



# Listless without a list

Blessed are the list-makers when it comes to travelling with small children, writes mum-to-a-preschooler and television presenter Tamara Sheward

ONCE UPON A time, I flew by the seat of my pants. I had a passport teetering on the edge of validity, a few crumpled dollars to get me through the first hours wherever I was going, and at least one clean(ish) pair of underwear stashed in the ragbag that passed as my luggage.

These days, those pants I flew by? They're triple-patched, carefully laundered and ironed with starch. You see, I'm the scatty mum of a four-year-old now, and spontaneity has gone the way of the eight (or six, or four) hour sleep. Apart from mainlining double espressos, only one thing gets me and my daughter off the yoghurt-stained couch and on a plane. And that thing is lists.

Lists of upcoming flights. The *Things to entertain daughter on said flights* sub-list. Sub-sub-lists of *Snacks that will fit in my carry-on and which will probably crumble but daughter loves them so whatever*. Stuffed toy-packing lists, with clauses and footnotes. Because what is a travelling parent without a list but a chump in an overseas hotel room wondering how to break the news that they forgot their jet-lagged kid's most-drooled on teddy bear?



## I tried list-free travel once. Only ONCE

While I have come across the incredible specimen that is a parent who manages ad lib travel with aplomb, I am not one of them. Fretting that motherhood had morphed me into a control-freak killjoy, I tried list-free travel once. Only ONCE. Without my *Don't forget on*

*pain of death* list, I left my phone charger dangling from a socket back home and wound up on a backstreet in the Japanese city of Narita searching for an electronics shop at 3am. Minus my standard *Don't check out until checking for* list, I left my then-infant daughter's bottle congealing under a hotel-room pillow. And thanks to the lack of a *Duty-free for parental brownie points* list, I'm still awaiting my mother's forgiveness for neglecting to purchase her

favourite limited-edition perfume. Far from proving that I could wing it with the off-the-cuff crowd, going list-less just sent me off my head.

Though lists are definitive things by nature, filled with satisfying bullet points and authoritative full stops, for me, the best kind comes with a slew of question marks. Typically written up on board the flight home, entries look like this: Bali? Fiji? New Zealand? The list's name: *Where to next ...* ✈