

TRAVELING TO THE ROCK OF AGES WITH CHILDREN

Much of the following is taken from *Some Survival Tactics*, by Vicky Lansky, produced in a pamphlet from "Focus on the Family" by Dr. James Dobson. You may be interested in applying some of these ideas as you travel to the Rock of Ages.

Packing the Car

It's hard to travel light with children. Clothing, food and toys take lots of space, but imaginative packing pays off. A backpack and/or an umbrella stroller are well worth any space they take up. Children enjoy selecting and packing the things they want to take. You'll need to set some limits as to types, sizes and number of toys that will be allowed, perhaps by sewing up a drawstring "busy bag" that limit their choices of take-alongs. An old attaché case of Dad's might also be used.

- Simplify dressing for the whole family by designating specific bags for specific items. "Susie's clothes," for example, or the nighttime suitcase for the whole family. Put children's clothing on top for easy access if you're sharing suitcases.
- Use duffel bags for kids' clothes and toys--they'll fit more easily into the car or trunk.
- Pack disposable diapers in the corners of suitcases to save the space a big box will take.
- Pack several large plastic bags. They can be used under sheets for the occasional bedwetter, and for soiled laundry.
- Take along a night light to reassure children waking in the night in a strange room.
- Pack a few of the baby's things that will make strange surroundings seem more like home--a crib sheet or receiving blanket that has been in the crib at home for a few days before the trip, and a toy or two usually kept in the crib.
- Take along a small pillow for a child to sit on and to use for naps while traveling. It's also good for playing with toys in the lap.
- Keep plastic bandages and premoistened towelettes handy.

Comfort in the Car

Even if you travel in a large car or station wagon with plenty of room, you'll want to organize things so that they'll be easy to get at and not cause clutter.

- A litter bag will eliminate increasing clutter.
- Stuff a pillowcase with bulky cold-weather clothing. You'll have a pillow for napping, and the clothing will be in one place.

Peace in the Car

Parents who travel a lot are accustomed to children's initial excitement and restlessness in the car. The kids usually settle in after an hour or so, once territories and rules have been set.

- Travel at night, or get a very early start, so that the children will sleep in the car, but don't encourage so much sleep that you'll have well-rested, active kids at night when you're ready to rest.
- Put a small suitcase or box between two children in the back seat to clearly separate "sides."
- Place a firm-sided diaper bag filled with small toys and books between two toddlers in car seats. It can be reached easily by the children and holds enough to keep them busy for quite a distance. Stash some of the children's favorite toys and books in the bag well in advance of the trip so they will have more appeal.
- Plan a variety of activities. Start each day with prayer and the Word.
- Stop often to run and play with the kids. You all need the break. Consider carrying a jump rope or a big, inflatable rubber ball for exercise and fun.
- Give the kids a five-minute warning before you stop so that they can put on shoes and sweaters or coats.
- Plan--and announce--a treat for the end of the day, so everyone will have something to look forward to: a swim in a motel pool, dinner at a restaurant, a pop stop.

Food in the Car

- Cover the back seat with a sheet or blanket; you can shake out food crumbs at rest stops.
- Use an insulated six-pack bag to keep baby food warm or cold. Tape the baby spoon to one of the jars.
- Carry a supply of small paper plates with little slits in the center. Put the sticks of popsicles or ice cream bars through the slits and there'll be less mess on fingers.
- Fill several small plastic bags with an assortment of such treats as raisins, dry cereal and sunflower seeds, and bring them out when spirits need reviving.

- Avoid taking very salty foods in the car--they call for lots of drinking and then stops at restrooms.
- Make a mini-ice bucket out of a plastic pitcher. Place a container of yogurt or cottage cheese in among the ice cubes and the food will stay cold for a few hours.

Eating in Restaurants

- Assemble your own "restaurant kit," with children's utensils, snacks, towelettes, a high chair strap or belt, small toys, and a small plastic clothespin, diaper pin or sweater guard to use in snapping a napkin around a child's neck (better yet, a bib or two!).
- Let someone walk around outdoors with an impatient toddler while you're waiting for the food to be served. Or let the child play with ice cubes on the high chair tray, or with paper napkins or straws.
- Consider wrapping snacks from home for your child in different kinds of food wrap--some, perhaps, even in colored wrapping paper. It will take lots of time to open all the "presents."
- Order a pot of hot water and extra napkins for cleanup and, perhaps, to wash a high chair tray that's not quite clean.

Drinks in the Car

- Carry a thermos of cold water--it quenches thirst best. Add a little lemon juice for flavor.
- Satisfy both thirst and hunger with grapes. Oranges serve the same purpose, but they're messier.
- Freeze a half-full plastic container with water. When you're ready to go, fill the balance of the container with water for a long-lasting, cold thirst-quencher.
- Don't forget to take a cloth diaper or two to mop up spills--they are very absorbent. Scotchguard the upholstery before leaving.

Toys to Take Along

- Keep the toy supply in the trunk. Bring out a few items after every rest stop, for variety, and return those in the car to the trunk.
- Let the children fill small school lunchboxes with small toys to play with--but not so small that they can get lost in the car.
- Take music tapes to play in the car, and sing the songs as you travel.

Activities in the Car

Check at your local library for books on games to play and songs to sing in the car. Keep a list of favorite songs and games in the glove compartment so you won't forget them when you suddenly need diversion.

- Make a simple map even small children can follow as you drive in the car, marked with the stops you're sure of.
- Store crayons, markers and coloring books in a metal cake pan with a sliding cover. The closed top provides a work surface. Avoid pencils and scissors--their sharp points may prove dangerous in case of a sudden stop.
- Buy magnetized games, or glue pieces of Velcro on board games and their playing pieces, to keep small parts from getting lost. For a dice game, put dice in a clear plastic jar so that you can just shake them, rather than roll and risk losing them.
- Take along a big catalog for the children to look at.
- End each day with prayer and quiet story-reading.
- Believe God and have a wonderful trip. See you at the Rock.