



## News Release

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### AAA TRAVEL EXPERTS OFFER TIPS FOR TRAVELING WITH CHILDREN IN TOW AND SOLO KID TRAVEL

*AAA Travel experts advise that traveling without the proper documentation for children can complicate or ruin travel plans.*

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va., (April 24, 2012) – Summer remains the most popular and eagerly anticipated season for family travel according to AAA Travel experts. Options for family travel are varied and may include children traveling alone to visit geographically separated family members, travel with a solo parent or kids leaving parents behind to cruise the world with grandparents. Some family travel options may require additional and perhaps unexpected travel documentation when both parents are not accompanying the child, the child is traveling with adults other than parents or the child's last name differs from the parent's name. *"Family travel plans could be interrupted or even ruined if necessary documentation requirements for children catch adults by surprise," said Judy Ocasio, Vice President of AAA Tidewater Travel Services. "It is critical that parents identify and obtain the required documents for their specific family or child's travel."*

#### **AAA Travel experts offer these children's travel tips:**

**Passports for Children** - All U.S. citizens including infants and children must have a valid passport to travel internationally by air. A passport card can be used for automobile and cruise ship travel to Canada and Mexico from the United States. Both parents must provide consent authorizing passport issuance for a minor under age 16. AAA Travel experts recommend that citizens of all ages use a passport for all international travel, including auto and cruise travel to Canada and Mexico, in the event an emergency requires reentry to the United States by air. Current passport holders should examine the passport expiration date, and if the document is due to expire within six months of travel, renew it prior to travel. While adult passports are valid for ten years, passports for children under age 16 are valid for five years. Parents should carefully examine all passport and child travel documentation requirements at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov), or seek the assistance of a knowledgeable travel agent. To locate the nearest AAA Travel Agency, visit [AAA.com](http://AAA.com).

**Cruising with Children** - Cruise lines generally require at least one legal adult (age 21 or higher) to occupy every stateroom to eliminate children cruising alone. This person also needs to be a legal parent or guardian. Cruise lines also require a notarized letter of authorization to travel if a child is sailing with only one parent, other non-custodial adults, or has a different last name than the responsible legal adult. For more information visit the applicable cruise line website or a knowledgeable travel agent.

**International Solo Parent Travel** - When visiting a foreign country, including Mexico and Canada, as a lone adult with a minor child under age 18 additional travel documentation is required. To help prevent cases of parental abduction and international child trafficking, many countries now require proof of the lone adult's relationship to the child and the legal right to

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travel in and out of the country with that child. In addition to the child's valid United States passport and entry visa where required, a letter of permission from the absent parent(s) signed before a notary public is needed.

The letter should include a statement of authorization for the child to travel, details of the trip and legal names and contact information for the child and accompanying adult. Single parents, grandparents, stepparents, guardians and any adult with a last name different from the child needs to be prepared with the additional documentation to present at border crossings, airport immigration check points and cruise line check-in desks. A travel agent can assist in securing the appropriate documents.

**Children Flying Solo** - Most airlines offer fee-based Unaccompanied Minor programs that facilitate air travel for children without an accompanying adult. These programs provide an affordable travel option to link geographically separated family members with the children they treasure. Airline Unaccompanied Minor programs, policies and procedures vary. Most require that an authorized adult escort the child to the departure gate and an authorized adult take custody of the minor child at the arrival gate. In flight, unaccompanied minors are under the care of the cabin crew.

If planning an itinerary for a child traveling by air solo be sure to carefully check the specific requirements for each airline you are considering. Check age requirements, fees and all details which can vary greatly. For example, some airlines require travel must be on a nonstop flight, while others might allow one or more stops if a plane change does not occur. Specific details of each airline's program can be found on the airline website.

**Child Medical Care Authorization** - When a child is traveling without a parent, receiving emergency medical care could be complicated or refused by the medical facility, unless the emergency is deemed life-threatening. The adult accompanying the child should carry a medical proxy, an original notarized letter from the non-traveling parent(s) granting permission to authorize emergency medical care for the child. The letter should include the permission statement, child's health insurance information, social security number and full legal names of the child and accompanying adults. If the child remains at home while a parent travels, this important medical authorization documentation should be supplied to the child's caregiver.

*As part of North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA Tidewater Virginia provides its more than 325,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding AAA Tidewater Virginia has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. For more information, visit [AAA.com](http://AAA.com) and follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/AAATWnews](https://twitter.com/AAATWnews).*

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