THE PRACTICAL GUIDE TO TODDLER TRAVEL:
What to Know, How to Go (with kids from 1-4)

By Kara Post

My husband and I traveled to Hunan province in February 2002 to adopt our first daughter, Shao. As soon as we arrived home from that trip, we started paperchasing for our second daughter, Jin. We traveled to Guangdong province in October 2003 to adopt Jin, taking Shao (then age 2.5) along for the trip. It was a wonderful experience for our family, and I share it here for the benefit of other families considering taking a toddler or preschooler on an adoption trip.

Before you decide as a family whether or not to take a two-to-four-year old, confirm your agency’s policy on traveling with additional family members. Some agencies won’t allow young children to travel; some require that you bring an additional adult along to assist with the child. Our agency, Holt International Children’s Services in Oregon, currently has no restrictions on families’ travel parties.

Allow me to preface our experience with this disclaimer: Not every toddler or preschooler should join her family on an adoption trip. Each child is unique, and you know yours well enough to decide how she will handle the long flights, jet lag, different food, adoption appointments, being surrounded by new faces, sleeping away from home for 2 weeks, and meeting a new sibling.

DECIDING TO TAKE OUR TODDLER

Our decision to take Shao was an easy one. I’ve been a stay-home mom since we brought her home, and we thought it might be difficult for her to be away from me for 2 weeks. She is a seasoned traveler, having flown several times and having endured several 7-hour car trips to visit family out-of-state. One item or activity can hold her attention for a long time, and she can go for long stretches before she needs to move around a lot. We insist on good table manners, appropriate indoor behavior, and we practice safety at home (holding my hand, looking both ways before crossing the street), so it wasn’t news to her that we expected the same protocol during travel.

We knew the girls would probably be close in age (as it turned out, they are 19 months apart), so they would still have basically the same needs and same schedule. We delayed potty training Shao until after travel, knowing it would be much easier to change her diapers in China than to deal with potty training there.
Of course, we still had some concerns. There was the possibility that Shao would get sick in China. We prepared for this by taking two of all the usual adoption travel baby medications (see packing list at end). During our wait for Jin’s referral, SARS made its first appearance and we didn’t know whether it would surface again at the time of our trip. If it were present at the time of our travel, we would have made arrangements for her to stay home. As it turned out, SARS was gone and we felt comfortable in our decision to take her. Another concern was her reaction to a new sibling. We knew that jealousy was a probability. But we thought it was better for our family to take Shao with us and confront initial jealousy issues in China, rather than show up with a new baby sister after being separated from her for 2 weeks. Another problem was the possibility that Shao might, with good intentions, give the baby something to play with that might be a choking hazard. As we packed, we took this into consideration and didn’t take anything with strings or small parts. We talked about how Jin might not be able to eat the same kinds of foods as Shao, and that while she could help us feed the baby a bottle, she was not allowed to feed her anything else. We knew that despite our reminders, we would still have to be vigilant!

We considered taking another adult to help care for and supervise Shao. In our case, the friends/family members we considered for the job weren’t able to travel with us. We consulted Judy Chen in Holt’s China program, and she suggested that since we were the only two adults going, one of us should be primarily “in charge” of Shao while the other should primarily care for Jin. This way, each daughter would feel she was getting the love, care, and attention she needed. My husband and I decided that I would take care of baby Jin while he took care of Shao.

**PREPARATION FOR THE TRIP**

**FOR SHAO:**

We chose Jin’s name before our dossier was sent to China, and we talked about her with Shao in everyday conversations during the entire 11-month wait for her referral. We had Christmas, Valentine’s Day, and Easter presents for her (wrapped and waiting in her room until she came home). We included her in Shao’s bedtime prayers. We read *I’m a Big Sister* by Joanna Cole (available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) and talked about how things would be different with a baby in the house, and how Shao could help with her new sister. We also read a book called *Up, Up, and Away Susie* by Julie Monahan (which I found at our Dollar General store) that follows a little girl on her first plane trip.

The “Big Sister” book was great for initiating discussions about how we would take care of the baby, and that we had done these same things for Shao when she was a baby. She loved hearing her baby stories! We also watched her adoption trip videos and talked about how we would fly on the plane, stay in the hotel with the baby, then bring the baby home. We made a point to show her the clothes, gifts, and cards from family and friends when we brought her home, so she would know that she got just as much attention when
she arrived. She still needs her panda blanket for security at night, and always gets rocked before bedtime, and we didn’t eliminate those kinds of habits just because she was going to become a big sister.

We did a lot of role-playing with dolls before travel--holding a baby, feeding her a bottle, singing to her, being gentle. Shao had previously only been interested in stuffed animals, but the role-playing really sparked her interest in her dolls.

We also talked about the fun things that being a big sister/having a baby sister would bring. She would have someone to play with, she could choose the books to read to the baby, she could help select Jin’s clothes. As a big sister, she got her own new bed, she got to sleep with the CD player on her nightstand, she and Daddy could go play outside while Mommy stayed inside with the baby (she *loves* having Daddy all to herself).

