

Have baby, will travel

Small babies make great travellers if you ensure their needs are met

Christmas holidays allow us time to relax with family and friends and to take a well-deserved break from the day-to-day routine. But that all-important routine, long-distance travelling and packing for these breaks can be a lot to think about for a new parent.

Parents have shared many holiday concerns with me; like having your baby in a car seat for a long length of time, and then once you have arrived, your baby's ability to sleep in a foreign environment. Then there's the worry that you'll be disturbing others who are not used to babies' cries in the night.

Those of you blessed with a good sense of time, space and a lot of patience will find these journeys less stressful. Others may find that the worry of being parents has taken over all your logic and rational and the thought of going away makes you a little nervous.

Where to start?

Planning is essential. Writing lists and making a 'plan of attack' can ease unnecessary worry. My mother was a wonderful example of this, filling up a room over a week with everything our family of six would require on holiday. My pile here, my brothers' piles there, etc. Each day the list, which sat in the kitchen, got crossed off, allowing my mother the ability to go to sleep at night.

With babies and children there is a lot of equipment that is needed. Pre-planning will ensure you pack the important items and stop you packing unnecessary extras.

Travelling

When traveling by car, plan your departure time by your baby's feed times – leave after one of your baby's feeds and in time for their sleep, which can be had in the car. This allows them a kick or play between feed and sleep while you do the last-minute requirements.

Departure time will also be influenced

by the distance you have to travel, how often you might have to stop and places you are able to feed and go to the toilet.

When travelling in the car with your baby in a capsule or infant car seat for long periods it is important to ensure your baby doesn't overheat inside. Most car seats are made from washable and durable fabrics that don't breathe, and this may cause overheating.

It is advised that you do not travel for more than three hours without having a break. Babies need to have some movement and a break from lying in an unnatural position, just as we need to stretch our legs. These breaks also give you a chance to feed – reducing the risk of the baby dehydrating, which can happen easily, especially with the air conditioning on.

Don't be in a rush. If you meet your baby's needs throughout the journey, they should settle well on arrival; rather than the restless night you may face if your baby arrives hungry and thirsty.

Your holiday environment

You may have many family and friends desperate to help you which is wonderful because you deserve an extra pair of hands! Just be aware that new environments and groups of people can be tiring for small babies. Their level of stimulation increases rapidly and this can sometimes (especially if it's a new experience) be too much for your baby and yourself. Wean them in gradually, allowing only a few people to hold them at one time. A favourite motto of mine is "everything in small doses".

What about your routine?

A routine is still important on holiday but you might like to adapt it slightly to suit the environment. As long as you stick to roughly the same timings you will be fine. Allowing the new and exciting events to take place is important and as long as your baby isn't too tired

they are quite adaptable. If your baby has to have several sleeps in a buggy some days, or in a strange place that's fine, just try and follow this with a quieter, more normal day. Try and make the quieter days a majority.

Routines are easy to put back into place when you get home, it usually takes about three days.

Safety

There are several important safety measures required for journeys and holidays:

- Be prepared with a first-aid kit.
- Assess your new environment for safety issues, temperature, insects and possible animal interest (any cats in the house you are staying should be watched carefully).
- Think about your access to emergency services, especially if you are in a remote environment that doesn't have mobile reception.
- Be aware that if it is warmer in this new environment you might need to have boiled water on standby in a bottle. If your baby wakes early and is not hungry, they might just be thirsty.

Relaxing!

The most important thing is that you ask for help when needed. Get some rest when you can and try to relax and make the most of your holiday environment. Your baby will be happy if you are.■

With over a decade of international experience, Sharlene has carved out a unique career in child care – specialising as a newborn advisor. Sharlene has an established post-natal care business and continues to work around the world. Due to demand, Sharlene is currently developing a series of DVDs for her international market and will share advice with readers through this column. If you have any questions for Sharlene, see www.tbonz.co.nz www.littlemiracles.co.nz has information on the support options Sharlene provides.

