiple rooms. Quiet Time is time for the kids to either nap or read or play quietly in their room, or other private area, and a chance for Mom and Dad to relax. End Quiet Time with a snack, or fun activity.

Katy

This year my four-year-old (and only child) and I are doing something different together. While my husband stays home to do some extensive work on our home, we are taking a Greyhound bus to visit my mom in Ohio for a couple of weeks (we live in North Carolina). WHAT AN ADVENTURE! We normally drive, and on a rare occasion have flown, but with gas prices where they are, we had to be creative to figure out how to travel most economically. Taking a bus (round trip for both of us) was less than half of the expense than if I drove.

Sooo...with everyone cutting back on their travels due to gas prices, instead of feeling like your stuck and can't afford to go anywhere, why don't you consider taking a bus! You can take a day trip to the nearest city and visit a museum, go to a park or to a local eatery. Or you can visit a friend or family member for the weekend. It would change the scenery for everyone, promote your relationship and create a memory, all for inexpensive!

Rebekah

Switch houses with a family from another state or city that you know.

Trillia

My husband and I celebrate our 1 year anniversary this coming Monday, June 9, at the very start of summer. Since we're newlyweds living on one income (I'm a happy keeper-at-home) and everything's so expensive, we can't afford to take a vacation for our anniversary. When we were dating, we each made a list of things we love, so we're using this list to make our anniversary special. The main event is camping in the backyard. We both love to camp, so we're gong to set up the tent in the backyard, roast marshmallows over a camp fire, and gaze at the stars. For supper, we're going to lay out a blanket, surround it with candles, and have a picnic consisting of a few of our favorite foods. To top it off, we will have our family worship of God, complete with Bible reading, prayer, and hymn-singing.

Christina

Our summer vacations have usually consisted of traveling to see family. While everyone around us goes to the beach, my mom finds her own ways to let us have fun together. We use the six birthdays our family has in the summer as set dates to take time off and have fun. We go at least once a year to a beach nearby that we love or have never been to. Last year we took a long family hike and, because it was too expensive to camp, set up our tent in the backyard. We packed breakfast and some snacks in the cooler, pretending we were not at home. It is these little things that become great memories.

Hannah

Go to roadsideamerica.com and find places to visit in your own town or nearby....funky places! Take picnics!

Angie

Our favorite family vacation so far has been to spend a week working on a dairy farm – what great memories! When funds are tight (or just for fun) camp in the backyard (or camp in your friend’s backyard – maybe they’ll want to swap yards for the weekend 😊).

Gina

Plan a “surprise trip.” When our 4 kids were all under 10, we packed all their bags in advance and then awakened them early (4:00 AM) one morning, put them in the car and headed to Disney World from Virginia! They learned of where we were going when we stopped for breakfast after 3 hours of travel and put a toy Mickey Mouse on the table! They still say this was one of their favorite memories. It doesn’t have to be a big trip like Disney; just any surprise get-a-way (maybe Grandma’s house!) will make a cherished memory!

Janis

TRAVELING WITH KIDS

My husband is an AF Reservist and does much of his duty in the summer. We keep him company and the drive is 12 hours from Kentucky to VA beach area. With 4 small children under 10 we have become quite the 'experts' on long summer road trip (mind you, nothing to friends who travel from KY to Maine every year with 5 kidlets under 10). We have resisted the DVD in the car thing as we want to encourage the children to observe what's going on out the window, not get car sick and use their imaginations through listening to audio books.

Ideas for road trip:

Surprise activity bags containing, fresh coloring pencils (NOT markers), hard back travel journal, a few Target items from their \$1 section (ie. safety whistle compass for boy, hair clips for girls) I give these an hour after we get on the road.

We play the usual tag plate spotting games. Our 1st grader enjoyed this more this year as his writing speed has improved. Our best tag plate was a Montana one.

Favorite books on tape:

Any of the 'Freddy the Detective' by Walter Brooks series.

History of the World, I think by Susan Wise Bauer from a "Well Trained Mind"

The Hobbit

Our Island Story (an 19Th century history of England)

For younger folk we like the Wee Sing Bible story and songs collections.

The complete unabridged Winnie the Pooh stories. Very funny especially when rabbit tried to get rid of Tigger and ended up getting lost himself. Lots of life application ideas there.

Unabridged Beatrix Potter stories

Narnia, of course (unabridged rather than the great but entertainment orientated FOF version)

Other ideas for smooth sailing:

We pack all our clothes in bags but keep a small overnight bag with a change of clothes and bathroom stuff so we don't have to lug 900 bags into the hotel. Only one stuffed animal and blankie per child allowed in hotel – makes it easier in the morning.

