

# PARENTING



Photo illustration by Andrea Dixon

Three-year-old Brittany Sidorenko and her brother, Zachary, 4, play with toys in the back seat of their parents' car May 9.

## How to travel well with your kids

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

With fear and trepidation have many parents approached airline trips with small children. Yet David Sidorenko, father of 4-year-old Zachary, said his child passed the passenger test with flying colors, thanks, in part, to a talking copy of a *Thomas the Tank Engine* book he brought along.

As the commuter plane from Rochester to New York City prepared to take off, and the passengers sat silently in their seats, Zachary pressed a button on his book, which responded by saying "Thomas, you're a really useful engine!" "The whole plane was laughing," Sidorenko recalled with a smile as he sat in his Rochester home while Zachary played with his 3-year-old sister, Brittany, and their 4-year-old cousin, Brooke.

Sidorenko attends St. John the Evangelist Church on Humboldt Street with his wife, Wendy, and their children, and Zachary goes to the preschool at the parish. At least once every two months, the Sidorenkos pack up their bags and prepare their children for journeys to Long Island, where Sidorenko's ailing father lives.

"He enjoys seeing the kids, and it perks him up a bit," Sidorenko said.

They've also traveled to such places as Toronto, New Orleans and Cape Cod. Unlike some parents, the Sidorenkos have no qualms taking their brood on long journeys, Sidorenko said.

"What doesn't work is unrealistic expectations," he said, such as expecting small children to get along the entire trip, or to sit for more than two or three hours at a stretch. If you're not into taking multiple stops, it's best to travel when the kids are least likely to make trouble, he noted.

"We got smart," he said. "We travel at night."

On every trip, the Sidorenkos make sure their children each bring along favorite items from home to give them a sense of security and familiarity. Sidorenko said his wife also plays games with them such as "Who can find a yellow car first?" and "When will we see the next green sign?" She also puts the food cooler between them in the back seat so they are separated — and can't hit each other — and also so they have something on which to place their toys.

His wife also goes to a discount store before each trip and buys a bag of dollar

toys, coloring books and other items for each child. That way, the kids have something novel to contemplate as the wheels of their family vehicle roll toward Long Island. And, Sidorenko said, they've learned to bring covered plastic cups filled with their children's favorite juice that won't spill all over the car. No more juice boxes, he said.

When they travel on planes, the Sidorenkos have each of their children pack a carry-on knapsack with their favorite things, and let them put it on the conveyor belt of the X-ray machine at the entrance to the passenger area.

"It's like they're helping, and it helps them feel in control," Sidorenko said.

The Sidorenkos do what all parents should do when traveling with their offspring — plan ahead and prepare to be creative, according to Deb Cornick, publisher of *Have Children Will Travel*, a quarterly newsletter that maintains a Web site at [havechildrenwilltravel.com](http://havechildrenwilltravel.com).

Cornick, a divorced mother of a 16-year-old son, said she has traveled to places all over the world with her son since he was a baby. She started the newsletter in 1996 to share with others what she has learned about traveling with a child and to collect tips from readers and writers who share her interest.

Unlike parents in other parts of the world, those in the United States are alone in thinking they can't travel with their kids until they've reached a certain age, she said during a phone interview from her office in Lake Oswego, Ore.

"In this country, it's still looked at that kids are to be seen, not heard," she said.

Hence, travelers, particularly those on planes, have been known to give parents dirty looks when their children cry or act up. Although she strongly suggests planning enough activities to keep one's children busy so they don't bother others, she also said Americans need to realize that children have a right to travel, too.

"It's a free country," she said. "If a child is screaming ... that's life. Everywhere else in the world except the U.S., children are just loved."

She added that children can never start learning to travel too early. Even if they don't fully comprehend all they're seeing, they will learn how to adapt to new situations and new people, an important skill to have throughout life. Her son, who has written articles for her newsletter, is more self-confident than the average teen because he's seen so much of the world and

has been exposed to different, and sometimes difficult, situations, she said.

"Be flexible," Cornick said. "Be ready for everything. Have a real positive attitude. You're going to have hiccups along the way."

For example, Cornick said she and her son were prepared to spend a day exploring sunny Mexico — and then it rained. Instead of being annoyed the fact they couldn't visit their planned destination, they opted instead to see some Mayan ruins in a jungle. There, the rain was actually beneficial since it cooled the air considerably and chased away mosquitoes. The day turned out to be quite pleasant.

Overall, she said, don't be afraid of making mistakes. You'll learn from them.

"Traveling with kids is kind of like parenting," Cornick said. "There's a lot of guesswork."

## Family Events

◎ **SAT, MAY 18** — Program: "My Toddler and Me"; learning and movement activities centering on flowers and gardening; for ages 18 months to 3 years; Strong Museum, One Manhattan Sq., Rochester; 8-10 a.m.; \$6 adults, \$5 toddlers; pre-registration required; 585/263-2701, ext. 314.

◎ **MAY 18, 25** — Star show: "The Sky Tonight"; tour currently visible stars and preview the grouping of planets occurring in the western sky this month; Strasenburgh Planetarium, 657 East Ave., Rochester; Saturdays 3 p.m.; \$4 adults, \$2.50 students & seniors, RMSC members free; 585/271-1880.

◎ **SUN, MAY 19** — Show: "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" and "The Very Quiet Cricket"; for ages 3-8; puppetry and music by Mermaid Theatre; Arts Center, Nazareth College, 4245 East Ave., Rochester; 2 and 4 p.m.; \$9; 585/389-2170.

◎ **MAY 24, 25** — Family performance: "TWO: High-Energy Juggling"; Jason and Matthew Tardy; features breath-taking juggling set to music; Bristol Valley Theater, 151 S. Main St., Naples; 7 p.m.; \$10 adults, \$5 children, \$18 families of three or more; 585/374-9032.

◎ **SUN, JUNE 2** — Breakfast: "1941 Historical Aircraft Group Pancake Breakfast"; military equipment on display; Genesee Airport, Rt. 63, Genesee; 7-11 a.m.; \$5 adults, \$2 children, under 4 free; 585/243-2100.

◎ **ONGOING** — Exhibit: "Geo-Zooom! and Riding Train"; fun activity stations invite children to learn about geography and transportation; Strong Museum, One Manhattan Sq., Rochester; Sat 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun. noon-5 p.m.; \$6 adults, \$5 students, seniors, children ages 2-17, under 2 free; 585/263-2700.

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