

Ep #157: Traveling With Toddlers vs. Teens on Points and Miles



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

Alex Payne, Jess Field, and Pam Lorg

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Alex: Whether you have toddlers or teens or both, there are things to consider when it comes to travel. Listen in as we share some of the challenges, tips, and destination recommendations for traveling with toddlers and teens.

Welcome to *Points Talk*®. We are three moms who've discovered how to leverage credit card welcome offers to get hundreds of thousands of dollars of travel expenses for nearly free. We've used credit card points and miles to take vacations to places like Hawaii, Paris, Greece, Maldives, Japan, and so much more. And the best part? We each still have 800 plus credit scores. Imagine being able to take the vacation of your dreams for nearly free. It's totally possible, and we're here to show you how.

Alex: Hey, I'm Alex.

Jess: And I'm Jess. Let's talk points. Today, a familiar face or voice is back, depending on where you're listening or watching. Our copy editor, Traci, is here, and we are going to talk about the differences between traveling with toddlers and traveling with teens.

Unfortunately, all three of us have experience with both of these now. And so, we can weigh in on when it's easier to travel with toddlers, when it's easier to travel with teens, and the pros and cons of each.

And so, Traci, why don't we kick it off with how travel changes with toddlers and teens, the biggest tips that you have for both age groups, destinations that we've all enjoyed with toddlers, that we've enjoyed with teens, maybe that could work for both? Because with Alex, she has four boys, and she has a wide range of ages that she has to accommodate. And so it's a little bit trickier for her. So, Traci, let's kick it off.

Traci: Yeah, I think Alex's situation is so different from mine because I have twins and so they've always just been the same, so I could treat them the same in terms of what they're up for. But I think it's really important to talk about how you can travel with toddlers and what the advantages are to that, because there are some. A lot of people might think I'm never doing that, I can't go anywhere until they're older.

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But I think, and especially with miles and points, you don't have to have a perfect trip when you're traveling with your toddlers. You can just have a trip. It's still memories. I think it opens up opportunities for people to go do stuff. And maybe it's not the dream trip that you want to do when they're much older, but it's still a fun time, and it's still having an impact on their development.

So, I think one of the most fun things that I carry with me from when our kids were toddlers is just seeing everything through their eyes because if it's especially if it's a place I've been before, like I'm taking them somewhere I'm familiar with, so I'm not as anxious. It's so fun to see their eyes light up when they see a real train. Stuff they don't see every day.

And then it's also really good because, especially my husband and I, we have a tendency to travel go, go, go, pack it all in. And with little kids, you can't do that. So you need to slow down. You spend a lot more time at playgrounds than you might think. And you have to stop for nap time, or you have to go stop for bedtime.

And so it makes the whole, even though you're complicating it by having toddlers along with you, you're also decomplicating it because you're taking a breath and you have to slow down and walk slow because their legs are little or you're in the stroller or whatever. So I think those two things are really important.

And then, especially if you're an introvert like I am, having toddlers with you opens up conversation opportunities with locals to a crazy degree. It's so helpful because you have this built-in cute kid that people comment on, or the kid goes up and talks to someone because they're not at that age yet where they're stranger-shy. They'll just talk to anybody. And so you interact, you benefit from them. They make your trip better because you're interacting with more people, which I think is really fun.

And then also toddlers, just practical reasons. They're free on public transport, so that's pretty cheap. And sometimes there's other things that you get a little perk because you've got a kid with you. Like there's special airport security lines. Like in Istanbul, I remember seeing one of those, and I think Alex, you have seen some too, right?

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Alex: Yeah, when we, well, the best one was we went to Costa Rica for spring break. My youngest, he's five now, but he was four. And when I say the line was out the door, the line was literally out the door to go through immigration. And so, they were like, "Oh, you come to this line." And they put us in a line that was just for families, or you know, people with needing extra assistance, and we flew through immigration.

I was like, I remember texting my mom and Jess, and I was like, you guys, I'm going to need to borrow another toddler. I need to find somebody who has a toddler that I can travel with so we're not waiting in these long lines.

The same thing happened when we went to Amsterdam. They put us in a shorter line. When we were flying home from London, when we were going through security at the airport, they put us in a shorter line because we had young kids with us. So it's really nice.

I know Megan has mentioned this; she's had this happen to her a lot, too, where they go somewhere, and people are so nice when you have little kids. One, 'cause little kids are cute, but also it's, oh, we don't want this family to have to wait. Or like they've gone to hotels, and the hotels, I remember one time Megan said they just gave them free breakfast. They were like, "Oh, we're going to give, you guys have free breakfast every morning." And it wasn't part of her reservation or anything. So, I don't know, there are definitely some perks that come with traveling with little ones.

I think a huge one is they fly free till they're two years old. So nice. Like, I will say, it is nice when they turn two, and they have their own space, especially if you have a big two-year-old. But it is really cool to be like, all right, let's go see all these places while I don't have to pay for you. I know sometimes when you go internationally, you will have to pay like taxes and fees and things like that, but it can really save a lot.

Jess: It's like having a companion pass for every airline.

Alex: Yeah.

Traci: That's a good way to think of it.