Another idea for babies used to sleeping in their own rooms. We often asked for a handicapped room with the extra large bathroom.

We would put the pac'nplay in there and if the fan was on a separate switch to the light we would leave it rumbling away all night. Of course if you need the bathroom at night you just have to be extra quiet. :-)

We always stop at the State border tourist centers and pick up a coupon book in order to find a good value hotel. We try to pick one with free hot breakfast and a pool. The pool gets the wiggles out of the kids and helps them sleep.

I keep a – this is gross – a vomit bowl under a seat for anyone who suddenly gets queasy. This has saved many a car seat and car carpet. We stop for the bathroom every few hours and make everyone go whether they feel like it or not. It always surprises me how 'busting' a kid actually was.

My husband is very good and finding interesting things on the road to visit on the way. This trip we stopped at James Munroe's Ash Lawn house and we drove along some of the Blue Ridge Parkway, both were on our way.

As we are in a hotel suite for 3 weeks we take scooters and a tricycle for inside scooting fun and outside sidewalk fun.

Lastly you can get a tourist pass to the library near you for around \$10. This is great for books, audio books and DVDs. We always pack a small portable stereo so the children can have quiet time in their room in the afternoon listening to books on tape.

Our children have fond memories of all our trips. Funny, really, I think it is just being together somewhere different that they love.

Johanna

Here's one quick tip I have for traveling with kids. It makes packing so much easier!

I tuck an entire outfit — including onesie, socks, accessories and diaper — into a gallon-size ziploc bag.

The outfits are instantly available, no matter if mom, dad, or grandma is dressing him. It also gives me a summer break from the mathematical calculation of shirts, plus shorts, multiplied by onesies, divided by diapers.

It's cheap, it's portable, and it really works -- for kids of all ages (and moms, too).

(In fact, it helps me so much that I do this with Bunyan and Bellie's laundry all the time. Makes tossing an extra outfit into the diaper bag a breeze!)

Karalee

My entry for the "traveling with kids" contest started when I was growing up as child and we would travel to visit relatives or on vacation. My father would purchase some of our favorite books; activity books; candy or small toys and hide them in the car. Once the trip started we had to find our new trip treasures. It was always something that we looked forward to as children. I still remember some of those treasures that my father bought for us. When we started taking longer trips to visit relatives and on vacation, with our own children, I carried on father's tradition. All throughout the year, I am always on the lookout for special activity books, small toys, candy, bingo games, new books on tape; radio adventures or anything else that would bless or occupy my children. I keep them in a box so I always have a supply on hand. When a long trip arrives, I can easily go to my trip box and select some treasures for that trip. I hand them out at a times interval and it really does help pass the time in the car. It is amazing even today, my older children laugh and often say - remember where we were when we heard that radio adventure, or got that surprise. I pray that my own children will have the same rich memories and carry on the family tradition to the next generation.

Cindy

Instead of eating out for lunch every day while on the road you can bring sandwich supplies and stop at a rest stop with picnic tables,

make sandwiches, eat, and let the kids run around and stretch their legs for a while.

Borrow books, books on tape, and DVD's (if you have a way to watch them) from your library. Allow the kids to help choose these.

Natasha

We took a road trip for two weeks last fall with our three children, then 7, 4 and 1. We kept a journal, making an entry each day of what we did and what each person's favorite highlight was. It made a great momento of our trip, which otherwise might have been a blur in our memories! We all love looking back and reading it and remembering!

Hannah

We live about 7 hours from each of our families and we have to fly across the country each summer to a training conference with our kids for the ministry that we work for. I have a standard packing list that I keep saved on the computer that I can edit and update for each trip. I begin about a week before we leave by updating that list for the current trip. Once I've completed that I feel much more prepared. Then throughout the week I begin doing laundry and setting aside those clothing articles and other items that we don't use from day-to-day so that I don't forget anything. The day before we leave I usually set aside the entire day to focus on finalizing packing the remainder of the items that have not yet been packed and then I highlight the items that cannot be packed until the morning of our departure (egs. the last of the bottles, the kids blankies, our pillows, etc.). Then I try to get to bed in decent time so I can be up and showered before the kids wake up. I can finalize the packing while my husband helps get the kids breakfast and clothes put on. Usually my husband and I don't try to get away much before 9 or 10 am if we're driving and we just make it a travel day. We keep a blanket in the van so when we stop for lunch we get takeout and we eat outside in the grass, which gives the kids a chance to run around.

