

Bump On Board

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By Lora Shinn

I admit it. I'm a travel junkie. In college, I saved every penny to saunter along the Seine and gape at the pyramids in Giza. Then I got pregnant.

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Once an intrepid explorer, I now worried about amber-colored tap water and wonderfully stinky soft cheeses. Friends warned about babies born far from home, and travel became just another concern-of-the-month.

Once my doctor gave me the go-ahead, I soon realized that trips could be on my "yes" list—with a few important adaptations. "Pregnancy is not a disease," says Ivan Dale Carroll, M.D., an obstetrician and pregnancy travel consultant (go to pregnanttraveler.com). "It is an altered state of physiology that requires some changes."

The second trimester is the perfect time to jet—after morning sickness passes and before you're too bulky for the bulkhead. I took my little stowaway to the Bahamas, Mexico, and France. Here's how.

Select Your Sweet Spot

First, choose a destination that you and your doctor feel comfortable with, whether it's a nearby city or as far away as Nepal. Consult with a physician specializing in travel medicine if health care won't be immediately available or tropical diseases present a risk. Carroll says studies show pregnant women are more likely to be bitten by mosquitoes. And the World Health Organization reports that pregnant women are more susceptible to contracting malaria—often transmitted through mosquitoes—which can lead to miscarriage or stillbirth.

And I'm not hostile towards hostels, but it pays to splurge on hotels when pregnant. Your back will throb and your joints will ache, so a pillow-top mattress provides the best place to rest your pregnancy weight. If you're headed overseas, ask whether the hotel offers elevator service, as many old-world inns don't.

All-inclusive cruises and resorts offer a low-stress option. During her second trimester, Pamela Kohl of Miami Beach, FL, stayed at a Club Med, where she could either laze poolside or play bocce ball. "The ease of travel arrangements allowed us to truly enjoy a 'babymoon,'" Kohl says, "and focus on spending time together."

Bring Home with You

Erika Martinez of New York City packed her own pillow on every second-trimester business trip. Other items to pack: protein-rich snacks to stave off low blood sugar en route and sandals or other slip-ons to ease swollen feet. Travel-



size detergent wipes will take care of spots on your maternity tops.

Molly Phariss of Seattle included Tylenol in her first-aid kit for her stay in the United Kingdom. Pharmaceutical names vary widely worldwide—as do drugs deemed safe for use in pregnancy—so bring prescriptions and over-the-counter meds with you. Carroll also suggests requesting an antibiotic to cope with surprise stomach bugs.

“Check in with your doctor or midwife before you leave, and get a copy of your prenatal records,” says Melanie Willson, R.N., a labor and delivery nurse at Sacred Heart Medical Center in Eugene, OR. Also call your insurance company to ensure on-the-road medical coverage and ask for recommended ob/gyns in your destination.

Fly Smart

Book nonstop routes that will spare you frantic gate changes; as your belly grows, it's hard to make the haul to H5. And select an aisle seat—your bladder will thank you. Avoid sitting in the last row, or in front of the exit rows, as you won't be able to recline your seat. When checking in, ask about snagging a roomy bulkhead spot.

Pregnant women are at higher risk for developing the blood clots known as deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Boost blood flow by drinking plenty of water and moving around the cabin at least once every two hours, Carroll says. Support hose also keep blood moving and ease swelling in your legs.

Eat for Two

As I threw up in the less-than-luxe toilet of my Puerto Vallarta motel, I ran through a mental list: Unwashed fruit? No. Unpasteurized cheese? No. Ice cubes? Uh-oh.

I endured just one nasty night, but it could've been worse. Bacteria and parasites in food and water can produce a severe infection in mother, baby, or both; dehydration and diarrhea can cause premature labor. As you would at home, take a pass on raw fish and unpasteurized dairy products. In developing nations, scrub and peel fruits and veggies, devour only steaming-hot dinners, and stay away from those ice cubes. As Carroll says, “Pregnancy is not the time to experiment.”

Take It Easy

Because you're more prone to exhaustion, opt for a leisurely vacation plan. Spend one week in a single destination, sightsee nearby and work nap time into your day. “Cut your itinerary and schedule in half,” Carroll says. “You can't do it all.”

Traveling pregnant will help you prepare for bringing baby on board later. Once he's born, your little adventurer will also need safe food, a well-packed bag, and plenty of patience. And you'll possess the travel savvy to ensure the trip's success.

Lora Shinn's daughter drooled for her first passport photo at 3 months and now joins her mom on jaunts. When not searching for cheap airfare, Shinn writes for KIWI and Parenting magazines.

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