

# "We soared through our first flight"

MUST read!



*"Ready, jet set, go!"*

Justin and I'd travelled the world before becoming parents and we wanted to share our globe-trotting love with Levi.

Taking to the air for the first time with a tot in tow, **CAROLINE JAMES** had a smooth experience thanks to some easy tips and tricks

when our daughter, Levi, was born in June 2010, the brakes were planted on our offshore exploits for a while. We were too busy getting our heads around new parenthood (the ultimate seat-of-your-pants adventure!).

Three years on and it was time to treat ourselves to a well-deserved getaway.

After booking the spontaneous tickets on Australia Day for flights in September, I used the months leading up to the trip to introduce the fun of flying on a big jet plane to Levi, including countless hours talking about planes, looking at

planes and pretending to be planes, hoping my unbridled enthusiasm for all things winged may rub off.

It did. By the time September rolled around, my little girl was as excited about getting to the airport as I was. She knew the names for all the main parts and people of the airport ('terminals', 'baggage handlers', 'tarmac', 'runway') and could even spot a 'flying kangaroo'!

## SNAKES ON (AND OFF) A PLANE

On the day of our big trip, we arrived early so we were among the first passengers to check-in and clear security and immigration. This set a positive tone for our flying experience, as it helped keep us big flyers relaxed and unrushed and gave Levi ample time to take it all in at her own pace. I adored watching her wide-eyed wonder at the planes coming and going and really seeing a busy international airport through a child's eyes. It was magic.

By the time we heard our boarding call, Levi couldn't wait to get on that plane. And because I'd bought our little her own tiny travel bag to carry on her back, to give her a small taste of independent travel,

she strode on that jet like she'd done it all before. Inside her bag we'd packed a water bottle, some small story books, a favourite soft toy and a couple of hidden jelly snakes.

Now, a word on these snakes: I'm not a big fan of bagged lollies in general, but there are times when they can be your best parental friends, and this

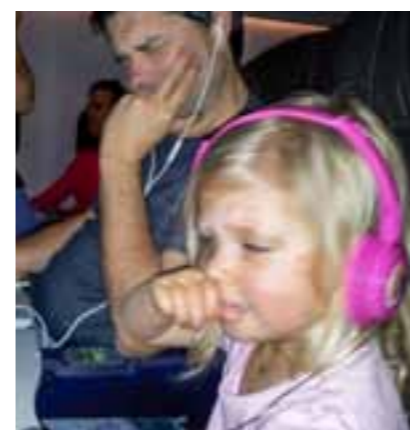
includes time spent at airports and in the air! A well-timed sweet discovery helped

*"I adored watching her wide-eyed wonder at the planes and seeing a busy airport through a child's eyes. It was magic"*



*"Sky-high excitement"*

After many prep talks, our little girl was as confident as a well-seasoned traveller when we arrived at the airport.



*"Digital distraction"*

While not something I resort to every day, several hours of digital entertainment kept Levi happy.

us through some of the more challenging parts of travelling with a youngster, providing a delicious diversion for Levi when we hit a long queue, needed to wait around, and for those 'stay seated until the seatbelt sign is turned off' moments. At these times, snakes rocked.

## TAKE OFF!

Our flight wasn't full, so we ended up with a fourth and vacant seat beside our three. What luck! When Levi got tired a few hours into the six-hour flight, she stretched out between us and it was lovely having a little extra space for our own limbs.

Our flight departed on time at 6:30pm and take off was smooth. I talked Levi through the unfamiliar plane noises to keep her relaxed: "Wow, can you hear the engines?", "Listen to the wheels tucking into the plane's tummy", "Did you hear the pilot's voice?". She stayed calm and loved it all.

*"I'm not a big fan of bagged lollies in general, but there are times when they can be your best parental friends!"*

I didn't want Levi's ears to give her grief as the plane took off, so we chewed on carrot sticks and took sips of water until the plane levelled out after five minutes. And once the seatbelt sign switched off, I introduced her to the wonders of a plane bathroom. This trip to the loo gave us an excuse to stretch our legs and get Levi familiar with her surroundings before it was time to bunker down.

## LET'S DO IT AGAIN

So how do you keep a young, naturally energetic child entertained when she's strapped in one spot for a few wakeful in-flight hours? You bring in the big guns – food, drinks and little surprises!

Ordinarily I don't like TV as a pacifier, but I quickly saw the merit of packing a portable entertainment option if you're flying more than an hour and there's no in-flight entertainment service. My darling Justin had loaded some favourite kids' shows and interactive games onto a spare mobile phone and we'd bought a pair of fun, hot-pink headphones for Levi. During the early part of our flight, before the sleep

fairies found our little one soaring above Australia, I was amazed by how easy it was to keep Levi occupied with the help of *Rob the Robot* and friends.

Friends who'd flown to Hawaii with three-year-old twins had also told me, "Pack loads of finger foods, because there's something about altitude that makes littlies happy to regularly graze." They

were right. Intermittently I offered mini snack packs of sultanas, apple pieces,

beans, carrot sticks, crackers with cheese and an occasional jelly snake. Everything was eaten without any complaint.

I'd bought a couple of small 'surprises' along with me as well, which I hid in my carry-on bag. They included a mini colouring book with crayons, some stickers and a travel-sized magnetic drawing table, which I revealed at my discretion during the trip, saving a couple for our return journey. Again, they were all well received and helped my little traveller stay happy and engaged.

I'm glad to say there were no mid-air meltdowns for us and we touched down safely in Denpasar for our fabulous family holiday in the tropics. Now I can't wait to book my next offshore adventure with my pint-sized flying buddy, who has revealed she's just as big of a plane-lover as her mother. Italy, anyone?!



*"Sunny skies ahead"*

We had such a great family holiday in Bali (including the trip there!) that we're sure we'll hop back on a plane soon.

Pictures Reader's own