Once we received our referral, we proceeded with some milestones for Shao. Since our girls were going to share a room, we moved her out of her crib and into a toddler bed, rearranging the bedroom to give each daughter her own side. This was a big celebration, with a special cake and “bed” gifts (new toddler bedding, new pajamas, new bear to sleep with, new bedtime CD, new bedtime book). As difficult as it was to admit that our “baby” was now a toddler, we knew we would have to make some age distinctions between the two girls in order to reassure Shao she was special and very much loved, even though we were adding a baby to the family and she was now the “big sister”. We acknowledged the things that she could do that a baby couldn’t, by allowing her to make simple choices: what she wanted to wear, what kind of cereal to eat, what kind of toothpaste to buy. We noticed an immediate surge of empowerment, and we knew this would give her an extra boost of self-confidence as our travel approached.

We prepared her for living in a hotel for 2 weeks by making a short list of daily chores similar to those she has at home, knowing that keeping a routine as much as possible would help with her adjustment to China. At home, her chores are to help make her bed, set the table for dinner, and pick up toys at the end of the day. In the hotel, her chores would be to help feed the baby her morning bottle, help put trash in the trash cans, and pick up her toys at the end of the day.

**SAFETY**

We consulted our county health department’s international travel clinic about immunizations. My husband and I had received Hepatitis A & B for our first China trip, and I was due for a tetanus shot by the second trip. Shao was up-to-date on her immunizations, and we followed the clinic’s recommendation for her to receive Hepatitis A (two injections, 6-12 months apart). We decided against malaria and typhoid fever prevention for all of us, deciding that the risks of the side effects outweighed the risk of infection. Check with your county health department or travel clinic for recommended immunizations for your destination, and allow the necessary amount of time for all members of your travel party to receive them.
We checked with our medical insurance provider to find out what steps to take if we needed medical attention in China. We were given a contact number to call collect, and instructions for the documentation needed to file a claim. The provider asked for our dates of travel, hotel name, address, and phone number, and a second contact number (we gave them Holt’s office number in Oregon, since the staff there would know our itinerary in China).

We purchased travel insurance through Travelex (www.travelexinsurance.com). The family package we purchased was $198. We felt it was affordable considering the cost of an uninsured medical evacuation (up to $30,000!). It also included trip cancellation/delay, missed connection, itinerary change, accident medical expense, sickness medical expense, medical evacuation ($50,000), lost baggage, and baggage delay.

You will need to allow plenty of time to obtain your child’s US passport before travel. If she doesn’t already have one, she needs to appear in person with you when you apply. And if only one parent goes to apply, the other parent must sign a notarized consent for the passport application (there’s an official form for this on the State Department website, but I know parents who wrote their own consent statement and it was accepted--this might vary among passport offices so call yours ahead and check first).

I read the book Trouble Free Travel with Children: Helpful Hints for Parents on the Go by Vicki Lansky (ISBN #0-916773-15-9) from cover-to-cover and referred to it many times throughout our wait for referral and travel. It is full of wonderful, practical, easy suggestions for traveling with kids. Highly recommended reading!

We prepared for the worst--being separated from Shao--by creating an ID necklace for her. I typed information onto a piece of paper and had it translated into Chinese characters. Then I reduced the paper to business-card size and laminated it, English on one side and Chinese on the other. I punched a hole at one end using a lanyard string to make a necklace. She wore the necklace at all times, with the card tucked into her shirt. I made two of these necklaces in case she lost one. The information on the card read: “My name is (full adoptive name). I am 2.5 years old. My mother and father adopted me from Hunan in 2002. I live with them in Michigan USA. I am a United States citizen and speak English. I am in China with them now to adopt my baby sister. If I am separated from my parents, please call the White Swan Hotel (phone # and address) or the US Consulate (phone # and address).”

China travelers can use this website to find the address (in English and Chinese characters) of your hotel to make your own ID card: www.sinohotelguide.com/index.html Families can also purchase a nifty ID wristband from www.childsid.com (click on Child ID Products, then ID Inside Wristband).

We also made reduced, laminated copies of Shao’s adoption documents and carried them with us at all times, in the event someone suspected we weren’t her parents (imagine a Chinese toddler having a meltdown in a Chinese department store, screaming as she is led out of the store by adult Caucasians).
PACKING

Our packing list is at the end of this guide. Basically, we packed clothing for the 3 of us in one suitcase, packed baby supplies and Jin’s clothing in the second suitcase, and each of us carried a backpack. Shao and I also wore fanny packs. She kept tissues, lip balm, a mini flashlight, and other tiny treasures in hers.

When we arrived at our destination, we used one of our backpacks as a diaper bag for the girls on our daily excursions, and used the other backpack to carry our cameras, camcorder, umbrellas, and the documents needed for appointments.