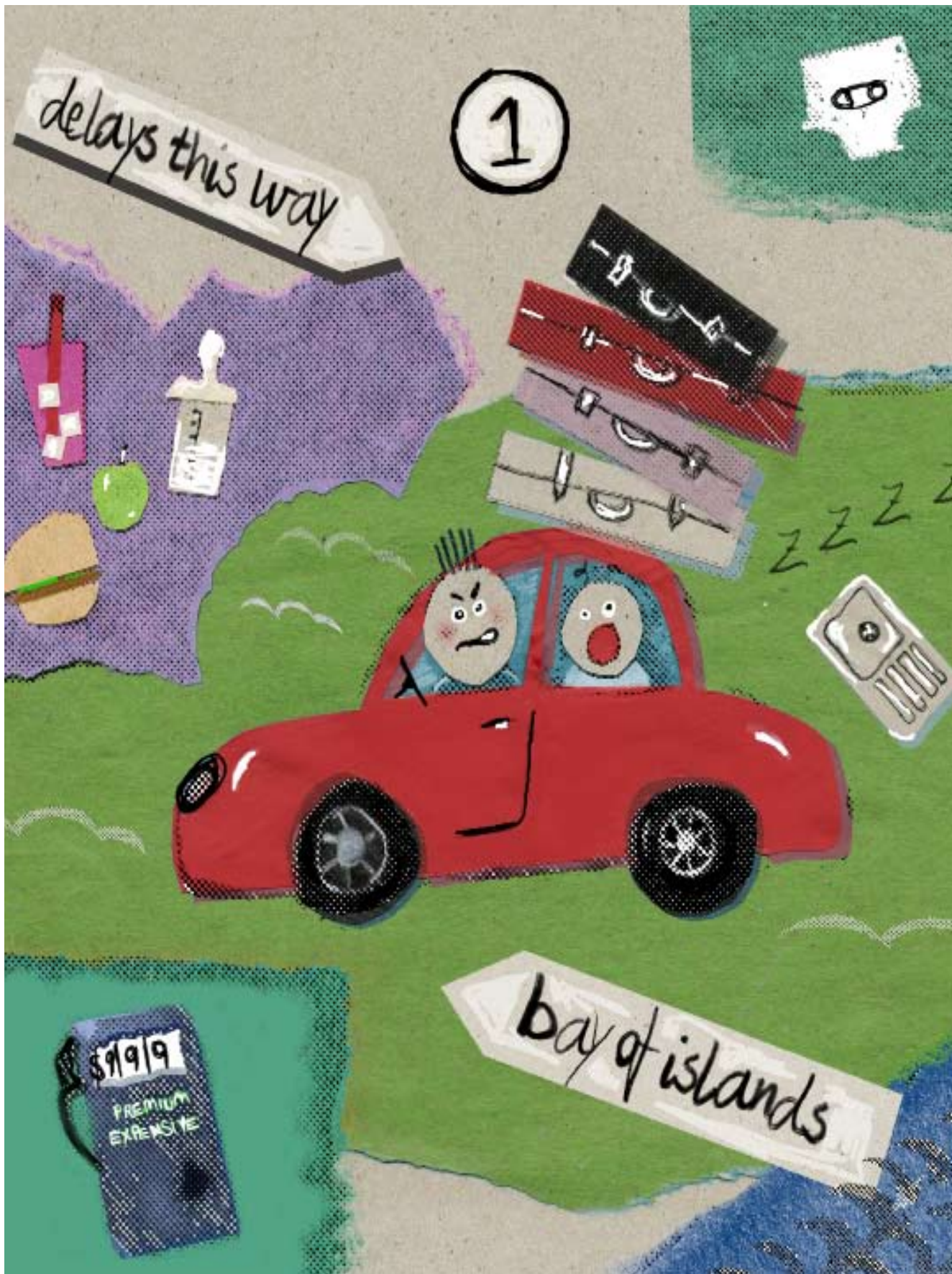


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