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Jess: My biggest thing about traveling with toddlers, not even, I mean, toddlers, yes, but kids before they start school, is that you can travel at off-peak times and you don't have to worry about them missing school or missing their activities or having to make up their schoolwork. And so it was a lot easier to plan trips. You know, the older they get, the harder it is for them to miss school, catch up with all that homework, and everything. And so I do miss the days of being able to just book a trip and not have to look at a calendar and worry about things like that.

Traci: That is very true. Now my kids are annoyed if I ever want them to miss one day because they're like, I'm going to have to make up.

Jess: No, Molly's the same. She's, "I can't do that. I can't miss a day of school." And I'm, "Yes, you can." "It's going to be too much work."

Traci: If you have toddlers and you don't have older kids already, it's one of those things that you might not think about. Like, toddlers equals complicated, but older kids also equals complicated in certain ways. And so don't let that put you off. Just go for it.

And that kind of leads us into what are some of the challenges of flying with toddlers, and there are a lot, but they're all just logistical challenges. They're all things that you can sort of deal with, and they're also things that you deal with at home anyway. So it's, why not deal with them in a more glamorous place, like Paris

So nap time. I wouldn't normally build nap time into my travel itinerary unless I had a toddler that needed one because there would be a meltdown if I didn't let them sleep. So you build that into your time. You know, you need to go back to the hotel midday maybe.

What do you do after they go to bed? When our kids were little, a lot of the times we would actually just get a VRBO because then we could put them in a bedroom, close the door, and then we could still be awake and not have to hide under the covers on our phones in the dark and...

Jess: Yeah.

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Alex: You know, I remember vividly, I think it was Kai, who's my second youngest, when he started climbing out of a pack and play when we were traveling, I was, "That's it. We're never going anywhere again." We, what do we do? There was a couple times, even just going to my mom's house, where he was climbing out, and it was, "Oh my gosh, it's 3:00 AM. I'm never going to get to sleep."

But I just want to say for you parents that are in that phase, it doesn't last forever. It goes and you just got to do what you got to do to survive that, but it goes by fast. And then it's, then it's fine.

Traci: And they have things now that I don't think they had when my kids were little. Like things you can take in the hotel rooms that darken the crib area, and like that would have been...

Alex: Yeah, the slumber pod. We had one of those, and it is really nice because then you aren't doing the whole, oh, let's climb under. It kind of gives them their own room in the hotel room.

Traci: Yeah. So that's pretty cool. I mean, it's really neat when these products show up, and you have something to deal with that issue. And so, okay.

So tantrums and meltdowns and what do you do with embarrassing toddler behavior? You just roll with it. I, we have fond family memories of when my son just had enough at Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland, and he just stopped right in the middle of the path, right in the middle of all the people, and just pout, and like. And but it was, it's a funny memory now.

Alex: And you're never going to see those people ever again in your life. And you will have that tantrum walking through Walmart. It's going to happen wherever you are. I love how you said it's, have a tantrum in Paris is more glamorous or whatever. That's what I always said, too. I'm like, it's going to be chaotic at home or chaotic in Hawaii. I'd rather have chaos in Hawaii.

Traci: Exactly.

Jess: Well, it's funny. Traci and I were just in Portugal together, and we saw several kids having tantrums and meltdowns, and their parents yelling at them in

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French or Portuguese or and I was, Okay, it's not just the American kids that are losing their crap at these sites. It's everyone.

Traci: And it's, I mean, when you look, and when you think about it from their perspective, you look at them with sympathy, right? I was like, Oh, I get it. No one's going to be judging you. They get it. It's just kid behavior everywhere, and it's universal. So don't let that sort of stop you if you're worried about that.

I will say that there's a lot of gear that you usually have to worry about packing with toddlers, if you bring strollers or car seats or your baby carrier, and being prepared for any eventuality, and like, I need to have this, and I need what if this breaks and what if I run out of this? I would say, there's ways around that.

There's things you can do. You can rent equipment when you get there. You can plan your trip around not needing a car seat, go to London, and just ride the tube. You don't need a car seat.

Alex: Yeah, that's what we did when we just went to Amsterdam and London. We didn't bring a car seat or a stroller. And let me tell you, it was so nice having fewer things. And that's not going to work for everybody, but for us, it's like my husband doesn't mind putting our kid, he was four, putting him on his shoulders. That's fine. Holding his hand and having him walk at times. So, if it was just me and I didn't have him with me, I would have brought the stroller 'cause I'm not, I'm not going to be able to carry him around the country. But it works for some people.

Traci: And you could also plan on, plan on running out of the special pouches that your kids have at home and get the local pouches. Like they have that. And that's kind of part of the adventure, going to a grocery store and seeing what substitutes and how do other kids in other countries do these things.

Alex: Can I say that's actually one of my kids' favorite things when we do travel, is going to a different grocery store and seeing what they have.

Traci: We do that everywhere we go.

Alex: Even as teens, they still love it. So it works for both.

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Traci: Yes, yes. It's so much fun to go and just see what all the differences are, and sometimes you can find really cool candy or different fruit where they're not used to seeing it, and it's really fun. So I would say, don't think you have to pack every single thing for every eventuality. It's okay if you, like we switched, I think when our kids were a little bit older, we switched to one of those bubble bums, where you, it's an inflatable.