[EMK Press note: It’s useful to carry enough diapers, wipes and a complete change of clothing for each child onto the aircraft. It’s a necessity also to carry bibs (either wipe-able / pack-able ones or disposable). In a confined space like an airplane, it’s amazing what children can do with food (and where it goes!). These bibs, clothes, and diapers, can be slipped in backpacks with the toys]

Check the climate of your destination before deciding on the clothing to pack. Our two weeks were spent in a very warm climate, making packing very simple! My husband and I packed 4-5 mix & match outfits each. For Shao, I chose 6 play outfits, then put each top/bottom/socks/matching hair accessories in a gallon Ziploc bag. That way, her clothing was organized and ready to go. We used local or hotel laundry services every few days. I also took a couple of her dresses for the adoption registration appointment and dinner at a nice restaurant. She wore one pair of sneakers for most of the trip and we packed a pair of sandals to go with the dresses or use as back-up shoes. Also, be sure to pack a sun hat for your toddler or preschooler if you will spend any part of your trip in a warm, sunny climate.

We packed 3 sets of toys/activities for Shao: one set for the flight over, one set for the stay in China (also knowing we would buy her some toys in there), and one set for the flight home. This way, the same toys didn’t lose their appeal. We packed the first set in her backpack, along with several snacks: Goldfish, fruit snacks, mini M & Ms in case we really needed to bribe her (!), raisins, juice boxes. We took an empty mini water bottle with a pop-top sipper in case she ran out of juice boxes and needed a refill from the flight attendant. And she was allowed to bring one favorite stuffed animal, along with the favorite panda blanket.

Every child is different, so the toys that worked for Shao might not work for your child. But without question, her favorite item for the flights was a set of Play-do (mini cans sold in the party favor section of stores) and Play-do “cookie cutters” to make shapes. She was entertained for long stretches at a time, flipping down the tray table and making shapes. Sticker books were another hit, as were lacing cards (which we only gave her on the
flight over, then promptly packed up in China because of the strings). Here is a list of the other toys/activities that worked well for Shao:

**IN-FLIGHT**
- Travel Magnadoodle (clipped to her backpack)
- Magnetic Teddy Bears from Toys R Us (magnet board with bears and their wardrobe)
- Color Wonders markers & paper
- “I Spy” toddler board books (can’t say enough wonderful things about them--we read them together and she loved finding the objects)
- Rub-with-a-Coin books (rub a page until the picture appears)
- Travel Colorforms (found them at Target, come in a small, flat plastic carrying case)
- Magnetic make-a-face board (you use a magnet-tipped pencil to make whiskers, eyebrows, etc. on a face, available from [www.leemagicpen.com](http://www.leemagicpen.com))

**HOTEL**
- *Oreo Matchin’ Middles* game (take the cookies out of the cube and pack them in a Ziploc; Shao played with them for hours and Jin liked them too; stack them, match the shapes, mix them up and guess the shape, etc.)
- Coloring books and crayons
- A set of 100 colored plastic links from the learning dept of an office store (not as big as baby links, not as small as paper clips; they come with a set of game suggestions like match the colors, count the colors, make a patterned link, etc., also order from [www.learninghorizons.com](http://www.learninghorizons.com) product # 12003)
- Glue stick, small craft foam shapes, and construction paper (to make cards to send from China)
- Paint-with-water books (found them at the Dollar Store; don’t forget to buy extra paintbrushes)
- Inflatable beach balls (1 for each daughter, they were quite a hit in the room and in the tub!)
- Parents Magazine card games (*Rhyme Time, Make A Word, Picture Pairs, Make A Match*, also from [www.learninghorizons.com](http://www.learninghorizons.com))

I also packed the *Wee Sing Children’s Songs and Fingerplays* book in my own backpack (didn’t bring the CD), which has the rhymes, tunes, and simple directions for dozens of fingerplays. It came in really handy many times during the trip when Shao was getting cranky or tired of her toys. Plus, it was wonderful to watch her “teach” her new baby sister some of the fingerplays! Be sure to learn some of them ahead of time so you’re not fumbling through the book while trying to make the hand motions.

I found some great travel toys at hospital gift shops, and our local Cracker Barrel restaurant gift shop (caters to travelers; I’m sure other chains around the country do too).

[EMK Press note: Many 3 and 4 year olds are fascinated by hand-held electronic games. A *Game-Boy* equipped with Rugrats, Sponge-Bob and Spirit games can buy you needed]
quiet time. The **personal TVs** located at each coach seat on some airlines also entertain small button-pushers for hours! **Card games** like *Go Fish* and *Hello Kitty Uno* work well, as does a simple string game like *Cat’s Cradle*. A **disposable camera** is also a terrific travel-project for a 3+ yr old, and can capture a true child’s perspective of the trip.

**TRAVEL**

We bought Shao her own plane seat since she was over 2, and we also made the decision to buy Jin her own seat. We tried using the bulkhead bassinet on Shao’s flight home, and it was an exhausting experience that I won’t describe here. Take my word for it and spring for the new baby’s seat!

