

Special points of interest:

- Travel with kids.
- How NOT to loose your week of vacation.
- Fashing.

Travel with Kids

The controversy in the last couple weeks hasn't had anything to do with Democrats and Republicans. The big debate around offices and parents lately surrounds the removal of a family from an AirTran flight last month when their 3-year old girl pitched quite a fit.

"After the family boarded an AirTran plane in Fort Myers on January 14 for a flight to Boston, the child became temperamental and refused to take her seat," the Orlando Sentinel writes in its account of the incident. The girl "was climbing under the seat and hitting the parents and wouldn't get in her seat." However, her parents say they didn't get enough time to calm their child down. "We weren't given an opportunity to hold her, console her or anything," mother Julie Kulesza told The Associated Press.

Surprisingly, various informal polls have shown that folks are about 80% in favor of the airline's decision to kick the family off the plane. It's a sticky issue, and definitely not one you want to find yourself in. When we travel with our kids we want our adventures to be fun and as free of anxiety as possible. Here are some tips to keep in mind when traveling with young children:

- Buy a separate seat for your child. When you are at home, how long can you truly sit a squirming infant or toddler on your lap? When you are in unfamiliar surroundings, the squirm factor will only increase. Not only are you both uncomfortable, but this is not the safest way to travel.

Fasching

Germans call the pre-Lenten Carnival season *die närrische Saison* ("the foolish season") or *die fünfte Jahreszeit* ("the fifth season"). Whatever name you use, Fasching is a whole lot of fun! Fasching is the only other time of the year outside of Oktoberfest when many normally staid Germans, Austrians and Swiss loosen up and go a little crazy.

In 2007, the official start of the **Fasching** season is either January 7 (the day after the Epiphany, *Dreikönige*) or the 11th day of the 11th month (*Elfter im Elften*, Nov. 11), depending on the region, and it runs through February 20. Carnival guilds take three to four months to organize each year's events, including Carnival balls, parades and royalty, leading up to the big bash in the week before Ash Wednesday, when the Lenten season begins.

Carnival season is celebrated worldwide, with the festivities in Rio probably being the most famous. In the U.S., New Orleans is well known for throwing a massive Mardi Gras celebration. While the former French possession of New Orleans is one of the few cities in the United States with a major Carnival celebration, almost all of the Catholic regions and cities across the German-speaking world and the rest of Europe celebrate Mardi Gras in a big way.

Some of Germany's best known celebrations are held in Cologne, Mainz, Munich and Rottweil. But Cologne's Karneval is not really the same as Munich's Fasching. Germanic Carnival celebrations vary from region to region, sometimes even taking place at different times. Further south in Bavaria and Austria, the culmination of Fasching takes place on Shrove Tuesday, like Mardi gras in New Orleans. These and other differences reflect the long history and local traditions of the celebration, and they are also seen in the language.

Fastnacht is related to the Germanic word "fasten" (to fast, abstain from eating).

Karneval is related to the Latin "carnem levare" (to remove meat).

Carnival or Mardi Gras goes by many names in German, depending on the region and dialect: Whether it's Fasching or Karneval,



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Travel with Kids—Continued

- Bring your own car seat. This seat is familiar to your child and they are accustomed to be buckled in it before a vehicle starts moving. As an added bonus, when you get to your destination you will have your car seat with you. Carry it through the airport on a small luggage cart with wheels.

- If your child is old enough to walk, have them walk in the airport as much as possible prior to boarding. The goal is to tire them out.

- Bring a small, folding stroller to the gate. You will want a back-up plan in case the walking doesn't work, and that stroller will come in handy after you land. Check it with the gate agent and it can be waiting for you immediately upon exiting the plane before you walk down the jetway.

- Whenever feasible, schedule your flights carefully. Naptime and bedtime are excellent times to fly with your children.

- If possible, don't travel with a sick child. Planning a vacation often takes months of preparation, but if your child is ill then everyone will be miserable. Ear infections are especially aggravating, as the air pressure changes will hurt even more. If you can re-schedule, do so.

- Entertain your child. You are undoubtedly the most fascinating thing for your child to play with, but patty-cake and teensy-weensy spider can get old after a while. Come prepared with new toys and games, unveiling different ones for each of the flights. In addition to new activities, go to the store with your child before the flight and let them pick out a something special to play with on the plane. No matter how much they beg, make sure they understand that they have to wait until the plane ride to play with it. Coloring books, small puzzles, Color Wonder markers and paints, Play-doh, little animals or dolls, and hand-held electronic games are excellent. Bring a portable DVD and/or CD player with headphones with movies and music that are new to your child. A movie can save you for 90 minutes if you are lucky.

- Feed your child. A hungry child is a cranky child. Load up with your child's favorite snacks and juice boxes, and include some special treats. Lollipops and gum, if your child is old enough, are not only fun choices but they help to limit ear popping during take-offs and landings. Now is not the time to worry about nutritional value, break out the goodies.

- Finally, just go with the flow. Parenting is not a perfect science and kids are not perfect specimens. Do the best you can and enjoy your time with your precious children.



How NOT to loose your week of vacation.

Fasching—continued

it is a time to let off steam and live it up before the Lenten period that once called for fasting. It is this fasting tradition that gave the celebration its Fastnacht name.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, amusing plays known as Fastnachtspiele were performed during the pre-Lenten season. Today there are elaborate parades in all the large and small communities where Fasching is celebrated. Floats and marchers displaying large caricature heads often lampoon regional and national politicians. Another part of the celebration involves Carnival princes and princesses, and a sort of "counter-government" during the season. The Rhineland Rosenmontagumzug is an event broadcast each year on German



television, similar to the Macy's Thanksgiving parade in New York. It features colorful floats with caricatured figures mocking local and national politicians and other personalities or events.

No matter what name you call it, Carnival season is traditionally seen as a chance for people to go wild and let their hair down before Lent starts on Ash Wednesday.

We want our members traveling and happy, and are saddened when someone loses their vacation week in a given year. Here are the simple things you can do so you do not lose your week of vacation . . .

For each year that you have an assigned travel week, you must either travel to your home resort OR get a week assigned for you to deposit with Interval International. Either travel or deposit your week by September 15 of any of your travel years.

Even if you are not sure of your travel plans for your given year, you can and need to deposit that week prior to September 15. Remember that you can deposit your week well in advance, as early as January 1 of the year prior to your given year. For example, if you have an assigned week for 2008, you can deposit your week anytime between January 1, 2007 and September 15, 2008.

Once that annual deadline has passed, we are unable to go back and assign you a week. That time will be lost as you cannot borrow a week from the past since that time is over. It may help to think of the rooms in similar terms as airline seats. If you have an airline ticket and you fail to show up for your reserved seat on your date of travel, you cannot ask the airline to give you a seat on a future flight. The seat you reserved is gone. Similarly, there is a specific number of weeks in a year and a finite number of units available for occupancy. Inventory is set just like a seat on a plane.

We want to make this process as simple as possible, and offer you many ways to manage your travel week;

Over the phone by calling our Member Services Department at (708) 539-2250 x276 (in Illinois) or (877) 256-4922 x276 (outside Illinois).

Via e-mail to memberservices@resortintervals.com

By mail to American Resorts International, 4749 Lincoln Mall Drive, Suite 600, Matteson, IL 60443

On our website at www.resortintervals.com and clicking on "Web Bank".

It's always a good idea to keep a record of the deposit week assigned to you each year you make a deposit. If you have any questions, please call our Member Services department and our representatives will be happy to assist you. When it comes to your vacation week, remember this motto . . .

USE it, don't lose it!

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