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Bambino on Board



The Bambino Heads Back to Chicago

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Jerry Soverinsky/AOL Travel

was truly excited with what must have seemed like a flying Gymboree class. He remained awake the whole way.

It's been a week since we returned to Chicago, and our adjustment back to Central time, traffic congestion and temperatures in the upper 90s has been a relatively smooth one. Max resumed his old sleep schedule just two days after returning home, three full days before Jana and I resumed ours.

Our return flight to Chicago was easy enough – unlike our flight to Europe that was marked with anxieties fueled by death stares from fellow passengers. Seated in the bassinet row again, we were neighbors this time with a Finnish couple and their 7-month old baby, two toddlers in the row behind us, and another baby to our right. Max

In hindsight, the late arrival – just before 6 p.m. Chicago time – was well-timed. It kept Max awake until a reasonable American bedtime, which seemed to hasten his body clock adjustment.

We caught a snag on our arrival into O'Hare, as none of our bags made it onto our connecting flight from Copenhagen. Because Max's car seat was in one of the suitcases, we were forced to wait a couple of hours until airport personnel could track down a loner. Having faced the exact same problem on our Europe arrival last month, we've learned to check the baby car seat at the gate on future flights. We lost too much time (and incurred a hefty expense bunking down in Zurich) while we waited for the seat to arrive.

Looking back, while six checked bags seems to indicate we over-packed for our trip, it helped a great deal to have many of Max's favorite toys, books, and play things on-hand. While his white noise machine broke a couple of days into our trip, an iPhone sound machine app filled in quite well, as did an endless loop playlist of his favorite nighttime songs.

Whether Max remembers anything from our month in Europe is anyone's guess. But for Jana and me, the adventure far exceeded every one of our expectations, first and foremost among them was to enjoy a month of intimate family time immersed in European cultures. Along the way, we made several new friends while discovering centuries-old villages and awe-inspiring mountain scenery, all washed down at night with wonderful wines, great bread and cheese, tasty chocolates, and of course gelato.

We can't wait to return.

(Though it will help a lot if the US-exchange rate improves.)

If you decide to follow in the Bambino's footsteps, check out these resources:

Cheaptickets.com: I signed up for their fare tracker email alerts and quickly snagged two adult roundtrip tickets and an infant ticket for \$1500 total, including taxes.

Zurich Radisson Blu Hotel: For any Zurich stay, planned or otherwise, this airport hotel that borders the train station is uber-chic with first-class rooms and facilities.

Tenute di Pecille: Two separate complexes in Panzano-in-Chianti offer private home rentals affording dramatic views of the Chianti vineyards. The onsite staff is first-rate, and the private pool offers welcome relief from hot, hot, hot Tuscan days.

Villa Margherita: Run by 86-year-old Frau Kunz, this 100-year old Swiss chalet in Interlaken, Switzerland offers a private, 2-bedroom, 2-bath apartment fully equipped with all of the amenities of home. The perfect residence for an Interlaken stay.