

FAMILY ROAD TRIPS | PACKING TIPS

What to Bring on Your Family Cross-Country Road Trip

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“You may not find a path, but you will find a way.”
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What to Bring on Your Family Road Trip

It can be tempting to bring a lot of things when traveling for a few days or weeks when there are no baggage restrictions. But you'll quickly find out that you don't need as much as you think.

Before listing all the essentials for a family road trip, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Most hotels, and now Airbnbs, provide shampoo, conditioner, and soaps.
- Most hotels have cribs on demand.
- In high altitudes and mountains, even in the summer, the weather can change a lot, so it's better to bring extra layers.
- Most hotels, Airbnbs and campgrounds have laundry rooms available and included or at extra cost.
- If you forget something, it's ok! You'll be able to get it almost everywhere.



Things Not to Forget

Picnic Kit

It's a really good idea to always have food in hand. There's not always a grocery store or a restaurant when the kids are hungry and when it's time to eat.

Bringing a basic picnic kit is always a good idea. If you're camping, well, you should bring the complete kit. But either way, here are the basic things you should have in your picnic kit:

- Cooler and ice pack,
- Cutlery kit,
- Pocket knife,
- Table cloth
- Plates and glasses,
- Reusable sandwich bags,
- Plastic container,
- Bottle & can opener and peeler
- Dish soap and scrub,
- Reusable food pouches



More on Road Trips essential here:

Winter Road Trip Planner
Camping Road Trip Essentials

Snacks and Lunches

Snacks are a must when driving long hours. Here are a few ideas for snacks:

- Fruits & Nuts/Trail Mix,
- GoldFish crakers,
- Veggie platters (cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, …),
- Fruit platters (berries, apples, bananas, grapes),
- Raisins,
- Cheese & Crackers,
- Apple Sauce to go.,
- Wrap (Hummus, peanut butter, cream cheese, jelly,…)

More on Road Trips Snacks here:

 Best Road Trip Snacks for Kids



First Aid Kit

Here is a list to help you create your own first aid kit to bring with you:

- Band-aids,
- Hand Sanitizer,
- Disinfectant wipes,
- Kleenex,
- Baby wipes,
- Benadryl,
- Epi-Pen,
- Chapstick
- Tylenol and Advil,
- Thermometer (and vaseline),
- Polysporin,
- Sun block,
- Bug spray,
- Tweezers,

Or check out the fun pre-made travel **Keep Going first aid kit**.

Basic car repair tools

Though you should always hope for the best, cars are prone to needing repairs for longer road trips. We recommend bringing the following items:

- Spare tire,
- car jack,
- AAA or CAA card (for roadside assistance),
- handheld battery charger,
- muffler tape

Toys and activity kits for the kids

Kids need to be entertained in the car, but also at other moments of the trip (quiet time before bed, on rainy days, etc.) like at home. So it's always a good idea to bring a few of their favorite toys and activities.

- Animals,
- cars, blocs,
- puzzles,
- books,
- coloring books & crayons

It is also a good idea to prepare a tote bag for each kid with new little toys and surprises to give them one at a time in the car (before a long stretch).



More on Road Trips Games Here:

Best Road Trips Games

Other Things to Pack

- Swimming Gear (bathing suits, microfiber towel, etc.)
- Microfiber towels
- Hiking gear
- Reusable bottles of water
- Day backpacks
- Walking/Hiking Shoes
- Bikes and/or scooters
- Clothes in layers (T-Shirts, Long Sleeves shirt, sweaters, polar, ..)
- Rain jacket and/or compressible jacket

Useful App to Download

Here is a non-exhaustive list of smartphone apps that can be super useful while doing a road trip:

- **GoWhee App** to easily find kid-friendly activities
- **AllTrails** to find hikes
- **Roadtrippers** to map your road trip
- **Maps.me** for an alternative to Google Map when you have no internet.
- **Spotify** to listen to good music



How to Pack the Car

Packing the car can be a nightmare. Here are a few tips to pack well so you don't end up playing a game of Tetris every time you touch the car:

Forget big hard shell suitcases

Why? You'll lose space. Try packing cubes or a backpack. They will be easier to fit and utilize all the space. No free space left empty.

Pack strategically

Start with items you won't need for a while at the bottom of the car. Then, you'll want to pack the items you'll need often last, so they are always reachable. It's a good idea to have food, kids toys and kids items available at all times. Keep these at your kids' feet in the car rather than in the trunk.

