



PRESS RELEASE



Press Release: Embargoed until 00.01 12th February 2008

Virgin voted most child-friendly airline

The Branson-owned airline came top in a poll carried out by guidebook publishers Rough Guides with over a third of respondents (36%) voting Virgin the most child-friendly airline. British Airways came a close second with 32%. Budget airlines however fared miserably with Easyjet and Ryanair picking up just 8% of the vote between them (6% and 2% respectively).

It's no real surprise that the budget airlines are not seen as child-friendly. The Rough Guide survey, conducted to coincide with the publication of *The Rough Guide to Travel with Babies and Young Children*, also revealed that parents greatest worry when travelling with children was packing and carrying everything they need. With both Ryanair and Easyjet charging passengers per item of luggage with strict weight limits, travelling on them with kids can be far less of a 'budget' option.

Fawzia Rasheed de Francisco, author of the book, suggests the airline families choose can make all the difference to the journey "Aside from baggage restrictions, budget airlines tend to be allocated inconvenient gates in airports, involving walking long distances, negotiating stairs and buses etc - tough going with small children. There's also the fact that budget airlines make it hard, if not impossible, to change plans without buying new tickets; when you factor the cost implications for a whole family, the so-called budget tickets can work out to be more expensive in the long run."

Nearly half of respondents said their children have travelled far more extensively than they had at the same age, though 22% consider travelling with children 'Hell on Earth'!

See below for Fawzia's Top Tips for Air Travel with Children

Notes to Editors:

- The Rough Guide to Travel with Babies and Young Children by Fawzia Rasheed de Francisco was published in January 2008, £9.99.
- The survey was carried out by Rough Guides on ivillage.co.uk with 1387 respondents.
- More survey results available – please contact the Rough Guides press office on 0207 010 3701 or press@roughguides.com.

Fawzia's Top Tips for Air Travel with Children

1. When booking flights, opt for larger aircraft with roomy seating and individual TV screens with children's channels. Besides the added comfort, bigger planes are more stable, which means less turbulence, motion sickness, spills and trips.
2. Ask about early check-in facilities to help reduce waiting in queues with the children.
3. On many airlines you can order baby food, nappies and child's meals, but do take back up supplies just in case the goods don't materialize or turn out to be what you expect.
4. Factor in delays, time in airports, as well as on flights when planning what to take. For long stops in airports, it's worth taking a portable DVD player with a few films..
5. Don't think twice about asking for assistance with luggage if you are travelling alone with more than one child; so long as staff are available and there aren't competing requests, you should get help.
6. Book a block of seats for yourselves - having an aisle seat between you means that you won't have to bother someone else every time you need the toilet.
7. If funds allow and there are 2 adults travelling, consider booking one seat in business class and the rest in economy, then take turns to stretch out and sleep.
8. For long transit stops, think about paying to access airport lounges. The facilities are enclosed making it easier to keep an eye on your belongings and the children. They also include food and drink on tap.
9. Once on board, introduce the children to fellow passengers. Breaking the ice early paves the way to a better time all round and can help prompt the odd spontaneous offer of help as well.
10. If you have a baby, try delaying feeding until the plane starts to take off. The sucking helps with balancing the pressure on the ears, and a large meal at this point often lulls babies to sleep for the flight ahead.