Lisa

As kids we knew what to expect when going on a trip. We were allowed to pack a book or two, a few special toys, and a stuffed animal into our very own backpack. We were responsible for our own toys, making sure that each item was put in our backpack before we got out of the car (thus minimizing the mess). My mom also kept a special bag of coloring books and travel games that only came out for long trips. We loved passing the bag around and coloring on our travel trays, but we liked it best when we got a family game going on (you have to shout out answers if traveling in a fifteen passenger van).

Hannah

Two summers ago we traveled cross-country twice in one summer and it was a delight (at least 98% of the time, anyway ☺). Here is what helped us – we bought each child a plastic hanging file folder container with a lid and we printed their names in a fun and colorful font and taped it to the container with packing tape. They were tall enough to hold a good bit and thin enough to only take up minimal space. Then we filled each container with lots of travel activities – coloring book, crayons, different fun activities that we obtained from Oriental Trading Company (like finger puppets to color, scenery pages to be decorated with accompanying stickers, scratch postcards, etc.), books, small toys, etc. As we were traveling they were able to have their choice of activities and I didn't have to set everyone up with something new every time they wanted to shift gears. We also stocked our cooler and van with lots of fun snacks and drinks (healthy fun snacks, too). We would alternate between a fruit/veggie and some crackers or cheese or some other non-fruit/veggie item. No one ever complained about what they got because they knew that if it wasn't their favorite, then next one would most like be more appealing (if they ate whatever healthy thing they were given first ☺). To hold small snacks, we used large plastic cups. This helped with cost as we didn't have to buy the more expensive single serving packs. We outfitted the van with a portable DVD player, lots of great music, and audio dramas from Your Story Hour and Jonathan Park. We did have some scheduled times for reading, naps (quiet activities for the older children), etc. Each night after they were in bed, I would go out to the van, give it

a quick vacuum (that operated via the lighter), tidy it up, tidy their bins and give everyone fresh sticker/scenery sheets, a fresh pack of finger puppets, etc. for the next day of travel. We also packed a plastic tub with breakfast foods and brought that in the hotel with us each night. It saved lots of money not having to buy all of our meals between breakfast in the room and healthy "snack lunches" on the road. At rest stops we had balls and Frisbees ready for play. And don't forget to take lots of pictures!

Gina

I have been thinking about this recently as we are getting ready to go on a three-day road trip from Minnesota to Idaho. We have two children, ages 7 and 9 and there will be seven of us in a van for three days in each direction.

1. Snacks – Prepare durable snacks ahead of time so you're not tempted by expensive snacks at gas stations. Trail mix is great. We only get drinks with caps on them...preferably bottled water.
2. This week, we are reading and praying through C.J.'s vacation suggestions as listed on his blog.
3. We are reserving audio books on tape from the library. We plan to listen to Focus on the Family's radio theatre presentations of the Chronicles of Narnia this trip.
4. Plan games for the car – We like to play games in the car that don't need much in the way of equipment. One of our favorites is a spelling game. I say the word "eye" and spell it. The next person has to spell a word that starts with the last letter of the previous word. My sister then spells, "every" now my daughter needs to spell a word that starts with "y." You can't use the same word twice. My dad likes to choose words that all end in the same letter, "y" for instance, to make it harder for me to think of a "y" word. :)
5. A box of tinfoil – when all else fails, pull out the tinfoil and give each child a piece to sculpt with. You can choose a category like people or animals and see what each person comes up with.

6. Plan a fun stop sometime in a long day's travel. When we're spending the whole day in the car, we like to plan a fun outing along the way. We might stop at a Dinosaur Museum or Bear World or something like that to give us a chance to stretch and have some fun. This is especially crucial on the way home from vacation when you're thinking that all the fun is behind you.

7. Stay at a hotel with a pool. We like to start driving in the morning and plan to get to our hotel on the way in time for supper (usually pizza) and then spend the evening swimming in the hotel pool.

8. Quiet time – We try to have a scheduled quiet time in the car when everyone is reading a book, coloring, resting, or listening to quiet music. We will have small mp3 players with headphones this year with music and stories on them. We set the volume beforehand and our kids can't change the volume. We also limit the use of these to quiet times as we want everyone involved and engaged with everyone else while we're together and talking or playing games.

Doreen

If you're going to drive, and aren't going too very far, (4 hrs max) leave LATE. Kids will be snoozing in the back seat, Mom will help keep Dad awake (or vice versa) and you'll have a quick, quiet drive to your destination. Of course the goal is NOT to drive all night and be tired behind the wheel, depending on kids bedtime plan to leave around 10, and arrive at 2.