Jess: Yeah. We had that too.

Traci: We wouldn't have used it at home, but for the limited time we were there driving around, it worked. Be flexible with that stuff. Don't think you have to do it exactly the way you do it at home, 'cause that's part of the fun. So, yeah, there's also, how do you keep kids entertained? How do you keep kids quiet? How do you keep kids happy when you are traveling?

I would say, I tend to be very, very type A about all that. And so I will pack a tablet, headphones, backup headphones, backup batteries, backup wipes, backup outfits. Just sort of...

Jess: Yeah.

Alex: You had me at backup headphones, Traci, because let me tell you, my pet peeve is when there's a kid listening, and they don't have headphones.

Jess: Or an adult. I don't discriminate. I don't like anyone listening without headphones.

Alex: I just say that because the last time I was flying, I forget where, I think it was when, somewhere in Europe, and we had just had our red-eye flight, and it was our next one, and I was so tired. And there was a kid without headphones playing some game with the most annoying sound. And I was, "Please, flight attendant, please come tell them." Because I'm not the kind of person who's going to complain. I'm not going to say anything to that parent or the kid. I'm just going to deal with it in silence, but I was, "Please, flight attendant, come tell them." I think eventually they did, but it was like three-fourths of the flight was over.

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Traci: I've also been on the plane before where I've seen the parent was with their toddler, and they were trying to use the in-flight entertainment, and it wasn't working. And we, you guys know from your flights, from lots of flights, sometimes it doesn't work. So you should pack to entertain your kids as if you're assuming the in-flight entertainment doesn't work.

Alex: Go like you're flying Southwest.

Jess: Or Iberia.

Alex: Yeah. And you might not have chargers. There's planes still, like when we flew to Costa Rica, we, the Southwest plane didn't have chargers for a five-hour flight, and I was a little peeved by that 'cause I was like, well, I'm going to need my phone to get us to the airport, I mean, to the hotel once we land. So I was like, well, I guess I'm going to sit here. I was just raw dogging that flight. The kids had stuff. We were prepared for the kids. It was just me that had to suffer.

Traci: Who thinks about mom?

Alex: Right?

Traci: What does she matter? So that's one of my big tips. It's just be prepared in case you, you know, you got to keep the kids entertained. And snacks, also, snacks are very important.

Alex: And extra clothes.

Traci: Yes. For them and for you maybe even, in case.

Alex: That's the other thing. Like we've had times where there's been an accident on a plane or, you know, if there's turbulence and your kids get motion sick. I know Megan always travels with, I think you do too now, Jess, right? The emesis bags?

Jess: Yep, always got emesis bags on me. And that's from many moments of car sickness as Molly has evolved over her life.

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Traci: And I also, okay, so here's some more suggestions for things to pack. I like to pack weird toys, not, like things that aren't even toys. I like to pack quiet things so they're not disturbing anyone else for in the plane or in the airport.

I usually would pack office supplies, and it sounds really weird, but a pad of Post-it notes can go a long way. You can do a lot with Post-it notes, and kids don't usually get to just play with Post-it notes willy-nilly at home or masking tape. You can make jewelry, you can tape your Post-it notes to the tray. You can do really imaginative fun stuff, and they're quiet, and the kids think they're cool because they don't get to play with that at home.

Alex: And they don't roll off the tray table and roll down five aisles.

Traci: Like the cars, or...

Alex: Yeah. We got, we were at the airport flying home from Hawaii, and the gift shop had a Lego, and Legos aren't cheap, and magically it was a small set that was reasonably priced, and Noah wanted it so bad. So we're like, okay, we're flying home from Hawaii, we'll let you get this little Lego set. And it worked out fine, but the number of times that I had to go down, I dropped a piece and go find it was, it wasn't ideal. It worked great for entertaining him, but just, you got to think of yourself too. Is this going to be an annoying thing for me to have to do or not?

Jess: Yeah. My favorite is the window clings that you can get at the Target dollar spot, and I would just get one of those and bring it on the plane, and she would just stick it to the airplane window. And I was, it's quiet, she's not bothering anyone, it's not touching anyone else's seat. It's all good.

Traci: And it's nice when it's something that's actually creative like that. And also, personally, I have no problem with kids having screen time on planes and airports. That is what those were made for. If anyone should have unlimited screen time, it's anyone at an airport or on a plane, right?

Alex: Yeah.

Traci: Those rules go out the window when we're traveling.

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Alex: No, literally, when we travel, my kids have screen time limits on their iPads. When we get to the airport, I turn screen time limits off. Screen time limits don't exist when we're on a plane.

Traci: We're just getting through with our lives.

Alex: Exactly. Yup.

Traci: Keep me and everyone happy. So, yeah.

Alex: Yeah.

Traci: Yeah. And then I think, again, I would choose places that if you don't want to bring a lot of gear, choose a place to go that you don't need a car seat. Choose to use public transportation. Get by with either just the car seat harness on the plane, or heaven forbid, just have them in their seatbelt. It depends on what your risk tolerance is and everything, but don't feel like you have to plan a trip that does require all that stuff, if you want to go kind of light. So.

Alex: I will say, I love going with toddlers. Older toddlers. When is, when is a toddler officially, when are they not a toddler anymore?