**[EMK Press note: Shao was an experienced traveler. But for those kids who are not, when you go to the airplane toilets, be prepared to cuddle when you flush. The plane toilets BANG on flush and many kids are very frightened, even if they are just having a diaper change]**

We also invested in 2 Sit ‘N’ Strolls. The SNS is an amazing product that converts from stroller to car seat to booster seat. We bought ours from [http://travelstroller.twooffice.com/products384.html](http://travelstroller.twooffice.com/products384.html). I’ve also seen them at [www.onestepahead.com](http://www.onestepahead.com). Be sure to buy the optional sun canopy if you will spend any part of your trip in a warm, sunny climate.

I can’t say enough about what a wonderful product the Sit ‘N’ Stroll is. It was so convenient to wheel our daughters through the airport, right to their plane seats or very close to them, lift up the SNS with daughter still seated in it and fold the wheels, then strap it in like a car seat. In China, we wheeled them right up to the van/bus then held them on the seat beside us (seatbelts aren’t used in China). It was certainly more comfortable for them than sitting on our sweaty laps. We used them as booster seats many times when we ate at restaurants or when there was a shortage of high chairs. And unlike many strollers, the SNS allows for reliable one-handed steering (handy when you’re carrying luggage and pushing a stroller). Be sure to read the SNS owner’s manual thoroughly; the conversion mechanism requires a few specific handling techniques, like backing it onto a curb instead of tipping the front wheels up.

And in case of doubts about the practicality of taking the SNS (or any type of car seat) to a foreign country, allow me to explain how we accomplished that! Shao rode in hers to China, so it was with us on the plane. Make sure you take the SNS out of the box and check it over before packing it. It won't do you any good for the flight if you're missing something or don't know how to use it. Practice using it with your child riding in it. Try lifting the SNS and folding up the wheels with the child in it. We found it easiest to do this by holding the back of the SNS in our left hand and tipping it slightly backwards while folding up/deploying the wheels with our right hand (we’re both right-handed).
After you’ve checked the baby’s SNS, open the box again and put your name and the name/address of your first hotel on one of the inside top flaps. We put all our extra diapers inside the box for cushioning and to save room in our luggage. Tape the box shut and write your name, hotel name/address on the outside too.

All you have to do is get it to the airport. From there, check it with your luggage (it can count as your second piece, providing you only take one big suitcase for yourself). Kiss it goodbye until you arrive at your destination.

When you land, you stick it on a luggage cart along with your bag(s), and then the taxi/bus driver will help you get it stowed. When you get to the hotel, a bellhop will take all your stuff to the room for you. Take it out of the box and after your new baby seems comfortable with you, help her get used to being in it--feed her in it, read her books, play with toys, anything that makes it a fun place to be. Put the straps on her loosely at first, then gradually tighten them so she gets used to it. By the time you get on the plane to come home, she should be familiar enough with it not to be afraid of it, or of any car seat.

[EMK Press note: Kara’s stay was in one-stop Guangzhou. If you are scheduled to take multiple flights/trains within a country, another solution is to dispense with a stroller and use baby/child carriers and slings, like Kara also describes using below. Two exceptional sites for finding MANY appropriate carriers for both babies and good-sized toddlers are http://store.peppermint.com/baby-slings-by-name.html and www.thebabywearer.com]

When you're heading to the airport to come home, throw the box away and just keep the SNS on the taxi/bus seat beside you or put it in the trunk/storage space while you hold baby. When you get out at the airport, stick it on a luggage cart or use it to wheel baby through the airport; just don't check it with your luggage this time :)

One of the funniest moments we had in China was wheeling our two girls down through “The Places” in Guangzhou, and coming face-to-face with a British couple, their 3-year-old, and their new baby--both also riding in Sit ‘N’ Strolls!

We also took hip carriers for use when a stroller might not be practical--like visiting one of the giant, crowded department stores. We bought Jin’s Hip Baby II in Cool Max fabric from www.walkingrockfarm.com. It was very comfortable for parent and baby in the Guangzhou heat; Jin fell asleep in it many times. Since Shao was slightly bigger, we used the Hip Hammock (www.hiphammock.com), which carries kids up to 40 lbs. She was also very comfortable. We also used a toddler harness with Shao a few times when she was tired of riding in the Hip Hammock but when we needed to keep her attached to us. We got a few stares, but her safety was more important to us than what people thought of the harness.

Since Jin is from Guangdong province, our entire 2-week stay was at the White Swan Hotel in Guangzhou. We couldn’t have asked for a better plan as we traveled with two small children! We simply unpacked our bags and moved in for 2 weeks. We had a 2-bed room, with my husband and I sharing one, Shao sleeping in the other, and Jin in a crib.
Before meeting our baby, we took an overnight side trip on our own to visit her birth city. It was a wonderful 6-hour train ride through the Guangdong countryside, and a very special trip for our family. By this time, Shao had made it through the long flight over the top of the world, so the train ride was nothing! And in our “soft sleeper” private car, she slept most of the trip.

