

# Travel Writer and Mom of 3: Tips for Stress-Free Travel With Teens

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The author said that traveling with her teens (not shown) can sometimes be tricky, but she's found a few ways to make the experience better for everyone. da-kuk/Getty Images

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- Traveling with teenagers requires more collaboration and flexibility than when they were younger.
- One-on-one trips help tailor experiences to each teen's interests and reduce sibling conflict.
- Flexible itineraries and teen-chosen activities have made our trips more enjoyable.

I think most parents would agree that teenagers aren't always the easiest [people to travel with](#). Time together as a family can be tough when teens want to sleep in and stay on their phones 24/7. A trip to the Caribbean can somehow be met with long sighs and eye rolls when they feel like they'll be missing friends and activities back home.

As a [travel writer](#), I've had many opportunities to travel with my three kids. During the elementary school years, I could book whatever I wanted and even surprise my kids with a last-minute trip. They were always delighted, and we usually had a great time. Now that they are all teenagers (ages 15, 17, and 18), I've realized I need to get more of their buy-in upfront. These are some of the ways I've altered my travel now that my [kids are older](#).



The author, shown with one of her sons, says she tries to make sure her kids have a chance to choose activities they want to do while the family travels together.

## Individual trips offer the perfect opportunity to tailor the trip to their interests

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While I've traveled a ton with all three of my kids, I find the sweet spot when traveling with teens is [individual trips](#). This way, I can tailor an itinerary to one kid's interests, and we eliminate the sometimes-tricky sibling dynamics.

My middle kid loves fishing, but it can be challenging to do with kids who are more averse to spending the whole day on the water. So, I look for individual trips I can take with him that include fishing on the itinerary. On one of our trips, we even spent a few hours at a fish hatchery learning

about the salmon spawn. This would have been torture for my other two kids, but my son still talks about it today.



The author has found that flexibility is key to traveling with her children as they get older.

## **I let my kids pick out activities they want to do**

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When I have all my kids with me on a trip, I get their input on what they want to do. We took a trip to Paris a few years ago, and while a [visit to the Louvre](#) was on pretty much every Paris itinerary, we decided to skip it. Instead, we spent the day thrift shopping and visiting a wax museum. I just knew that art museums aren't really their thing at this point in life, and they wouldn't do well with the crowds at the Louvre. I didn't need to push it, and now it gives them an excuse to return to Paris one day when they are interested in seeing the masterpieces.

Getting their opinions on activities helps get their buy-in and gives them something to look forward to. If they know we'll be zip-lining or snorkeling later in the day, an early-morning wake-up doesn't seem so harsh.

## A flexible itinerary allows for last-minute changes

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Another way my [travel has changed](#) with teenagers is that I avoid a packed itinerary. Leaving the itinerary flexible lets us start the day slowly and provides everyone with some much-needed downtime.



The author says she's OK with getting a later start to the day when traveling with her teens, since she knows they like to sleep in.

I've also learned that we don't have to be together every minute of the trip for it to be a fun family vacation. When we're staying at an [all-inclusive property](#), there are often opportunities for part of our group to participate in activities while the rest can opt out. Sometimes my oldest will choose to sleep in and skip breakfast. These little breaks give us time to reset, and then we enjoy our time together even more.

## **I throw expectations out the window when traveling with teens**

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Traveling with teenagers has taught me to loosen my grip on the "perfect" itinerary and focus instead on connection. I've learned that giving my three teenagers a voice and meeting them where they are makes all the difference. The trips may look different now, but the shared experiences are what keep us exploring together.