Prepare small bags of clothes for short trips.

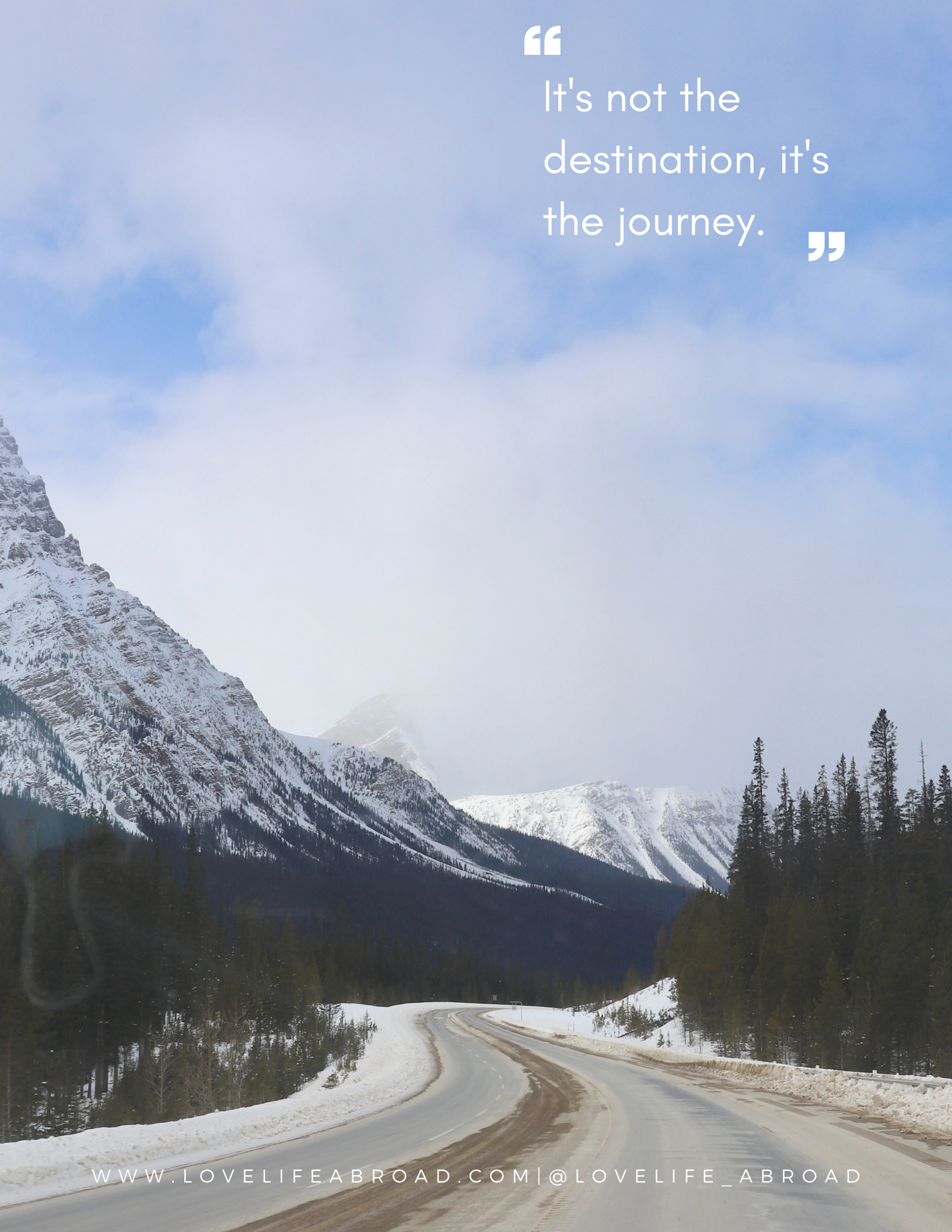
Plan in advance. Look at your itinerary and prepare a few small family bags with enough gear for 2 days. This way, you have your big bags of clothes at the bottom of the trunk and then a few small bags within reach for check in/check out.

Think about your kids

It's important to leave space at the back so the kids can be comfortable. If possible, leave enough room for their legs, and leave the middle seat for their toys, snacks and water bottles.

Leave room in the car

Remember that the first time you pack will be perfect, but after it will feel like there isn't enough room. Make sure you leave some free room. It will make the packing/unpacking way easier and less frustrating.


“It's not the destination, it's the journey.”
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