**HOTEL**

As much as possible, we tried to keep Shao on the kind of daily schedule she was used to at home. Sometimes we couldn’t because of adoption activities. She adapted to the time change quickly, probably because we landed in China at night, went right to bed, then woke up on China time.

We participated in all of our travel group’s activities. Thankfully both daughters stayed healthy. We made sure that wherever we went, we restocked our backpack/diaper bag for the needs of both girls. We were especially concerned with Shao drinking enough in the Guangzhou heat, but with cold apple juice available at 7-11 she was fine.

[**EMK Press note:** Bring a canister of powdered Tang or Kool-Aid to add to bottled water if your kids aren’t H2O drinkers, and you are away from your hotel for the day. Also, Chinese water comes in handy sport-top bottles, so even babies can use them. If your child is picky about food, then quickly locate a local store and let them choose from crackers, fruit and local candies. Stores like these also carry local rice powder baby foods, which are probably more like the “milk” your new baby was given in her SWI. These rice foods can easily be made up in the hotel using cooled and boiled water. Packing a few plastic spoons and forks can be helpful while eating “on the road” or in off-the-path towns.

Make sure you carry lots of little packets of tissues in case you visit places and need to use the toilet…. the Chinese bathrooms don’t often provide it! Carry wipes too, either your own or a Chinese brand. Little packs are handy for the daily trips in China, and these can be found in the local stores]

We made it a point for each of us to spend time alone with Shao every day. It might be a long walk around the White Swan, time without Jin in the Swan Room, going to a shop and choosing a new toy or clothing, going to get ice cream, etc. We made a big deal out of taking another “red couch” photo, sitting her in the exact same spot she was in as a baby among her orphanage-mates the previous year.

Before meeting Jin, we talked with Shao about how Jin might be afraid of us at first, so we wouldn’t want to hug her or kiss her right away. She seemed to understand, but as soon as Jin was placed in my arms, Shao planted a huge kiss right on her lips! Jin reacted with a beautiful smile, and quickly warmed up to all 3 of us.
We didn’t really have major jealousy issues in China. That didn’t start until we got home, and Shao realized that Jin was permanent! I think our pre-travel discussions during the 11 months we waited for Jin really did “sink in”, so that Shao was prepared for the adoption trip.

In summary, taking Shao with us was a decision we’ve never regretted. As miraculous as an adoption trip already is, it was made even more magical by having our whole family together as we met our new baby and brought her home. We think having another child with us played a big part in Jin’s quick acceptance of us. And while we realize that at 2.5, Shao might not remember the China trip, she will know that Jin has been with us ever since she can remember. And we think someday she will treasure the pictures of her meeting her baby sister in China, and holding her for the first time. In fact, she does still talk about parts of the trip, so it’s possible she will carry those memories with her always.

PART II

KARA POST’S ADOPTION TRIP PACKING LIST
Questions? Write to Kara: postfarm@direcway.com

I’ve posted our packing list below. Feel free to forward this information to anyone you think might be helped by our experience. It’s our way of “paying it forward” to thank everyone who helped us during our adoptions…

We took two large suitcases (each measuring 62 linear inches, the maximum allowed by airlines), and each of us carried a backpack. I wore a fanny pack to use as a purse.

My husband’s backpack carried our electronic equipment; mine carried our documents. We both took “comfort” items in the backpacks too. We checked the new baby’s Sit ‘N’ Stroll (info below) in its box as a piece of luggage on the way over. On the way home, we bought a lap ticket for baby for the short flight from Guangzhou to Hong Kong, and gate-checked the Sit ‘N’ Stroll (we took a lawn-type garbage bag to put it in for protection during the flight). We picked it up at the gate in Hong Kong, then she rode in it in her own plane seat for the rest of the flights home. We folded and packed a small diaper bag to use on the plane on the way home. You won’t want to take any more luggage than that, so you have your hands free to manage baby and luggage in crowded airports!

ELECTRONICS
Flashlight & batteries (came in handy for checking on her if she stirred during night)
Electric current converter/plug adapter kit (220 volt AC/50 Hz for China)
Camera/extra batteries/ lots of film (we used 20 rolls for a 35 mm camera)
Digital camera/batteries/cards
Camcorder/batteries/charger/videotapes
Calculator (for currency conversion and bargaining with shop owners)
Travel alarm clock
Mini-recorder/tapes/batteries (to tape record guide’s remarks as you tour, record conversation with orphanage staff, ambient sounds of China—we also recorded our dogs’ barking and played it in the hotel room so she would get used to hearing them)

[EMK Press note: if you bring your laptop, remember battery/plugs/phone jacks and a memory key. Keep travel/adoption documents on laptop; if stolen or lost, key can transfer memory to another computer with printer and presto… remember also to get either a roaming server or use a web-based email account like Yahoo]