Traci: When they're four, maybe?

Jess: Four, I think.

Traci: Then they're a preschooler. I don't know.

Alex: Okay. I was thinking like four or five. I guess I'm maybe in denial that I don't have a toddler anymore because I think toddlers are the funnest and the cutest.

But I will say, two-year-old, 18 months to two is a pretty challenging age to fly with a kid. I think the hard thing is when they're kicking the seat in front of you, and you're like, okay, no, we don't do that. Or the flight attendants is like, Oh, you need to buckle your kid in now and you're like, I'm trying. This kid doesn't want to be buckled in.

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So, you've got to pack your patience when you're traveling with kids in that age, but it is so fun too. I think the funnest thing for me is, we call him Vacation Noah, and he's been Vacation Noah since he was 18 months. Like when he goes on a vacation, he's his happiest. And it is so fun to see how much he loves it.

Even when we went up to the Park City Grand Hyatt the other day, we were leaving, and he's like, I'm sad to leave this hotel. And like, and that's just an overnight at a hotel. So it's really, really fun traveling with toddlers. So don't let it scare you. It's really magical.

Traci: The Hyatt loyalty starts so young in your family.

Jess: No, it was a, wasn't it a Hilton?

Alex: No, it was a Grand Hyatt. It was the Grand Hyatt Deer Valley.

Traci: Start them young. Start them young. He'll have a Hyatt, he'll be a lifetime globalist by the time he's 18, right? Okay.

So travel tips for toddlers, like when you're actually in your destination, you need to be taking these toddlers to playgrounds because they need part of the trip to be for them. And even multiple times a day, possibly, depending on how much your kids love playgrounds, I guess. Like it's, and also it's kind of fun because it gives them an opportunity to play with other local kids. And you know how kids can play and they don't even know the same language, but they're still playing with each other. That's really fun to see. And it helps them get their energy out and you get to explore a different side of the destination. And so I would say, take your kids to playgrounds.

We would always read books to them or watch movies that take place in the place we're going. We'd watch *Mary Poppins* when we're going to London or things like that to sort of get them excited for the destination. And then I'd also say, don't feel like you have to plan your trip around kid activities just because kids are with you.

I don't know if you've watched *Schitt's Creek*, but fold in the cheese, David. Fold the children into your plans, but don't make the plans everything for the children

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because that's just going to put too much pressure on you and also them because then you're, "Well, I'm doing this for you."

But just if you want to go to a museum and you want to go to something else, do it in small chunks that kids can manage. Like, go to the Louvre, go for 30 minutes. It's okay. You'll go back one day because you've got miles and points, but then you've got a little taste of what you wanted, and the kids get a little bit of exposure to something that's adult and requires a little quiet and patience, and good behavior. And building that over time really helps them become better travelers overall, so that when they're 12, you can take them to the Louvre for like three hours and then they can't complain because they're...

Jess: And they're most, like, we took Molly to MoMA when she was like 18 months, two years old, and it was great because she was in her stroller. She was confined. And like you said, we went for an hour, and she just looked around at all the stuff. It was colorful. It kept her attention. But yeah, we just went for an hour, not all day.

Traci: And here's one thing that I felt really stupid when I realized this, but then I was, "Oh, I should have taken advantage of that." This might be very niche, but if your kids had ear infections and they've gotten the ear tubes put in, that's a great time to take them on planes because the ear tube keeps their ears from hurting. I didn't put that together. I was, "Oh, kids, ears hurting planes, that's bad." But if your kids happen to have that, you've got like a superpower. And I was, can adults get those tubes, 'cause that's always not fun.

So if your kids have ear problems, don't think, oh, that's a deal breaker for planes. Think, oh, maybe I actually have a superpower with that. Yeah. So those are kind of all my basic toddler travel tips. Is there anything you guys wanted to also cover?

Alex: One thing I've heard, and I think this goes for younger kids in general, not just toddlers, is you go on vacation, you're doing all these fun things, you're seeing all these places, and then your kids are, "I want to go back up to the hotel room and play on my iPad." And it can be frustrating as a parent when you're, "What, we're in this amazing place, and you want to go in the hotel room and be on your iPad."

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But what I've learned is it's kind of a way to kids to regulate themselves and regulate this experience. They're in a new place, in a new environment. There's so much newness, and that kind of is a comfort for them.

So it's been helpful for me to learn that to be, okay, it's okay. I'm going to go up, have your screen time, relax, decompress. You've done a lot of new things today. It just can keep everybody happier, and then it kind of lets you let go of it as a parent of trying to control it all, and realizing, okay, my kid's not ungrateful or not having a good time because they want to be on their iPad. They just have done a lot of new things, and this is kind of a way to relax and decompress from all the newness.

Jess: Totally agree.

Traci: Cool. All right, do we want to shift gears and talk about teenagers?

Alex: Yeah, the only other thing I wanted to say real quick is people say don't travel with kids because they don't remember it. They be said that a lot on social media.

One, they remember a lot more than we think that they do. Noah will say things sometimes, even my 11-year-old will say things, I'm like, what, you remember that? That is, it's actually really wild. I also think that they're, they take in more, even if they don't remember the memories, they remember feelings, and their senses can kind of keep those things in a sense. I don't know if I'm making sense, but I think there's, I think they can learn a lot from travel, even being a toddler, about other people, other cultures, and they carry that throughout their life, even though they're just tiny little people.

