Summer Travel Prep Checklist

Hope
Autism Clinic

Everything to plan, pack, and prepare for a smoother trip with your child.

Use this checklist to plan, pack, and prepare for a smoother trip. Work through the sections that fit your journey, whether you are driving, flying, or staying somewhere new.e around water.

Before You Leave

- [ ] Talk through the trip with your child: where you are going, how they are getting there, how long they will stay, and what they will see
- [ ] Make a social story or picture sequence of the journey, from leaving home to arriving
- [ ] Show photos or videos of the destination, the people, or the airport ahead of time
- [ ] If flying, check whether your airport offers an autism rehearsal program (such as Wings for Autism)
- [ ] If flying, contact TSA Cares about 72 hours ahead to arrange screening support
- [ ] Tell the airline your child has autism and ask about boarding and security support
- [ ] When possible, choose travel times that fit your child's usual routine

Pack the Travel Kit (Comfort & Calm)

- [ ] Noise-canceling headphones or earplugs
- [ ] A favorite comfort item (blanket, stuffed animal, or pillow)
- [ ] Fidgets or a squeeze toy
- [ ] A weighted lap pad for calming pressure
- [ ] Sunglasses or a hat for bright light.
- [ ] Familiar snacks and water
- [ ] A device with preferred shows, music, or games, plus a charger
- [ ] Something for ear pressure during takeoff and landing (gum, chews, a drink)

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Bring Pieces of Home

- [ ] More of your child's safe foods than you think you will need
- [ ] Familiar bedtime items: the same pajamas, book, stuffed animal, or blanket
- [ ] Sleep supports: white noise machine, nightlight, or blackout coverings

On the Journey

- [ ] Build in extra time so you are never rushing your child
- [ ] On a long drive, plan stops for movement and sensory breaks
- [ ] Bring a simple visual of the route or the steps of the trip
- [ ] Plan for waiting: pack enough to occupy and soothe through delays

When Plans Change

- [ ] Tell your child ahead of time that "sometimes plans change, and that is okay"
- [ ] Pack for a longer wait than you expect
- [ ] If traveling with another adult, plan to divide and conquer: one rebooks, one stays with your child
- [ ] Narrate any change calmly and simply ("The plane is late. We will wait here and read together")

Keep These in Your Carry-On (Never Checked)

- [ ] Medications
- [ ] Comfort items
- [ ] A change of clothes
- [ ] Safe snacks
- [ ] Emergency and medical information

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Settling In Away From Homes

- [ ] Walk through the new space together and show your child where they will sleep
- [ ] Set up familiar items right away
- [ ] Keep wake-up times and bedtimes close to your child's usual schedule
- [ ] Balance busy outings with quiet downtime, and keep a calm space available

Remember

- A shorter, calmer outing that works for your child is worth more than an ambitious one
- Every trip teaches you a little more about what helps, and every trip can get easier

For informational purposes only. This resource does not replace professional advice or supervision.