**DOCUMENTS** (make copies of everything, put one set in each carry-on)

- All documents recommended by your agency
- List of Western-trained doctors in your destination country (available from travel clinics—your China facilitator may be a better source)
- Drivers license
- Passport (several copies of each person’s)
- Credit cards (call the issuer to make sure it can be used in your destination country, and notify them of your trip so they don’t think it’s been stolen and put a freeze on purchases)
- Phone cards (call to check usage in your destination country)
- Phone/fax/email addresses for:

  - *Friends / family*
  - *Pediatrician (get emergency # and email address too)*
  - *Insurance company*
  - *Airline customer service*
  - *Travel agent*
  - *Travelers checks*
  - *Social worker*
  - *Attorney*
  - *Consulate of your Nationality*
MEDICINE - MOM & DAD

small first aid kit
prescriptions (with a written prescription, in original pill bottles)

RX:

- 2-week supply (per adult) of Cipro (strong broad-spectrum antibiotic)

OTC:

- Bacitracin or Neosporin or triple antibiotic ointment for cuts, scrapes, scratches
- Cold (decongestant & antihistamine)
- Cough/cough drops
- Flu
- Allergies
- Nausea
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Gas relief
- Headache
- Vitamins
- Sleep aids
- Airborne effervescent tablets, to be taken before flights
  (to help build immunity against colds)

MEDICINE - BABY & TODDLER

See Dr. Deb Borchers’ “Open Letter to Pediatricians” and “Medical Supplies List” on the FCC homepage (www.fwcc.org) for prescription meds to request from your doctor:

RX:

- Antibiotics for baby and for toddler
- Acticin cream for scabies-- 2 tubes in case you get scabies and need to treat yourself
- Tube of Elidel for eczema, common in Asian babies

OTC:

- Medicine dropper
- Thermometer (digital ear/armpit/rectal combo)
- Mylcon gas drops
- Kaoelectrolyte powder packets (for dehydration caused by diarrhea)
- Little Tummies laxative (for constipation--usually brought on by stress and change in feeding)
- Tylenol infant drops (4-5 bottles)
- Tylenol infant cough/cold drops (3 bottles)
- Anbesol Teething Gel or Hyland’s Homeopathic Teething Tablets or Ointment
- Children’s Benadryl (for allergic reactions) Beware of using Benadryl as a sleep aid; some children have the exact opposite reaction and become very active)
- Hydrocortisone cream (for really itchy spots)
- Lice kit
- Nystatin (Rx) or Lotrimin (for diaper yeast infection)
- Desitin Creamy diaper rash ointment
- Similasan homeopathic ear pain relief drops
- Little Noses saline drops (to relieve stuffy noses, soften mucus)
- Liquid multi-vitamin with iron (we used PolyViSol brand)

**EMK Press note:** vitamins or formula with iron can cause extreme constipation- and unhappiness- in some newly adopted babies who are unused to it; consider beginning vitamins/formula without iron in-country, and switching to those with added iron once back at home

**There is a great new little travel med kit called the New Parents Survival Kit by Vetco Pharmaceuticals (manufacturers of the “Little Tummies,” “Little Noses,” etc. products). You can find it at www.amazon.com for $19.99.**

**TOILETRIES**

- Shampoo/conditioner
- Soap (supplied by hotels but I like my own)
- Lotion
- Deodorant/antiperspirant
- Glasses/contacts & extra sets/solution
- Hair styling products
- Hair dryer--leave it at home; all the rooms have them
- Makeup
- Shaving supplies
- Toothbrush/floss/toothpaste
- Antibacterial hand gel
- Feminine hygiene supplies
- Pocket packs of tissues (you may need them for any restrooms outside the hotels)
- Nail clippers
- Q-tips
- Lip balm
- Sunscreen
FOOD - MOM & DAD

Don’t overdo it. Maybe take granola bars and peanut butter / cheese crackers.

FOOD - BABY

- Cheerios (empty BIG box into gallon ziplocs, take small container for diaper bag)
- Kix cereal (ditto on the ziplocs)
- Animal crackers
- Teddy Grahams
- Goldfish crackers
- Prune juice or jars of baby food prunes (to relieve constipation)
- Formula: either take enough for the whole trip, or enough to switch baby from her current formula to US formula while you’re there, or don’t take any and instead use her current formula--be sure to buy some for the flight home and enough to use at home for a week. Talk to your pediatrician and follow his/her plan for formula recommendations.
- Rice cereal (just a couple of small boxes to get started--it’s easy to find) plus sugar cubes or sugar packets (to sweeten formula as the Chinese orphanages do-you can begin to wean baby off this during your trip)

CLOTHING -- MOM & DAD

- 4-5 “mix & match” outfits--don’t over-pack, and budget $50-100/week for laundry (you probably won’t spend that much, but just in case); depending on climate of baby’s residence, you may need to take a sweater or sweatshirt for layering, along with a jacket or coat.
- Swimsuit
- PJs
- 5-6 pairs of socks with good cushioning
- 5-6 pair underwear
- 1 pair comfortable shoes

China travelers won’t need to dress up for the Consulate appointment in Guangzhou, since it’s now a “group swear“ and not an interview anymore. You might want to dress nicely for your adoption registration in your daughter’s province. An outfit that packs small and easy is best, and try to avoid taking a pair of shoes you’ll just wear for this one appointment.

