

have baby, will travel

If you think having a baby means the end of exciting travel, think again, says *Laura Miller*. From camper van trips to luxury villa holidays, the world is still your oyster.

“It’ll never be the same again,” seems to be a constant refrain in your life since proudly announcing you were pregnant. Whether the well-meaning souls spouting this wisdom are referring to your figure, your social life or your sex drive, it’s starting to make you rather nervous. And then comes the “it” that really shakes you up: Travel. “Once you have that baby, your holidays will never be the same again!” they say, and for the first time you find yourself thinking: “What have I done?”

Living in Hong Kong we’re used to jetting off to a new destination at the flutter of a passport every Chinese New Year, Easter and long weekend. Air travel is the only option, really, when you fancy a change from the local getaways. As a result, we’re used to being internationally mobile, and it’s not surprising that the idea of baby-induced island fever is giving

you the chills. Take heart, however. That new little person in your life doesn’t spell the end of adventure, nor does he or she mean your holidays will ever forth be spent in tacky resorts with mega-playrooms and bouncy castles on demand. Sure, you won’t be motor-biking across Mongolia’s grasslands or trekking in Tibet any time soon (well, not for a year or two ...) but your burgeoning belly is certainly not the party-pooper travel-wise that you might have been led to expect.

Time for a babymoon?

So, your bump’s a-growing, your sleep’s a-going and who knows what weird and wonderful thing your body will do next? Your baby hasn’t even arrived yet and already your identity is being eclipsed by your growing role as a host organ. And what about the man in your life? Man? What man? It’s definitely time for a babymoon.



While a honeymoon is a critical recovery period from wedding madness, a babymoon is crucial for taking stock and enjoying your partner before you're up all night for very different reasons. It's a time to anticipate the changes to come, but revel in the fact that they're not here yet, and, of course, to pay some attention to that very important being behind your bump – you. But for Hong Kong mums-to-be, it's not simply a matter of hopping in the car and driving to a romantic B&B in the countryside. Taking a babymoon means airports, foreign food and being far from your doctor. And is it even safe to travel by air when pregnant?

The answer is yes. It is safe for most pregnant women to travel by air, even until well into the third trimester. You may not feel like it much in your first three months when even the smell of toast has you heaving, but the second trimester is the ideal babymoon window of opportunity. But where should you go? Should you restrict yourself to direct-flight beach resorts within a three-hour radius of Hong Kong? It depends on you – and your doctor. I went camper-vanning around New Zealand's South Island and walked the three-day Routeburn Track at four months pregnant, strolled the Great Wall for the first time at

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five months and had a baby shower in South Africa at seven months. (One babymoon clearly wasn't enough.) At the end of the day, it's meant to be a treat, so do what you feel like, and what you feel capable of. Here are a few rules of thumb:

1. Speak to your doctor before booking your flights.
2. If he/she gives you the OK, get a letter to prove it, within a week of your flight. The letter should state how far along you are and how many babies you're carrying. If you're showing (and any time after 28 weeks), the check-in attendant will ask for it. No letter, no babymoon!
3. Remember that different airlines have different rules when it comes to how many weeks pregnant you can fly. Cathay Pacific and Dragon Air will fly you up to 36 weeks in a single pregnancy, or 32 weeks if you're carrying twins.
4. Take advantage of your situation and don't lift anything heavy, especially into overhead lockers. There are much more enjoyable ways of putting your back out!
5. Wear anti-DVT flights socks while in the air. The Scholl variety is available in most Hong Kong pharmacies.
6. Find out in advance where the closest hospital is to your destination and keep phone numbers handy.

Post-natal vacation

Your bundle of joy has arrived and you've survived explosive nappy-changing episodes, breastfeeding in public and back-to-back visits from in-laws. You even have a semblance of routine in your life. All's going well, but trips to Mothercare and Bumps to Babes are doing nothing for your cabin fever. You need to get out of town, and soon.

With an infant now in tow, it does make sense to stick to direct-flight destinations. And if it's a short trip you're planning (a week or under) then staying in Asia and away from jetlag is a good idea.

With this in mind, you start doing your usual pre-holiday research into flight and hotel deals, but suddenly come up short: Bedtime. How are you going to put your little one to sleep in your hotel room AND eat dinner on the beach with your feet in the sand? Spending your holiday eating room service won't really cut it, and taking your helper with you to babysit isn't an option for everyone. Now what? Simple answer: Hire a villa – with staff.

As decadent as it may sound, hiring a villa with a chef is an option in Asia that new parents would be mad to ignore. The advantages include: dining in style by day and at night while your baby sleeps safely within monitor range; a microwave-equipped kitchen for easy sterilising; a villa concierge to pre-arrange baby kit including car seats, cots, bathtubs and even your bub's brand of nappies; a private pool that allows mum all the tanning she desires between feeds; and multiple suites – ideal for getting friends or the extended family along.

In Asia, Thailand is definitely the queen of villa holiday destinations, and Phuket – less than a four-hour flight from Hong Kong – is the jewel in her crown. Many companies offer villa rentals. Awesome Villas offers exclusive villas with exceptional views (www.awesomevillas.com). With its rim-flow pool, open-plan living area and friendly, baby-loving staff, Villa Kiana is situated in the Sri Panwa estate on the island's southeastern tip (www.sripanwa.com). The villa is just a few minutes' walk or complimentary *tuk tuk* ride through lush rainforest to the Sri Panwa Hotel's restaurants, tennis courts and Cool Spa. This means you get the best of villa living, combined with the five-star facilities of a trendy resort. You'll feel very yummy mummy with your Ray-Bans, cocktail and cute little tot while snacking on Phuket's best pizza and sushi in one of the Pool Club's signature rocking chairs. There is also Satis House, a 1,000-square metre open-plan

home overlooking an expansive pool and lawn on the white sands of Natai Beach, and then there's Villa Yin, and Villa Rak Tawan ... there's one to suit every new family.

Packing tips for baby jet-setters

So you've chosen your villa, your tickets are booked and your little munchkin has a brand new passport. All that's left to do is pack.

1. Don't over-pack. Most essentials are available everywhere – especially in Phuket.
2. Take two nappies in addition to the usual number you'll need for the flight duration.
3. Buy a new toy/rattle for the flight.
4. Don't forget a spare shirt for yourself onboard.
5. Keep the thermometer and infant paracetamol in your hand luggage.
6. On a summer's break to Phuket, your baby might only wear nappies all day. Take five outfits max. (And remember they can be washed daily by villa staff.)
7. Take two bottles max. They can be washed.
8. A microwave steriliser can be stuffed full of underwear and packed in your suitcase. (But boiling water works just as well.)
9. For bath time, take along an all-in-one hair and body wash.
10. Don't forget the baby sunscreen and sun hat! ☀️

