

## Traveling with Kids

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It's not a sin to cry "Liberation!" when the children go back to school. The summer vacation is long. *Theirs* is. *We're* sick of them. If we went somewhere, it was probably with *them*. Did we really have a good time then? That depends on us. Did *they* get something of value out of it? Only if *we* had our fun.

Fasten your seatbelt, the emergency doors are there, your life jacket will drop from the overhead compartment, put on your oxygen mask. Yes, *yours* first, *then* your children's. Pay attention to the flight attendant. Think of yourself first. It's the *only* way to travel with kids.

If you're in Barcelona for a weekend, a visit to the Tibidabo Amusement Park is not exactly your idea of enlightenment, is it? You don't like theme parks, so even Poble Espanyol would only put you in a foul mood, wouldn't it? Which isn't good for the kids in the long run, is it? Am I such a bad mother for thinking that there is magic enough in the world of Gaudí, magic enough in picture books you can buy about the white-haired old man who was run down by a streetcar? Incidentally, why not tell your 4-year-old son that *modernisme* in English is neither modernism nor modernity, but Catalan Art Nouveau? It's never too early.

The brick-and-iron building that houses the Tàpies Museum is *modernisme* of a less

enchanted kind, but the sculpture of tangled wires that floats over the roof, which is turn-of-millennium Barcelona Design, is a sufficient treat for any child, I promise! So shut up about Camp Nou! It's not necessary. Am I such a negligent parent for never taking my children to see "Snowflake" while it was still alive? It wasn't necessary.

Speaking of zoos, it's common here for folks, when announcing forthcoming trips to The Capital, to include the zoo in their plans. I never thought the Madrid Zoo to be more a must than the Prado. Nor any other zoo. Never did I go to a zoo of my own accord, so a zoo is the last thing I'll take my kid to on a trip, unless I'm in Berlin and reading *Berlin Noir*, and the sexy detective is meeting an informer in the Berlin Zoo.

I cringe even more when Paris and EuroDisney (or whatever it's called now) are pronounced in the same sentence. I'm not anti-Disney. You've got to be a grim fool not to acknowledge the genius of Disney. I love Disneyland and Disneyworld, okay? But in Anaheim and Orlando, never in Paris. I'll sooner take my son to Monet's garden and lily pond farther out in Giverny. The Pompidou Center is a giant Lego and children walk out of it forever able to spot a Gris. Months later you're crossing the street and they blurt out, look at that woman, she looks just like a Modigliani! Ah, joy! All because you did what you yourself wanted.

Tips? Give them relevant reading. Have them draw, write, and paste things in a travel notebook. Let them send postcards to their friends. Growl at them when they mope. Snarl when they whine. Give them vinegar when they're thirsty for the Nth time. But most importantly, pursue your own interests. They'll get so much from it in the long run, including your good mood.