And there's also something to be said about seeing the magic through their eyes. And even if they don't remember it, I'm going to remember this time of seeing my child, you know, at Disneyland for the first time, or playing in the ocean for the first time, or seeing the Eiffel Tower. You're going to remember that, and that's going to be a special memory for you, too.

Jess: I completely agree, and I was the same way, where I was like, even if they don't, you know, she's two, she's probably not going to remember this, but even

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if she doesn't, I will remember it. And what, I'm not going to travel with her until she's six or seven? I want to see the world too. And so, I think it's more nuanced than just the kid's not going to remember.

Traci: For sure. And that's the great thing, too, about points and miles is like, even if they don't remember, you can go back because you can just earn more points. So it takes the pressure off, I think, if you don't think of it has to be like this perfect experience.

Alex: Yeah, 100%. Well, Traci's the teen expert. I only, I am new to teens. I have a 13-year-old, going to have a 12-year-old soon. Jess is almost what, Molly's 12?

Jess: She's 12. She's 12, yeah.

Alex: So we're just entering the teen space, and so Traci's going to share all the things so Jess and I can be prepared for teens.

Traci: Well, Jess also had experience.

Alex: Tweens are kind of teens though. Tweens think they're teens.

Traci: They do think that.

Jess: But I've been traveling with Ella and Olivia, and Charlie.

Alex: That's true. You've been traveling with them for a long time.

Jess: I have, I've run the gamut of the ages. So...

Traci: I remember traveling, when we saw you guys in Edinburgh, they were teenagers, or at least Charlie was. But yeah, okay. So let's move on to teens and clear our minds of the toddler issues, and lucky people who are dealing with both at the same time, like Alex.

Okay, so teens can be so fun to travel with. We, I just, teenagers are really fun in general. They have such an interest and appreciation for where you're going that, really, it just makes it more fun because they're actually interacting and getting into it more. You can get them to help you.

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Like Eleanor, we call her Magellan because she is so good at navigating through airports, and she always spots the sign saying this is the one that has PreCheck and CLEAR. Why are you going that way, Mom? And she, you know, corrects me. So they help navigate. You can have them help navigate on transit. You can help them plot out on maps and get them involved in the planning of the trip.

They'll get buy-in. They'll be more into what you're suggesting, into the idea of going and leaving home, leaving their friends, missing out on whatever FOMO they're missing because they've helped plan it. So that is a really good thing.

Alex: I love that because as a parent of toddlers in those years, you're so, okay, I got to keep, is everybody here? Am I keeping track of everybody? Do we have everything? And then you have teens, and you're, "Oh, you're guiding us. I don't have to even worry about where TSA PreCheck is or where our gate is. You can find it." It takes, that just takes so much weight off.

Traci: Yeah. And oh, another benefit I didn't even think about until just now is I haven't checked to see what my children pack in literally years. They can pack themselves. They know the drill by now.

Alex: That's nice.

Traci: I don't even check their bags. I don't even have to.

Jess: That's going to be nice.

Alex: That is nice. I do have my kids pack, my older three pack, but I'd still have to check it 'cause I'm, "Oh, you have one pair of underwear for six days. All right, you're going to need to get about five more pairs."

Traci: But they usually just ask, "What's the weather going to be like and how many days are we going?" Like, how many outfits do I need? And do I need anything dressy or weird? Like a swimsuit or anything unusual. And that's all the guidance they need. And like, that's really awesome, that takes a lot off. And then obviously, we're making family memories just like you make with a toddler, any kid, any age.

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And then, just especially as the more I see it, the closer we get to going off to college age, this experience of being able to be in other countries and know how things work and see how people do things differently, it really helps build resiliency and all these new neural pathways and resilience and dealing with delays and figuring out alternative arrangements to things. It builds this, all these skills that I think will be transferable. I hope will be transferable when they do go off to college by themselves and they need to figure things out. They have a pretty good foundation for that then, and they're not as sheltered of just, you know, we've always been at home. They've seen the world

Alex: My mom does everything for me. It's, "Oh, I know how to figure things out."

Traci: Right. Yeah. So I think that's, um, those are all really great, great things that traveling with teenagers can bring into your life. And I think they do pose some challenges, but it's the same challenges you'd have at home. It's, "Well, I want to spend time with my friends. Why am I here with you instead of at home with my friends?" And I have FOMO because I'm missing this event that's happening at home. And it's, well, okay, I get that, but also, we're in Paris. Deal with it.

Jess: It's like, you can get over it.

I do want to say, like one of my favorite things is it kind of ties into your first point about interest and the appreciation for the destination. And I know you're going to agree with me, Traci, but it's like, getting to do things that they're excited about.

Like Molly read the *Harry Potter* series, and then we went to Universal and she got to go to Harry Potter World. And Molly and I watched the entire series of *Gilmore Girls* together, and then we went to Connecticut and got to see all the places that inspired Stars Hollow. You know, it's like finding things that are fun to tie your trip into, versus, "We're just going to pick this random destination and go there." It's traveling with a purpose to like further their excitement about something that they're interested in already.

