



The Joys Of Flight

Imagine this nightmare: You get to an airport for a multi hour flight somewhere. You were up late the night before packing and had to get up super early to make it on time. You spend time getting through security which took forever thanks to a screaming toddler and a mother who needs to get bottles of milk checked directly in front of you. Walking down the concourse you just think about how nice it will be to just get into the air, read for a little while, watch a movie and maybe nap on the flight. But wait, you're boarding and as you get closer to your row you're coming to a horrible realization. That mom at security is telling her toddler the row to walk to.....it's..... it's YOUR ROW!!!! "17 B honey, you're almost there". 17 B?? 17B????? You're sitting in 17A!!!! NO NO NO NO NO NO NO!!!!!! Oh cruel twisted world. What terrible deed have you done to deserve such an awful fate? Can anything be worse than this nightmare scenario?

Actually, there is only *one* thing would make this flight from hell harder to bear. That child isn't just sitting *near* you. He's *yours*.

I remember back in the day when I'd be flying alone and dreading the possibility of a bad row companion. What if the person smells bad? What if they are chatty (I can only pretend to be Lithuanian with no grasp of the English language until the flight attendant asks what I want to drink). However the real fear was always being stuck with, or near, a toddler. I remember being deeply annoyed at the parents of kids who made too much noise, or kids who couldn't keep still. I stared daggers at those parents as they sheepishly carried soiled children past me, fouling the air in my space. Then I'd feebly mask my inward joy if the perpetrating child fell or was somehow painfully bested by an older sibling.



Now, I want to find all of those parents and offer my most sincere apologies. I want to travel back in time and help them. I want to hold them and tell them everything is going to be alright. I want to send the flight attendant over with some wine or a whiskey to dull the psychological pain they are undoubtedly enduring. The contempt I once felt for small kids on flights I now have tenfold for other passengers with impatience for kids on flights.

If you haven't passed through Dante's 10th circle of hell (Air Travel With Children) then you can't possibly understand what it's about. When we travel, my wife starts making packing lists two months in advance. These lists will encompass all that we need to bring for them. Blankets, pack and plays, toys, books, diapers, water, snacks, booster seats, clothes, shoes, sneakers..... It goes on. Special emphasis is placed on what to bring onto the plane to keep them entertained.

We do not do this for ourselves, but for the sake of our fellow passengers. We're used to the pandemonium that surrounds toddlers. It's just white noise to us. Plus, our kids DO NOT sleep on planes or in cars so we can't count on them sleeping the hours away. I really envy parents with kids that do sleep, but our crew somehow didn't come with that feature. We know they'll be moving, yelling, crying and acting up eventually because they are children and it's not natural for them to sit still for hours. So, all that crap I lugged through security was there with the express purpose of helping my airplane neighbors have a quiet-ish flight.

We would like nothing more than to plop them 12 aisles away with someone else, wish them "Bonne Chance!" and then retrieve them upon arrival, but we can't. We need to battle through security with strollers and carry-ons, feed them airport food, get them onto the flight, stifle the screams, keep the legs from kicking, keep hands from latching and unlatching the tray table, attempt to keep them in their seats, stop them from spilling anything, read to them, sing to them everything. Oh, and you haven't lived until you use the shirt you are currently wearing to contain a hearty dose of projectile vomit. It is absolutely exhausting. I would rather spend the flight sitting between Pepe Le Pew after a dinner of cheese and beans, and a chatty Fran Drescher while lime sized hemorrhoids developed and flared underneath me with the burning of a thousand suns.

So with that pleasant visual, here are my suggestions for parents traveling with kids:

- 1) Buy the CARES (Child Aviation Restraint System) before you get on that flight. It's a seatbelt that straps onto the chair, essentially making the airplane seat into a 5 point restraint like a car seat. It's made for safety, but let's face it, it's really just the best way to keep them put, short of putting your kids into the full Hannibal Lecter mask and straight-jacket (which I've considered). We borrowed one from a friend and it was wonderful. www.kidsflysafe.com