

## TEN WAYS TO GET KIDS EXCITED ABOUT THE FAMILY TRIP

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By Ruth Lutnick

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You, your husband and two children, ages 10 and 13 are going on a long-anticipated--by you--trip to London and Paris. You and your husband have been there before and loved it so much that you simply must show your children those famous places and mind-opening culture palaces.

Your children are not so thrilled. In fact, the 13-year-old, a girl, has asked if she could stay with her best friend while you and her whiny younger brother go to Europe without her.

How do you turn the scenario around? How do you detoxify the inevitable, "Are we there yet?" Here are ten ways to go.

#1 Get them into the mood of the place in advance. Watch movies or read books set in that particular country or city. This will involve them in the places on an emotional level, and they'll be really keen to actually go to "where it happened." Many of these media offerings are about kids, and that's always an interest builder. Some of these stories show the kids as the brave, the bold and adventurous ones, while the adults in charge need their help. Nothing like being more in control of a situation than the grownups to whet your appetite for travel.

#2 Find places that are intriguing, not-well-known and "kid-friendly" to visit. As a former kid, I'm sure you remember how PAINFUL "seeing" something can be. Plan to go to places where you will be "doing" something. Active places win hands down with kids. If you do go to a "seeing" place, plan an activity, such as a scavenger hunt, to transform it into a "doing" place. Imagine the fun you can have at spots such as the perfume museum in Paris, Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, or at the City of London museum sound and light show depicting the famous fire that destroyed London!

#3 Plan shopping trips that your kids will enjoy and have them save up for special stuff they like, or give them allowances. Allow equal time for each in the shop of his/her choice. Getting stuff is always a blast, and showing the stuff off to friends gives them bragging rights as well!

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#4 Let the kids share in the planning. Set aside some days, blocks of time, evenings as you write out your itinerary and tell the kids that they decide what the whole crew does at those times. This gets them involved and excited about the things that THEY look forward to.

#5 Go heavy on the local entertainment. Kids love music, movies, sports events. Plan these kid-friendly events with your kids input, and you're sure to have a blast. They'll remember the joust, or football (a.k.a. Soccer) match. Go Beckham!

#6 Leave some time for relaxation. Stay at a hotel with a swimming pool, a tennis court or other game centers. Don't begrudge them that important video arcade time.

#7 Plan to meet local kids. Studies all show that kids love meeting other kids. If you have friends or people you can connect with in your destination who have kids, plan a visit. You can also connect by

searching the internet for kids' interactive sites.

#8 Put your kids in charge of the photography department, or at least their own photography department. Provide each with a good camera. You don't have to bring a computer; there are plenty of internet cafes and some hotels have web access. If they are anxious to share photos with their friends back home and keep in touch, this is a good way to do it.

#9 This may be the only don't in the list, but I feel strongly about it: Don't insist they keep a journal or diary. This is a chore. Unless they themselves come up with the idea, mum's the word.

#10 Have fun: this means you too. Taking your kids on a trip will provide experiences and closeness with them that will last until their own kids are ready to be launched. Nowadays, even grandparents are traveling with their grandchildren.

Happy travels to you and your whole family!

Ruth Lutnick is the CEO and founder of Four Corners Books, which publishes children's travel adventure books . She is an accomplished children's author and educator. Visit Four Corners on the web, at <http://www.fourcornersbooks.com> .

### **Top Ten Ways to be a Better Father**

**By Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC**

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The expectations for fathers are increasing both at work and at home. Here are ten ways for fathers to be more effective in the most important job they'll ever have:

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### 1. See your kids as capable

The achilles heel of many fathers is to see their kids as "not good enough." Your kids will feel this, and they'll live up to these expectations. The more you approve of them, the greater they'll be!

### 2. Make time for your kids

There will always be more work, but you won't always have the chance to be with your kids. Are there ways to include them in chores around the house? Your kids will know if they matter to you by the effort you make to include them in your day.

### 3. Use positive forms of discipline

Punishment is not very effective. It tends to create more of the very behavior that fathers are seeking to eliminate. Use natural and logical consequences instead—if you don't pick up your toys, they get put in a bag and taken away for awhile. Give them choices. Positive discipline methods help kids learn responsibility, punishment helps them learn to dislike you.

### 4. Have a great relationship with you wife

You are the main role model for your kids, and this is the main source of information for them about how to have a close relationship. They're watching very closely to learn how to do it.

### 5. Be aware of your kids lives

How much do you really know about your kids? Are you aware of their hopes and dreams? Do you know what inspires them? Do you know their friends names? What they like and dislike about you? If there are things you don't know about your kids, you can always ask!

### 6. Be nurturing with your kids

Hug and kiss your kids, and let them hear plenty of "I love you's." And also don't forget to wrestle with

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them. Both boys and girls benefit from wrestling with their dads. Kids need to see your "soft" side, so show it to them frequently.

### 7. "Really" listen to your kids

Put down the newspaper and look your kids in the eye when they talk to you. Be aware of your own tendency to "filter" what your kids say. Reflect back what you heard from them. If you want them to listen to you, you've got to show them the way.

### 8. Examine your relationship with your own father

A poor relationship with your own father will affect your ability to be an effective father. Are there things you want to say to your father? Ultimately, forgiving your father will go a long way towards allowing you to father to the best of your ability.

### 9. Take care of yourself

It's difficult to be kind and nurturing to your family if you're not kind to yourself. Find ways to take the time to relax, exercise, and keep your stress levels lower. And use friends and family to support you—don't become an "island" in your family. Your family will appreciate it.

### 10. Have a plan for your anger

Men can have a difficult time with the overwhelming emotional intensity that families can experience. The result is often anger, which breeds anger in your kids and creates a vicious cycle. Make a plan with a specific relaxation technique that helps to defuse your anger. Remember that one bad episode can impact your kids for a long time.

Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC, coaches men to be better fathers and husbands. He is the author of "25 Secrets of Emotionally Intelligent Fathers" <http://www.markbrandenburg.com/father.htm>. Sign up for his FREE bi-weekly newsletter, "Dads, Don't Fix Your Kids," at <http://www.markbrandenburg.com>



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