Should your trip be longer than a few hours, or require day time driving, make sure each kid has a bag of car appropriate activities. Mom and Dad, be ready with plenty of fun car games. These can range from classic license plate spotting, word games, number games, I-Spy, "I'm going to ____ and I'm bringing... then list items A through Z, each person giving one for each letter in turn, and having to remember all previous items as you go. Or a parent can write up a checklist of things to spot, and kids check each item off. This can be done up according to where you live and/or are going. Put about 20–30 items on the list (Yellow bus, moving truck, red

van, 65-mile speed limit sign, stop sign, tractor, barn, silo, pond, river, cows, etc, etc.) Card games are also fun.

Tips for everyone: Bring TRAYS in the car!!!! Wooden trays, plastic cafeteria style trays, any trays. These are endlessly useful! Picnic in the car with no mess! A flat place to play cards or other games, easy place to write, draw, or color. Each person gets their own tray, and has their own little space.

For kids who are motion-sensitive, Mom or Dad can tape or pin up a large pillow case or small blanket across windows. Without the peripheral movement, most motion sickness will go away.

For very small kids – Mom or Dad bring along a puppet animal and do little shows while driving. (I grew up with “Front Seat Bear”) Hide a bit behind the front seat and talk to the kids with the puppet. You can tell them about where they are going to visit, and even cover car safety!

Don’t forget to have a designated “car trash” bin! This should be easily accessible for everyone, and fairly large (try a grocery-sized paper bag, lined with a plastic one.)

If you’re going on a particularly long car trip, definitely have a cooler of drinks and snacks on hand. Very long times in the car can be tiresome, so let each kid pick out one “special snack” for the car, even if it’s something you might not normally stock at home. Of course have a variety of regular favorites as well.

Katy

The first time we traveled any distance with our daughter was when she was around 4 years old. I knew she would constantly be asking questions like "How much longer before we get there?" so I created a road map just for her, with places on the map for her to add stickers and/or color in squares at intervals as we reached them and then highlight the distance between those intervals. This not only gave her something to occupy her in the car, but it was a visual that helped her see for herself how far we had traveled and how much further we needed to go. Emily is 17 now and I can't remember just how far apart I spaced those intervals when she was

4, but it was appropriate for her age and patience level – a distance that increased as she grew older and "graduated" to a real road map.

Patricia

Though I only have one daughter, not quite three years old, I've traveled extensively with her, usually in cars, planes and trains. In the past two and a half years, we've lived in three different countries and trekked around in more. Here are some tips for travel during the "diaper years" that I've picked up along the way:

- * Use a backpack instead of a diaper bag: zipper closures keep the contents in when you toss it into the back of a cab or under a seat, and it lets both your hands be free when walking.

- * Keep the backpack away from your child: mine has vomited on extra clothes and diapers, eaten snacks early, ripped pages out of books and gotten into the wipes.

- * Take the window seat on planes/trains: it puts your husband between you and other passengers, giving you a bit of privacy while breastfeeding.

- * Bring a couple plastic bags for dirty diapers: if you are visiting, you won't have to ask for one, and if you are somewhere with no garbage access (such places do exist!) the bags will protect the rest of your diaper bag from the smell until you can throw it out.

- * If your child takes a pacifier, attach it to a climbing beanie with a bit of string or ribbon: it keeps it off of floors, and makes it easy to clip on the car seat, stroller, back carrier, etc.

- * If at all possible, stick to normal nap and bed times. If it's not, get back into a routine as soon as possible.

- * Bring snacks that require no utensil or bib (cheerios, dried cranberries, etc.) and serve water in vehicles (it doesn't stick, stain or get smelly).

- * Unless your child is 100% toilet trained, revert to diapers for long drives/flights.

- * Explain (as much as your child can understand) what is going to happen next so they are not caught off guard or confused.

- * Always have what my mum calls "a secret weapon" – a sucker, dvd, etc., to pull out when your flight is delayed, car breaks down, or some other "emergency" situation where your kids become desperate.

* If you are going to visit someone, pack an extra clean top (in addition to an extra outfit) and pop it on your child when your plane lands or car stops.

* Be flexible (travel with young kids is rarely predictable) and cheerful (if mum's not happy, nobody's happy!).

Rebecca

Keep a large, light colored bath towel in the car for covering the car seat when you get out. The metal parts of a car seat can get hot enough to burn a baby or child, especially if you're parked in the sun – tossing the towel over the seat will help keep it a little cooler and less likely to get scorching hot. It doesn't have to be your best bath towel from the guest bath. I bought the ones for my kids' car seats at Wal-Mart. I use plain white bath towels and have used the same one for my five-year-old's seat since she was a bitty bug. They've also come in handy in a pinch when we had a child hit by a stomach bug in the van (ugh!), when we decided to play in the water at the park (a fountain that was made specifically for playing in), or gotten caught in a sudden rain shower with no umbrella.