Traci: Yeah, totally. I, I definitely agree with that. And we've done some stuff like that, I think. Yeah.

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So, teenagers, okay, so the downsides of traveling with teenagers, besides just the whole general "teenage attitude" or stuff, they're, you probably need separate hotel rooms a lot of times because you can't fit two teenagers or three teenagers in a sofa bed or a pack and play.

So that ups the points cost a little bit, but I would say it's actually really nice to have separate rooms with teenagers because they need their space, they need quiet, they need downtime, you need the extra bathroom, so you're not all spending all morning in the bathroom.

I think with teenagers, it's also really important to give them the downtime. Like not, it's kind of with toddlers and their tablets, they're going to want Wi-Fi access, and they're going to want to be able to snap their friends and post to Instagram all the cool places you've been to taking them. And they need that. I think pulling them completely out, away from home, and cutting off all those ties would be really annoying if I were them.

So we try to give them downtime in the evenings so they can be in their own room and have that time to sort of decompress and interact with their friends and keep their Snapchat streaks alive or whatever the heck it is.

Jess: Molly's is her Duolingo streak that she needs to keep alive, but yes.

Traci: Yeah. And I would say one of the tricks that I think is really good when you can make it work for your itinerary is like pick a city where you feel like your kids could get some independence.

We went to Copenhagen with our kids a couple summers ago, and by the time we had been there a day or two, they felt confident enough with navigating and using the subway and everything that they were, "Oh, well, we don't want to go where you want to go for lunch. Could, could we go to McDonald's by ourselves and then meet you at the castle at 2:00 like we have tickets or whatever?" And I was, "Uh, I guess so." But it terrified me. But the fact that they felt confident enough to do that, and then they did it, and they met us when they said they would. I was, "This is crazy. This is really cool."

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And I feel like we've had conversations like, if we were to just drop you random place in London, do you think you could get around? And they're like, "Of course we could. We've been doing this since we were four."

So it's sort of like, pick, if there's opportunities where you can let them sort of in, like Japan would be really easy. Like, after a couple days in Japan, you can get around really easy. It's very safe. Pick a couple places that you want to let them off the leash a little bit.

And then also I think another good thing to do with teenagers is pick a, if you're doing a little tour, like a private tour with a guide, usually in cities, they're usually pretty young the guides. So our kids have always, they've been really standoffish and kind of quiet and shy at the very beginning, and then 10 minutes later, they are chatting the guide's ear off. They are best friends. They think the guides are cool, and it helps them sort of make a friend in the new place. And so I would say that's always a good idea to sort of, because the guides are also really good at getting people to open up and chat and everything.

So I think that's a really useful thing because then also it's nice to have someone else to play off of with the whole dynamic of your family traveling. They're going to be less surly when there's a third party brought into the mix because they're being better behavior. So that's kind of nice. Um, yeah. So those are kind of my big teen tips, but I'm sure you all have some.

Jess: No, I think you nailed it. I will say one thing I do like, so we've gotten them really into VoiceMap, which is, I think there are different apps for this, but it's an app where, depending on where you are, you can kind of download a little audio guide to guide you through public places where there's not typically a guided tour. That has been a huge hit with all of our kids. We did it in Japan, we did it in Belgium, and so that's kind of a fun way to be a little bit more interactive with it.

And then also on Airbnb experiences, I have found there are tours geared towards families if that's what you want to do. Like when we went to Connecticut, we went to Boston, and we did a Freedom Trail tour for, like for families geared for families through Airbnb experiences. And so, it's kind of like, you can find some that are maybe a little less boring than a strictly historical tour. So I think stuff like that is good to look out for, too.

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Traci: Yeah, for sure. For sure. So I think, did you guys want to talk about destinations we'd really recommend or really not recommend for toddlers and teenagers?

Alex: Yes.

Traci: Okay. So here's my spoiler alert. I think you can take kids everywhere at any age. There's some places that are going to be more complicated and maybe more challenging, but basically if there are kids that live there, you can take kids there. I don't think there's, like we've taken our kids all over and they've been fine, lots of different ages.

I would say for some exceptions, just in terms of making life easy or saving some things until they're older. Like, if you're going to go to, I don't know, Santorini with a stroller, I don't know how that's going to work. Lisbon with a stroller blows my mind. Like, I don't know how people do that. It's very hilly. So I would say if you're going to be in some ancient old city with tons of steps, tons of walking, a stroller might not be a good bet, maybe a carrier would be a good bet. You know, so like think about the logistics of that.

Traci: I am totally in the minority, but I absolutely detest taking toddlers to the beach because I think it's a nightmare. You have to keep slathering sunscreen. There's sand everywhere. There's danger. The ocean is danger.

Jess: And they don't know that they should be scared of the ocean. Right. I agree with you. I think beach is a no for a toddler, but I know that we are in the minority on that.

Alex: I love it, but I think the key here is where you're staying. If you're in a beach, we did the Hyatt Residence Club, that was amazing with little kids. The beach is literally right there. And so it's not like, oh, we got to load up in the car and drive to the beach, and then we're parking and putting up the shade tent. We're going to be there for five hours. That sounds like a nightmare to me.