CLOTHING – TODDLER

- Depending on climate: sweater, jacket, raincoat, snowsuit, hat /mittens
- 6 play outfits (put each top/bottom/socks/matching hair accessories in a gallon Ziploc bag with underpants or diapers)
- 2 dresses
- PJ’s
- Sandals / boots (seasonal)
- Sneakers
- Sun hat
- Swimsuit

**CLOTHING -- BABY**

- Check on your destination country’s customs; for example, white is the color of mourning in China
- Depending on climate: sweater, jacket, bunting, snowsuit, hat/mittens
- Diapers: Huggies Ultratrims—we took the “Mega” package of 120 per daughter and came back with a lot. We figured 7 diapers a day and that was pretty accurate.

[EMK Press note: Chinese brand disposable diapers, of varying quality, are readily available in most cities of China. Pampers can also be found]

- 8-9 baby outfits in 3 different sizes so you have at least 3-4 that fit
- 1 “arrival” outfit for when you land at home
- Sleep & Plays (long sleeved, long pants w/feet—we took 5 and that was plenty for pajamas)
- Onesies (5-6 in 2-3 different sizes, good for layering in cold weather)
- 8-10 pairs of socks in different sizes (baby will pull them off, lose them, etc.)
- Shoes (don’t bother—wait and buy them in your destination country)
- Sun hat

**MISC--MOM & DAD**

- Antibacterial wipes
- Mosquito repellent wipes
- Shout wipes
- Freezer weight gallon Ziplocs (pack parents’ and baby toiletries in them in case of leaks; they will come in handy for other things too)
- Small Ziplocs (you’ll use them for all kinds of stuff)
- Diaper disposal bags (there aren’t disposers in the hotel rooms, and a dirty diaper at 8 PM will really stink up the room by the time housekeeping arrives in the morning)
- Fanny pack (use for a purse/wallet)
- Books (paperbacks you can give away)
- Journal & pens
- White-Out pens for paperwork corrections (EVERYONE in our group borrowed mine!)
- Rubber bands
✓ Small “briefcase” thermos (for keeping water hot to make formula when you’re on the go)
✓ Liquid dish soap (small bottle—we used the whole thing washing bottles & baby dishes in the bathroom sink)
✓ Bubble wrap (for packing souvenirs—unroll it and pack it flat on the bottom of the suitcase)
✓ Scotch tape
✓ Duct tape (bought a “travel” sized roll—perfect)
✓ Mailing tube (for packing papercuts, scrolls, calligraphy, etc.)
✓ Insulated bottle holder (to keep an unfinished bottle warm)
✓ Inflatable neck pillows for plane
✓ Pocket notebook (for jotting notes about pictures as you take them)
✓ Leatherman— a multi-tool gadget (do NOT put in carry-on luggage!)—this item came in very handy
✓ Travel umbrellas (very glad we had them)
✓ Woolite (small bottle for sink laundry)
✓ Fabric softener sheets (for sink laundry—put one in the water and it makes clothing soft)
✓ Small diaper bag to use on the plane on the way home (something that folds easily into the suitcase on the way over)
✓ Sewing kit (we did use it for buttons)
✓ Bungee cords (great for jam-packed luggage)
✓ Plastic garbage bags (we took a few—came in handy for different things)
✓ American flag (we took a small one for her to hold for pictures when we landed in the US and again when we finally arrived home).
✓ Expandable zippered file (available at office supply stores—use this to organize your adoption documents and pack it in your carry-on)
✓ Baseball cap/sun hat