Gina

My friend, Rachael, emailed some great links for sanity keeping while traveling with children. In a few weeks, my son and I are flying to Orlando. We'll meet Daddy there so I get the joy of entertaining on the plane. Rachael is also equipping herself for a cross-country flight; hers is a more daunting task – 3 children all under 2.

Baby Travel Toys: <http://www.deliciousbaby.com/travel/family-travel-tips/travel-toys/baby-travel-toys/>

Car Travel Activities for Babies--some may work for planes too:
<http://www.momsminivan.com/babies.html>

Ten Great Travel Toys You Already Own:
<http://www.deliciousbaby.com/journal/2007/nov/20/ten-great-travel-toys-you-already-have-at-home/>

Preschool Travel Toys:

<http://www.deliciousbaby.com/travel/family-travel-tips/travel-toys/preschool-travel-toys/>

Ten Tips for Keeping a Toddler Busy on a Plane:

<http://www.deliciousbaby.com/journal/2007/nov/16/ten-tips-keeping-toddler-occupied-plane/>

Car Travel Activities for Toddlers--some may work for planes too:

<http://www.momsminivan.com/toddlers.html>

Flying with Kids--just tips, not ideas to entertain:

http://www.momsminivan.com/article-flying_with_kids.html

Preparing Toddlers for Air Travel--just tips, not ideas to entertain:

<http://www.partnershipforlearning.org/article.asp?ArticleID=1612>

Queasy Pops to eliminate Motion Sickness. Someone gave me a pack when I was pregnant:

<http://www.partnershipforlearning.org/article.asp?ArticleID=1612>

The Mystery Bag:

<http://www.ux1.eiu.edu/%7Ecfsjy/mts/sensor/23.htm>

Other things that have worked for us in the past:

Wrap books (from home) in tissue paper. The unwrapping buys you a few minutes and it's fun to watch baby discover the contents. Or with older kids, it builds excitement.

Aluminum foil is another fun "treat" to watch small children discover then crumple. I would take a few sheets inside a book I'm reading (or trying!)

Car games - the list I put together for a friend.

A word about "barf bag puppets" - Rachael's father-in-law is a retired Delta pilot. Her husband, Chris, was not allowed to play with the barf bags because they're treated with chemicals to mask the smell. Who wants more chemicals? Better to bring your own brown paper lunch sack--it won't take up much room--and they can color on them to make the faces.

Here's to fun travel!

Julie

So this might be given 100 times but it was a fun memory for our family. It seemed like when we went traveling my mom would have a "surprise" for us at every stop. It was funny because when my dad would stop for gas, she would pull something from under her seat in the car. Sometimes it was one of those Dollar Tree books where you color the page with 1 "white" marker and a picture appears. Other times it was a new kids music cd that we got to listen to until the next stop. And then there were times where it was a letter and we had to look for things that started with that letter until we stopped. They were fun memories! My mom is really wise about things like that!

Abby

My idea for summer traveling with kids comes with a little story:

When my oldest son, Tim, was 2 1/2 years old my Mom moved to Northern California. Many of our vacations included a 6 1/2 hours drive from southern California to "Grandma's house". To help answer the questions of, "how long until we get there?" and " how much farther do we have to go?" I gave Tim a visual aid. I used a highlighter pen to trace our route on a Calif. map which I then covered with clear contact paper. A sticker was used to represent us and it was at first situated on the location of our house on the map. As our trip progressed the sticker was peeled off and repositioned to our current position along the route on the map. This helped give Tim a grasp of how much distance we had traveled and how much was left. Over the years, as Tim became a reader, he was able to read road signs and move the sticker on his own. Tim grew to be fascinated with maps and traveling. (In elementary school he even started a collection of maps from all 50 states). He is now 23 years old and enjoys planning trips and has even traveled to China and throughout Europe.

Linda

One of our favorite things to do on a trip is to read a missionary biography together as a family. Geoff and Janet Bengé have written a series of books *Christian Heroes: Then & Now* through YWAM. We have read about Eric Liddell, Nate Saint, Amy Carmichael, George Mueller (who had a very interesting life before God got a hold of his life, his in particular gave us great topics of discussion). Around a campfire or even in a hotel these are great things to read before the kiddos head off to bed. This year we will be reading about Betty Greene who helped found Missionary Aviation Fellowship. We have also memorized a passage of Scripture together as a family. I make verse cards for each of the kids and then we can practice in the car as we travel. It's humbling how quick the kids can memorize, but it keeps us faithful when we are all memorizing the same things. This year we are hoping to memorize a section of Ps. 119.

Erin