But if you're like, okay, we can go down to the beach for 20 minutes, and then we're going to go hang out by the pool, that's great. And so I think you just got to be strategic about where you're staying.

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So Hyatt Regency would be a great place I think to take a toddler. There's tons of toddlers there. I just think it depends, but I'm, and I did do toddler in Hawaii when we did just stay in like a, you know, Airbnb type, it was like a timeshare place and it's we did have to drive out and it was exhausting, but it was still amazing because it was Hawaii. And so I'd still do it. But, you know, I get what you guys are saying. You do have to be on alert. And I would choose a beach that's like, oh, this is calm, and it's not, you know, more of the bay side and not

Traci: And not Hyatt, the Grand Hyatt Kauai, right?

Jess: Yes, yes, exactly.

Traci: I think if you're a beach person naturally and you're really happy there...

Alex: And I'm a beach person.

Traci: I'm not a beach person. I mean, I'm a cold, I'll take a cold beach where I can hike, but I'm not going to sit on the beach in the heat.

Jess: I like, I like watching the beach from my balcony. I don't necessarily like getting covered in sand.

Alex: That is my entire family. My kids are like, all right, we got in the beach, we did our boogie boarding. Now I need to go and change my clothes and get all the sand off of me.

Jess: Yeah.

Alex: And so we're not sit at beach all day people, but we love Hawaii, and we love...

Jess: I love the feel, the tropical feel. I just don't love the feel of sand. And I hate putting sunscreen on.

Traci: We have some sensory issues, y'all.

Alex: My whole family has sensory issues, including me, so there we go.

Traci: I would say I wouldn't take toddlers to Disney just because they're so little, and it's going to limit what rides you can do, and it's so expensive. I would just

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wait until they're older and you can go on more stuff. But I know again, that's probably the minority.

Jess: Okay, I agree with you in regards to the Disney parks, though I think kids under three are free, right? So if they're under three and you have older kids,

Traci: But you can't go on rides without them. You know, and then you're spending. I don't know.

Jess: Yeah. I agree with you about the parks. I will say the best destination for a toddler is a Disney cruise. We took Molly on our first Disney cruise when she was three. So she was old enough to go into the kids' club. You don't have to have a stroller, you don't have to have a car seat.

They tell you where to go to dinner every night. There's no "Oh, what are we having for dinner tonight?" conversation that we have every freaking night at our house. They tell you where to go for dinner. There's a kids' club, so you can just drop your kids off at the kids' club, and you can go to have a drink or go watch the Broadway show. Like, the best vacation for young kids.

Alex: Yeah. I agree with you guys. I haven't taken a toddler to Disneyland. I think Eli was five when I took him. Noah hasn't been yet, but I do know a lot of people do it, and they love it. And if their kid, a two-year-old that loves this character, there's a lot of magic to be had there.

And you do get the stroller pass when you go to Disneyland. So if you do have older kids with you, everybody gets to ride the ride. You stay back with the baby, they give you a pass, and you get to go to the front of the line. So it's actually kind of nice if you take a little one if you have other people going too, because then you guys can take advantage of getting those stroller passes.

Traci: Yeah, the advantages of a big group. That would be cool. So other things to think about, where you wouldn't want to take toddlers, I would say safaris definitely have rules about age limits. And it's because of safety, it's because the kids' noises scare animals, or the kids are in danger of...

Jess: I mean, I know that there are safaris that will cater to families, but it, like, we're going on our first safari next year, the youngest person with us will be 12. I

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think that obviously you could go younger than 12, but they have to be able to sit in the cars for a really long time and be quiet. And so I think you know your child best, and whether that's something that they will be able to do or not.

Traci: Yeah, I think a lot of the safari companies I've looked at, they have a rule about have to be six or over or five or over. You can't bring a three-year-old on a safari as far as I know, or maybe there are some exceptions to that.

Jess: I think I've seen somebody with some pretty young kids, but they couldn't get as close to the animals, and you know, there's certain things. So we've been, okay, let's wait till Noah's seven, and I think he would be able to handle it by then.

Traci: And it's not you couldn't, but it's just when is it the most...

Alex: It's like that's a really major trip. Let's do it right.

Jess: They're so expensive. It's like, do you want to spend the money to go on that and then not be able to get close to the animals? You know? So I guess it depends on how much money you have to spend on these safaris.

Yeah. And then what activities you want to do when you're in a place? If you want to go zip lining, you're not going to take a two-year-old on a zip line, presumably. So if that's important to you on this trip, maybe don't. Save that for when they're older. But so it's just danger and inconvenience, and cost logistics. Those are the sort of the things that come into play when you're deciding where a toddler would have fun. But other than that, toddlers can go anywhere. And like...

Alex: Yeah.

Traci: Everywhere we've been, we haven't taken, I don't think we didn't take our kids overseas until they were four, but we traveled a lot domestically with them when they were in their toddler stage. And like, but when we've been traveling in Asia and Europe and everywhere, people are so friendly to little kids. And I think people are always, "Oh, are different places safe?" But yeah, they're safe. They're fine. People will be, "Oh, your kid is so cute."

