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## Bambino on Board

# Be Ready to Change Plans: Traveling with Baby is All About Adaptability

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Posted Jun 29th 2011 03:30 PM

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DVDs (seasons 2 and 3)?

When you have a nine-month old baby as a traveling companion, there is plenty to keep you up at night as you prepare for overseas travel and after you arrive. It can all get a bit overwhelming. Only now, as our trip is nearing the three week mark, are we settling into our Italian lifestyle and able to reflect more clearly on our trip preparation and Europe acclimation.

To be sure, booking a month-long trip is fraught with anxieties: Will my accommodations match its website description? Will I remember how to drive a stick shift car? Will anyone speak English? And will my house-sitting neighbor find my private stash of Golden Girls

Travelers know that they are bound to leave home having forgotten to pay a bill or having failed to request a vegetarian meal on their flight. Later, they will forget to ask for no cuttle fish in their seafood broth at a fancy ristorante. They'll incur a late fee, eat the stale airline roll and butter then claim to be full when they are not.

That spirit of getting on with it is necessary when traveling in general, let alone with a bambino. Constant adaptation, on-the-fly decision-making, and frequent scheduling modifications are necessary to ensure a comfortable experience.

For us, it helps that our accommodations have exceeded our expectations. [Tenute de Pecille](#) is spacious, well-kept, and in the countryside, but within easy access to a town (Panzano), fulfilling our three most important criteria. But self-catering is not for everyone.

Farmhouse accommodations require a reasonable amount of self-sufficiency. We wash our own laundry (and hang it on a line outside to dry). There's no internet lounge or breakfast room. There is not a 24/7 concierge or room service. What we do have is an onsite manager named Sammie and curator named Rudina who take immense pride in the facility while respectfully deferring to their guests' wishes.

You may require more or less attention when you travel. Consider this carefully if you're planning to follow in our footsteps.

As for driving, while I remembered basic stick-shifting mechanics, I still struggle. I stalled the car twice today and on one occasion it began skipping backwards, prompting me to yell for my wife to get our son out of the car while I reached the top of the hill that had defeated me. I call it "On-the-fly Prioritization" and thanks to Max, I'm getting good at it.

While we knew Italy offers many of the conveniences of home, we were considered before leaving that Max was accustomed to certain food brands, diapers, heck, even baby wipe brands that would not be available in Europe. Our solution was to bring a huge stash of supplies from home. Not surprisingly, we've run out of many items already, but a visit to Panzano's local *farmacia* with its Sophia Loren-lookalike pharmacist greatly eased our anxieties.

We were introduced to new varieties of food, diapers, and wipes – all perfectly suitable. To these, Max has shown no resistance (indeed, he has shown a particular fondness for Coop brand frutta mista).

And, though we arrived with a modest sightseeing agenda, we've had to pare it down significantly already in order to work around Max's naps, the heat, and, in one case, getting rather hopelessly lost.

Our European experience has been everything we could have hoped for and more, but only because we knew ahead of time it would probably be much different than we imagined.