MISC—BABY

✓ Baby wipes (at least 200 per child; we like Huggies “Natural”—the local wipes weren’t very durable)
✓ 4 regular baby bottles—with flat-topped Playtex “fast flow” nylon nipples; you will probably need to cut the hole bigger since many institutionalized babies are used to a fast flow
✓ Sippy cups for older babies (we took 2 Avent Transitional Cups with the white spout; our baby wasn’t ready for them yet but started on them soon after we got home)
✓ Snugli, Hip Hammock, Hip Baby, or other brand baby carrier
✓ Sit ‘N’ Stroll OR at least take a car seat and umbrella stroller. The Sit ‘N’ Stroll or car seat can be left in its box and checked as luggage on the flight over, then you can throw away the box in China. If you buy a Sit ‘N’ Stroll, be sure to purchase the optional sun canopy. Carseats aren’t always readily available overseas, and if you do find them, they might not be FAA-approved for flight.
Toys—rattles, teething toys, board books, stacking cups, plastic links
Plastic bowls for rice cereal (we took 3 little ones with lids, perfect)
Large & small spoons (some babies will be on strictly formula diets, even at 12 months, so you might need to slowly introduce solid foods to her)
Baby nail clippers
Eucerin lotion for really dry skin (DON’T take any of the “pink” lotions—many institutionalized babies have dry, sensitive skin and the scent causes rashes. Take 2-3 bottles and use it liberally. Unscented Aveeno products are OK too)
Aveeno Oatmeal Bath packets for babies’ sensitive, dry skin
Nasal aspirator (suction bulb—the rubbery kind with narrow end; fits into tiny noses)
Bibs—don’t take cloth; use vinyl “wipe-off” bibs or Bibsters disposables. You’ll be washing cloth bibs constantly!
2-3 receiving blankets (use for changing pads, swaddling, bedding, play area)
Brush/comb if your baby has hair!
Baby shampoo/soap (the mild Aveeno products are terrific)
Formula travel container—available in the baby supply department; this is a great gadget with 3 separate compartments for storing servings of formula. There is an opening on the top for pouring one serving at a time into a bottle. Just add water from your thermos, and you’re set.

GIFTS FOR ORPHANAGE STAFF (CHINA ADOPTIONS)
The orphanage director may be a man or a woman, and you can figure on one nanny for each baby in your travel group. You can either buy a “group” gift that can be shared among nannies (like a box of candy) or wrap gifts for individual nannies. Consider copying your daughter’s referral picture and the Chinese characters for her name, and taping these on the back of a postcard from your city that can be used as a gift card. This way the staff will know which gifts are from your family. Wrap in red/gold paper or gift bags (“lucky” colors in China). Try to avoid products that say “Made in China.”

Women:
jelly beans or other non-melting candy
hand lotion
lipstick
hair ornaments
adoption jewelry

Men:
sports team hats / t-shirts
Leatherman-type tools (small multi-tool gadget)
flashlights
pen sets
stationery sets
NOTE: Don’t wrap gifts before packing them--airline screeners will open them. We used **Pack-Mates** for most of our clothing (clear bags that you roll in order to remove air from clothing so it packs flat; they really work!). Call 800-432-7517 to order Pack-Mates by phone and receive the “adoption special” of $2 each instead of $7.50 (minimum order 15 bags, special not available online). We packed almost everything else in freezer weight gallon Ziplocs so that if our luggage was selected for screening, no one’s hands would be directly touching our personal stuff!

Questions? Write Kara at postfarm@direcway.com

**Resources**

Magellan’s Travel Supply- [www.magellans.com](http://www.magellans.com)

Travelsmith- [www.travelsmith.com](http://www.travelsmith.com)

Travel Products- [www.travelproducts.com](http://www.travelproducts.com)

Make Your Own ID card- [www.sinohotelguide.com/index.html](http://www.sinohotelguide.com/index.html)

Child’s ID wristband- [www.childsid.com](http://www.childsid.com) (click on Child ID Products, then ID Inside Wristband)

Packmates- Call 800-432-7517 to order Pack-Mates by phone and receive the “adoption special” of $2 each instead of $7.50 (minimum order 15 bags, special not available online)

Carry On Only listserv [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CarryOnOnly/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CarryOnOnly/) (see additional Packing Lists in COO Links section; non-list members may browse Links)

**Diaper Backpacks**

Lands End [www.landsend.com](http://www.landsend.com)

REI [www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com)

Kelty [www.kelty.com](http://www.kelty.com)

Eagle Creek [www.eaglecreek.com](http://www.eaglecreek.com)

One Step Ahead [www.onestepahead.com](http://www.onestepahead.com)

**Carriers / Stroller**

The Baby Wearer www.thebabywearer.com

Int’l Child Carriers http://store.peppermint.com/baby-slings-by-name.html

Tough Traveler Backpack Child Carrier (can carry a toddler) www.toughtraveler.com


Hip Hammock Carrier www.hiphammock.com

**Toddler / Preschooler Travel Games**

Travel Games & Trip Ideas for Toddlers www.momsminivan.com (Great ideas!!)

Fun, Educational Toys www.learninghorizons.com

**Books**

*Trouble Free Travel with Children: Helpful Hints for Parents on the Go* by Vicki Lansky

*Gutsy Mamas: Travel Tips and Wisdom for Mothers on the Road* by Marybeth Bond (just for fun!)

*I’m a Big Sister* by Joanna Cole

*Up, Up, and Away Susie* by Julie Monahan

**Author:** Kara Post, a former K-12 music teacher, has two beautiful daughters from China, ages 3 yrs and 18 months. Both girls were adopted through Holt International Children’s Services (www.holtintl.org). Kara and her husband, Mike, founded and now chair a regional adoption support group in Michigan, and facilitate monthly events for domestic and international adoptive families.