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# The Road to Panzano: Planning a Month-Long European Vacation

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Posted Jun 21st 2011 04:00 PM

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Jerry Soverinsky, AOL Travel

(i.e. Kayak, CheapTickets, etc.) last December, watching prices from Chicago to half a dozen European cities. One Sunday morning, the fare to Zurich had dropped 50% from any other we had seen, and because Jana was out grocery shopping, I surprised her by booking the tickets – the first concrete step toward our European getaway.

Our journey to Panzano began months ago when Jana and I decided that we we'd try to initiate Max to travel at an early age. We both agreed that Italy would be the ideal destination.

As a former tour operator, I had maintained contacts throughout Europe and reached out to several to help solicit lodging reservations. Our criteria: walking distance to a town, a kitchen and separate sleeping and living areas. A pool, while not mandatory, was an object of desire. And, we did well – [check out that villa](#)!

**Heads Up:** While infants don't require a seat, some airlines still charge a hefty fee. Check before booking.

Once on the ground, we rented a car from [Auto Europe](#), my go-to car rental company whenever I visit the continent. I appreciate their 24-hour assistance, and while booking direct with a European company may sometimes be less expensive, I'd rather defer to a firm that guarantees no surprises with price and car model (and that speaks English).

Since traveling with a baby requires tons of gear, we reserved a VW Passat wagon. It was the largest wagon in AE's rental fleet, and costs roughly \$500 per week including basic insurance. While its luggage area is extremely generous, we needed every bit of space, including the unoccupied passenger seats, for our bags. If you plan to travel with a baby, don't skimp on luggage space - you can never have too much.

We applied for a passport for Max in early January (it took six weeks to receive it), and as we would be traveling with a pack-and-play crib, we acclimated Max to it several weeks prior to departure, having him take dozens of afternoon naps in it. The strategy has worked well, he's been sleeping in it every day of our trip.

Our one regret is probably making the decision to fly into Zurich, which saved us \$1,000 on airfare but forced us to make an eight-hour drive to Tuscany that required a hotel stay on the front and back ends of the trip. The costs added right back up: There was the gas (though incredibly, the entire one-way trip consumed less than half-a-tank of gas), two extra car rental days, and a snack-heavy layover in Scandinavia. In hindsight, we should have chosen a direct flight near our preferred destination.

Have you traveled with your kids? Have any great tips for the rest of us? Share them in the comments below.

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