

Top 10 tips for Baby's First Christmas Trip

With Christmas feeling like it's right around the corner (how is it nearly Halloween?), you're no doubt thinking about where you and your family will spend Christmas. Ideally, Christmas is a time for family, indulgence, and making beautiful memories, something to fondly look back on years from now. If you're planning on traveling to see family or just taking a well-deserved vacation, here are 10 tips to help you arrive at your destination safely and *sane!*

Take on only what you can handle

Depending on your baby's age, some travel methods will pose more challenges than others. A road trip might be more manageable when it comes to flexibility and access to things you might need for babies under a year old, but flights are shorter. Pick a travel method that will let you see to your baby's needs with the least difficulty!

Preparation is key

Prepare, but try not to fret. You're likely to encounter situations you didn't plan for, so make a list of absolute essentials for your baby's needs and yours. I like to [use checklists with space to write my own notes](#). As I'm packing my bags, I color code my checklist using one color per bag. Then, I note the bag in the same color. Now anyone can find what they need without digging into each bag. Make copies of the list, and pack them in the top of each bag. It saves time when you don't have to dig and hope! Send a copy to your family members' phones so everyone is equipped to help.

Give yourself time to arrive on time

Leaving things to the last minute is stressful. Leaving things to the last minute with a baby is a recipe for a bad day. When planning your schedule, add an extra hour to your scheduled departure and arrival times. Working to a "window" of time is less stressful than trying to hit an exact deadline.

Plan to Pit-stop

If you decide to take a road trip, break the trip into manageable segments. It can be a lot easier when you know you don't have to be "on" for very long periods at a time. Pit stops are great for a little outside stimulation, and even five to ten minutes where you can check in on your own needs can turn a grueling trip into a happy family adventure.

Check your Destination

If you're traveling to somewhere with a different climate, or you're expecting different weather on the trip, make sure you pack weather-appropriate clothes *last*. Grabbing a sweater from the top of the bag is better than trying to repack your wardrobe on the move.

The Go-bag

Make sure you have enough of the essentials. Have enough nappies for your baby on a regular day? Pack an extra day's worth. Keep waste bags in *every* bag, and try to keep [sealable, leak-proof trash bags](#) at hand. There's nothing worse than having trash and nowhere to put it.

Pack smart

Keeping your baby happy at the start of the trip with their current favorite toy is great, but trying to dig it out from under the seat a few minutes later will get old, fast. Block off small spaces around your baby with bags, and lay a blanket over the top to easily catch fallen toys.

If there are zippers, clips, or anything you don't want tiny fingers grabbing, pack them out of reach, or even better, out of sight. On the other hand, pack your food, nappy, and clothing change bags last, so they're quick to access during the trip.

Shop Early

Christmas specials make it tempting to wait to do your shopping, but starting earlier in the year will take a lot of stress off you as the time to make your trip draws closer, and it's easier to do multiple, short shopping trips with a baby than one marathon during Christmas rush.

Have Fun!

It's okay to loosen the reins a little when it's time for a Christmas vacation. Remember, this is a holiday for you too. The point of being organized isn't to predict every possibility, but to put the "basics" out of your mind, so you can spend this time being close to your family and rejuvenating.

Make Memories!

Take lots of pictures, and don't forget to be in them! Look for family-friendly destinations on your route where you can stop and experience new things, try new foods, or collect fond memories. For me, it's the scents of Christmas that bring my favorite memories back to me. The wafting smells of cinnamon, nutmeg, and pine can always take me back to warm memories. Try putting Christmas scents in your car or your bags for a homely feel!