

Kids Fly the Darnedest Ways [FINAL Edition]

The Washington Post - Washington, D.C. Author: Pamela Gerhardt Date: May 31, 1998
Start Page: E.04 Section: TRAVEL Text Word Count: 754

Maybe it's all the kids with ear infections wailing during takeoffs, or maybe all those wriggling lap-children bouncing around during turbulence. But it's pretty easy to tell that major airlines find little joy in transporting children. We found it extremely difficult to get information about airline policies regarding kids' ticket prices, lap child rules, car seat rules, kids' meals, bassinets and so on. Airline corporate communications staff often pleaded ignorance and directed us to reservationists, who were not eager to search for the information. But here's what we were able to find out about flying with kids:

- Domestic flights: You can hold your child under 2 on your lap for free, or pay half-price to get the child a seat of his or her own. You may, but do not need to, bring a car seat if you elect the latter option. Once a kid is 2, full price kicks in.

- International flights: Lap kids usually pay 10 percent of the adult fare (and bassinets are often provided). Kids 2-11 usually enjoy discounts of 25 to 50 percent. Full fare kicks in at 12.

Below we note exceptions to and details on these policies for many major airlines, with information provided by the airlines.

Air Canada: Babies must be two weeks old to fly. Bassinet service for babies under four months old is being phased out. Over 2 years, some seasonal discounts available.

Air France: Free bassinets for lap babies available at bulkhead seats for children no longer than 27 inches. From 2-11, discounts from 25 to 33 percent.

Air Jamaica: Lap child costs \$8 extra. No bassinets. For ages 2-11, some discounts, usually 50 percent.

American: Babies must be two weeks old to fly. For ages 2-11, discounts vary. For domestic flights, bassinets cost \$30, but this service is being phased out. For international flights, lap children sometimes fly free to the Caribbean, Mexico and Canada (in other cases, lap children cost 10 percent of adult fare).

America West: No bassinets. For its flights to Mexico, lap children cost \$8 extra. From 2-11 years, typical child discount is 33 percent.

British Airways: Babies must be 48 hours old to fly. Free bassinets for lap children are available. For 2-11 years, discount is usually 25 percent.

Continental: Babies must be one week old to fly. Up to 2 years, free bassinets are provided on 747s, 757s or D710s (mostly international flights). For 2 years and up, child seats are 25 to 50 percent off.

Delta: Discount for children 2-11 is 25 to 33 percent on international flights. For domestic flights, you may bring a car seat, which must fit into the overhead bin, and use it for "free" lap children if flight is not full. For international flights, request a bassinet, which fastens to bulkhead.

Lufthansa: For babies under 10 months, free bassinets hang from the wall in front of certain seats. For 2-11 years, discounts range from 33 to 50 percent. Age 12 and up, some youth and student fares.

Northwest/KLM: No discounts on domestic flights for age 2 and up. On international flights, free bassinets for lap child, costing 10 percent of adult fare, hook into bulkhead. For ages 2-11, discount usually 20 percent.

TWA: For international flights, free bassinets available for lap children. From ages 2-11, some discounts, usually 25 percent off.

United: For domestic flights, you may bring a car seat for children up to 2 years. No bassinets available on any flight. Over age 2, some seasonal discounts available. For international flights, free bassinets are available for lap children on 747, 767, 777 aircraft. The airline recommends that you call ahead to find out if flight is full. If not, bring your own car seat and use it in an empty seat for same 10 percent of adult fare rate. For children over 2, discounts range from 25 to 33 percent.

US Airways: On domestic flights, for children up to 2 years, airline says that if flight is not full and you are flying with a free lap child, it will try to seat you next to an empty seat. From 2-12 years, some seasonal discounts, but most kids 2 and up pay regular price. On international flights, lap children up to 2 years fly free; free bassinet sits in seat next to you. Over 2 years, some discounts available.

Virgin Atlantic: Babies must be one day old to fly. Bassinets available for lap children, who pay 10 percent of adult fare. From 2-11, typical discount 20 percent.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.