

Are We There Yet?

Travelling with grandparents and toddler puts the sandwich generation in a jam

by **KATHY BUCKWORTH**

I recently took a trip overseas with my parents, something I: (a) hadn't done for 20 years, and (b) had never attempted in the company of my own children. (For the record, I'm not totally insane; I took only one of my four kids. I'm just partially unbalanced; I chose the two-year-old.) It immediately became apparent that I hadn't spent enough time: (a) reminding my parents what travelling with a young child is like, or (b) preparing myself for taking on the role of child and parent at the same time. Here's what I learned:



1. Seven hours on a flight with a good book, free wine, crappy meals, more free wine and movies is not a long time for an adult. It's an eternity for a child.

2. An eternity for an adult is apparently the 10 minutes that your young grandson spends kicking the back of your airplane seat.

3. Some things have to be explained over and over, whether you're talking to a two-year-old (*No, there are no Timbits in England*) or a 65-year-old (*Yes, we really do need a car seat, even though all of "us kids" were just fine without one*).

4. Travelling in a car for six hours after a seven-hour flight tends to bring out the unpleasant side of a small child. (*Yes, I'm sure "us kids" used to entertain ourselves — probably because we could leap about the vehicle, unhampered by car seats.*)

5. Tiny, quiet English tea rooms seem even tinier and quieter when a grandfather announces, "I hope you can find us a table far away from everyone else just in case this little fellow explodes." (You've never seen 80-year-olds choke down their watercress and cucumber sandwiches so fast.)

6. Tiny, quiet English tea rooms rarely serve chicken nuggets and ketchup, nor do they offer space to change a toddler's ripe diaper in their lovely little "powder rooms."

7. While changing that diaper, you can prepare your answers for loudly asked questions like "Didn't you think of toilet training him before the trip?" (Thought about it. Thought about the extra clothes I'd have to pack and the many stops we all would be required to make, and dismissed the thought immediately.)

8. Some grandparent discipline tactics (*If you won't stop crying while you're sitting with Mommy, you're going to have to sit with Granddad*) have a way of escalating an already tense situation.

9. Travelling with a two-year-old can be a handy excuse for going to bed early and reading. Reading *Thomas the Tank Engine*, that is. Over and over and over.

My eldest child is 13. I'm already planning the first mother/daughter/grandchild trip, where I will naturally be the perfect travelling companion...provided that the wine is still free and I'm sitting behind *them*. ♥

Kathy Buckworth is the author of The Secret Life of SuperMom and SuperMom: A Celebration of All You Do, books easily read on any child-free transatlantic flight.