

Vacation with a One-Year Old

Bye bye Spontaneity, Hello Planning

Planning our first summer vacation with a one-year old was a new experience for me. I was never exactly a globetrotter, but travelling to me had always been adventurous rather than luxurious. I preferred a tent over a Spa hotel and cycle tours over long haul plane trips. Pre-booking was rare as I enjoyed waking up in the morning, curious to where the journey would lead me. Admittedly, I am not a very spontaneous person, but on vacation a loose plan was the way to go.

Not when you are going on vacation with a one-year old. Being organised and well prepared became inevitable. Wanting to combine our family vacation with visiting my family in Germany narrowed down our choices. And whilst the prospect of free childminders was tempting, we wanted to spend some time on our own too.



New Territory 'Package Holiday'

Before we became parents, we stayed well clear of package holidays and above all places with kids entertainment. That had changed now that we were planning our first vacation with a one-year old. Browsing through offers, I still felt myself

drawn to charming, quiet places. But my husband John pointed out that we should opt for something with plenty of family outdoor and indoor activities. Self-catering was a must as we were going to be confined to our room after baby's bedtime.

We settled for a holiday village at the [Lakelands Mecklenburgische Seenplatte](#), about two hours North of Berlin. To my delight it *did* look quite charming for a family resort. And it came with all the amenities we had been looking for. It was also not too far from the airport and my parents' house, promising manageable travel times. Last but not least it was set in a gorgeous nature reserve with an abundance of sightseeing and day trip opportunities.

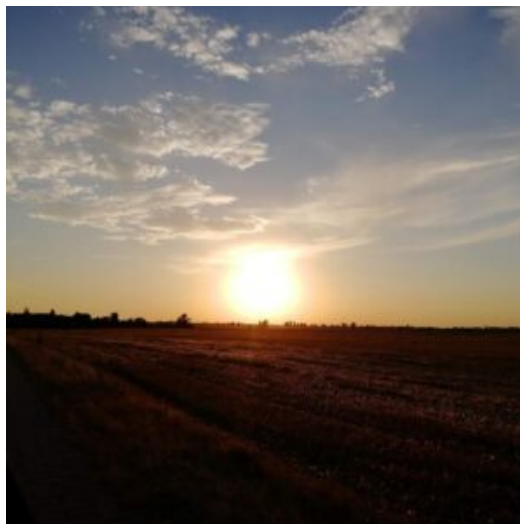


From Backpacking to Bag-packing

Travelling light had always been my forte. I took pride in requiring very few clothes on vacation and even more in my skill to pack them like a Tetris master. So whilst *I* was absolutely fine with a small suitcase for two weeks, I needed twice the space for our little one. Running through our daily routine in my head helped me to work out what to bring on our first vacation with a one-year old. Knowing I was able to wash stuff in my parents' house put my mind at ease. And the fact that John said "There is nothing we can't buy in Germany". Sometimes that is all it takes to stop a mother's irrational thoughts from racing.

Time to Relax

When we arrived at the [Dorfhotel Fleesensee](#) (now BEECH Resort), our expectations were even exceeded. They truly knew how to cater for families and make a stressed out mom on her first vacation with a one-year old welcome. As we pulled our luggage plus child in a handcart across the compound, we spotted lots of things to entertain kids. After a spin on the little merry-go-round we checked into our bright and friendly apartment. I was delighted to see that the set up suited us perfectly and I was looking forward to the week ahead. Afterwards we took a stroll to the sun terrace and enjoyed a cocktail as the perfect start to our summer holiday.



Who let the Cow Out

At the breakfast buffet was the first time we got a feel for what it was like to be on a package holiday with kids entertainment. A massive dancing cow entered the breakfast room, with a bunch of kids in tow. It resonated with our little one though as he started wiggling excitedly in his high chair. Whilst we devoured all the gorgeous breakfast items, mostly aimed at kids, the cow mascot, singing jolly children's songs, came as a minor shock. However we knew what we had signed up for and seeing our baby happy was a win onto itself. Welcome to family vacation with a one-year old.



Childminding included

After a couple of days of settling in, we couldn't wait to try the free childminding service. At fourteen months our baby had never stayed with anyone else before. Not used to grandparents around or any type of childminding, we weren't sure how this was going to go. But we were dying for some couple time and planned to go to the attached Pool & Spa one morning. The Kids Club was a lovely space, located in a lighthouse with a huge indoor area and an outdoor playground. It was quiet that day and we got a one-on-one minding service by a lovely young woman. Junior immediately engaged with the colourful environment and we managed to sneak out for as long as three hours! Good we made the most of it as this was all we got. The rest of the vacation he obviously wanted to spend as a family.



An Unlucky Break

Apart from looking forward to a change of scenery, we had been anticipating high temperatures and loads of sunshine which we normally wouldn't get back home in Ireland. Of course, now that we were away, Ireland was suffering an unprecedented heatwave with hose bans all over the place. That wouldn't have bothered us, if we had gotten some of that lovely heat over in Germany, too. Here on the other hand, everybody was welcoming the intense rain showers which the dry soil so desperately needed. Bad timing for us I guess.

So with the beautiful Lake Fleesensee right at our doorstep, we didn't get a single day to take advantage of the shallow warm water and sandy beaches. Even though there was plenty of stuff to do, I had seen us going down to the lake every day. I would have loved to take a boat trip and John was dying to do some watersport activities. Nevertheless, we had a great time, doing excursions into the surroundings or just chilling out at the Dorfhotel. We were so used to finding our way around bad weather after all.

The Man Who invented the Potatoes



On our way to my parents' house I wanted to take the opportunity to show John some more of my home country. Passing by Potsdam, I decided that the [Palace of Sanssouci](#) was definitely worth a little detour. My parents had always brought my sister and I when we had visitors from abroad and now I was going to show it to my Irish family. Proud I had come up with the perfect sightseeing stop, we pulled into the busy car park at Sanssouci. Since we had left the Dorfhotel that morning, the sun was back to splitting the stones. Great, formal terraced gardens with not a single place of shade in thirty degrees.

Anyway, the beauty of Sanssouci captured us instantly. Totally comprehensible why they called it 'sans-souci' which means "without a worry" in French. That was basically all I remembered about its history, obviously very little to impress my inquisitive husband. At least I was able to point him to Frederick the Great's grave that was covered in potatoes. But when he asked me why they were there, all I could come up with was, because he had invented them. It gave us both a great laugh, but was not exactly speaking for my skills as a tour

guide. (Read the story about the 'P



Shift of Priorities

But who expects you to catch up on local history before a family vacation with a one-year old? Priorities totally shifted for me when travelling as a mother. Whereas my preparations used to focus on what places to visit, it was now all about how most conveniently to get there. Rather than bringing a guide book on the plane, I was making sure I had enough snacks and things to entertain the baby. However our first vacation as a family of three was a success. We even got another chance for a date night at my parents'. And whilst I had the same proud feeling showing my husband around my hometown [Torgau](#), I skipped the tour guiding part and we settled for a nice dinner and drinks by the river Elbe instead.