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And when the kids were four, we took them to Ireland, and this nice old man who was singing in the pub was giving the kids daisies and interacting with them. And I was just like, this is so cute. So there's people are so friendly everywhere, especially when you have a little kid. It's opening up this part of everybody that they, it's just opening up the nice part of people.

And then the UK specifically, I think, is great for where if you want to take toddlers as a kind of first trip abroad, because there's Winnie the Pooh, there's Alice in Wonderland, there's Peter Pan, there's all of these sort of literary references. You've probably read the books to them at storytime, and then, look, here's this Alice in Wonderland statue, or here's the Peter Pan statue in Hyde Park in London, and here's a big pirate ship playground. And it's really cool.

And then they also obviously can, if you speak English at home, they can interact with people really well and really easily. And so that kind of gives a different layer of trip to them.

And then I think Australia would be a really great place to take toddlers. The only downside would be like, that's a really long plane ride. Um, but you can't top Australia with kangaroos and koalas, and that would be amazing.

So, I can't think of a place that I would normally go on a trip that I wouldn't take toddlers. I think they could be good anywhere. Do you guys have any favorite places that you think are really, really great for toddlers?

Alex: I agree with the ones that you shared. London was great. I think most of, yeah, I'm in the same as you as, if kids live there, you can go there. I agree that I would not take a toddler to Santorini, but that's a personal thing.

Jess: I wouldn't take a toddler, I wouldn't take a toddler to Bora Bora. I'm just going to put that out there.

Alex: Yeah, I wouldn't take a toddler to Bora Bora.

Jess: Yeah, I think... We mainly focused on big cities with public transportation when she was young because you don't need, you don't need to bring a car seat. I thought New York City was great, Chicago's great, London, Paris, any of those would be great with a toddler.

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Traci: Yeah. Especially one who has car sickness, right? Then you don't have to deal with, you don't have to drive. And for teenagers, I think it's kind of the same thing. Everywhere would be great for a teen. Um, I think it's important to get their buy-in on where you're going. Places like if they're in high school and they're taking Spanish or they're taking French or they're taking German, go to a German-speaking country, go to a Spanish-speaking country, take them to Peru.

If there's public transport, they can learn how to use that. They can be independent with that. If they have a favorite sports team or a favorite musician, go to where that person's from, go to where that team is. Take them to, Jess has taken, Charlie's gone to an Arsenal match, right, in London, like Arsenal. So you can do that.

We've gone to several different places in the world where there's Amazing Race filming locations. If your family watches Amazing Race, that's a really, 'cause they've been everywhere at this point. So you can watch that with them.

Nature things, adventure, animals, and then, so I was asking my kids, what are the coolest places that we've gone together, because I'm going to talk about this on the podcast. And they both told me separately, London and Tokyo. So, take it from the horse's mouth. Um, those are both big pluses. Eleanor told me, "Bali isn't it" because they're too young to go to bars, and Bali is all about going to bars. I'm like, why do you..? Who, why do you think that? I don't know...

Alex: That is so funny.

Traci: I don't... But I'm like, okay.

Jess: That's hilarious.

Traci: And then I said, "What about Rome? Did you think Rome was really cool?" Because I thought Rome was really cool. And she goes, "Rome's not all that hype." So that was a brutal diss on Rome. I'm really sad.

Jess: That is hilarious.

Traci: But places they can tell their friends, you know how important friends are at that age. It's, "Oh yeah, I just went to Tokyo." That's going to sort of up their

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social standing, I guess. So they're more in, into it just because they think it's cool.

So, and then when they go, my kids have seen the Bayeux tapestry. We've been to Bayeux in France. So when that comes up on their AP World History, they have this memory back in somewhere of, "Hey, I've been to that place." So it's kind of cool to sort of, yeah, you're going to do really well on your AP test one day. So, yeah, there's just lots of places you can take teens, toddlers, and the world is your oyster. There's just think of the practical sort of drawbacks to things, but other than that, have at it.

Jess: Yeah, I think one of, well, Molly loved Japan also, just because she's a big Sanrio fan. And so all the Hello Kitty stuff and the Pokémon, that was a huge hit. She actually loved Iceland. We all loved Iceland. She's really, she loves animals. And so it's, to be able to go to the waterfalls and see the horses and see the sheep and see, you know, that was, that was really cool for her too.

So yeah, it's just, you got to know your kid and what their interests are and how that factors into trips you're going to plan. Her streak on Duolingo is for Italian, and so next summer we're going to Italy so that she can practice her Italian there. So, it's going to be, it's going to be really kid-dependent, I feel like, but it's, it's a fun excuse to go on vacation, especially if you're doing it with points and miles and aren't paying very much for it.

Traci: Yeah, and as long as your kids are happy, it doesn't have to be the perfect trip because you can always go back.

Jess: All right, Traci, thank you so much again for being here, sharing your toddlers to teen expertise with us. And you did it with twins, so if you can do it with two, I can do it with one. I just keep telling myself that because we are, we are in those female tween phases right now at our house. I will say that. I'm sure a lot of you can relate. If you enjoyed this episode, we would love it so much if you would leave us a review and share it with your family and friends.

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about everything we discussed in today's episode. And to stay connected and follow along, follow us on Instagram @PointsTalkSquad. We can't wait to see where in the world points and miles take you.