

Travel checklist for families with an autistic child



Category	Items/Tasks	Details/Tips	Check
Pre-Trip Planning	Research Autism-Friendly Destinations	Look for destinations with sensory-friendly accommodations and activities. Ensure they cater to neurodiverse families.	
	Booking Accommodations	Book autism-friendly hotels, resorts, or vacation rentals. Look for quiet rooms and sensory spaces.	
	Choosing the Right Mode of Transportation	Evaluate options (car, plane, train) based on sensory sensitivities. Choose the most comfortable option for your child.	
Essential Items to Pack	Sensory Tools and Comfort Items	Pack noise-canceling headphones, fidget toys, weighted blankets. Bring familiar items to create a calming environment.	
	Food and Dietary Needs	Pack safe, familiar snacks and plan for meals during travel. Research food options at your destination.	
	Entertainment and Distraction	Prepare a sensory-friendly entertainment kit (tablets, books, tactile toys). Balance screen time with other activities.	
	Important Documents and Information	Prepare essential documents (passports, medical records, sensory plans). Keep all information organized and accessible.	
Preparing Your Child for the Trip	Using Social Stories and Visual Schedules	Create social stories and visual schedules to explain the travel process. Use these tools to reduce anxiety.	
	Practicing the Travel Routine	Role-play scenarios like airport security and hotel check-in. Practice runs help build familiarity.	
	Communicating with Service Providers	Inform airlines, hotels, and other providers about your child's needs. Ensure accommodations are confirmed.	
Managing Sensory Challenges During Travel	Creating a Calming Travel Environment	Use earplugs, window shades, and portable fans. Set up a sensory-friendly space in vehicles or planes.	
	Handling Unexpected Sensory Overload	Have strategies and a backup plan for calming your child. Identify quiet areas for unexpected situations.	
	Taking Regular Breaks	Schedule breaks to avoid sensory overload. Find quiet areas at airports, rest stops, or attractions.	
Navigating Social Situations	Interacting with Strangers	Prepare your child for interactions with strangers. Handle questions or comments about behavior with understanding.	
	Managing Crowded and Noisy Environments	Avoid or cope with crowded places. Use quiet zones and sensory-friendly spaces when needed.	
	Staying in Hotels or Vacation Rentals	Create a calming environment in temporary lodgings. Manage sensory sensitivities with familiar items and routines.	
Post-Trip Considerations	Decompressing After the Trip	Help your child relax and adjust back to their routine. Provide downtime to recover from the sensory challenges.	
	Reflecting on the Experience	Discuss the trip with your child to reinforce positive memories and learn from challenges.	
	Sharing Your Experience	Share your travel experiences with other families. Your insights can help others plan their trips.	