



One mum, one daughter,





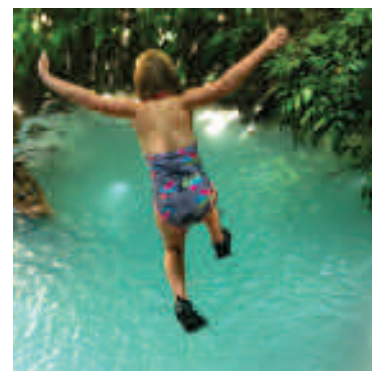
one year of adventure

EVIE AND EMMIE FARRELL are living life on the road and share why long-term travel could be the trip of a lifetime for your family too.



🔥 HOT TIP

If you're planning to travel long-term, connect with other travelling families on Facebook and Instagram before you go to find a world of friends.



As the sun rises over the Wang Quan Valley, my daughter Emmie and I creep from our tent, perched high on top of an ancient watchtower. Climbing over chunks of bricks and shrubs, we reach the parapet, where we sit holding hands and gazing at the Great Wall of China as it weaves a golden trail over mountains, valleys and a blanket of green forest in the morning light.

Up to one million soldiers once lived on this wall, guarding the Chinese empire from invasion. After a challenging four-hour hike we slept here too, laying under the stars in haunting silence and sticky humidity.

Leaving home

Moments like these are why I packed up our life in Sydney to travel with six-year-old Emmie. The plan was simple: to spend every day together and reestablish the bond I feared we'd been losing while I was working and she was at school or with babysitters.

Emmie's dad (we separated just after she was born), friends and family were supportive.

"Nothing changes in the suburbs," they said. "It will still be the same when you get back."

Plans to renovate the kitchen went out the window; we would be using our savings for travel instead. While \$20,000 wouldn't last long in Sydney, it would support us in Asia for at least a year, with the rent from our home topping up our balance each month.

A fabulous life on the road

We left Sydney on 1 February 2016 and have travelled to 13 countries in the 10 months since. Some of our most precious moments have been in the quiet everyday, like Emmie's head resting on my shoulder as we shared headphones on an early-morning bus trip in Taiwan, epic Uno challenges with a masterful child-cheater on island ferries in the Philippines and playing hangman on overnight trains through the Chinese countryside.

Then there are the dazzling once-in-a-lifetime experiences, like spotting pygmy elephants bathing in the Kinabatangan River, spending time with the Bajau Laut sea gypsies in Borneo, jumping from milky-blue waterfalls in the Philippines, sharing sunsets over rice paddies in Vietnam, caring for rescued elephants in Thailand and attending the Anzac Day Dawn Service in Singapore.

"We're travelling for one year!" is Emmie's introduction to people we meet on the road and they will often look to find a third person in our little gang. "Just us," I tell them, usually to a

surprised smile. It's not difficult to travel as a single parent; the hardest part was making the decision to leave and preparing for the trip. The fun began once we were on the road.

We carry one shared pack that holds limited clothes, electronics, medical supplies, toiletries and essentials like rain jackets and sleeping sheets. Emmie is responsible for the toys and games in her daypack and mine holds our money, passports, camera and as much junk as a six-year-old can sneak into it.



MUMPACKTRAVEL TRAVEL MAP

Can you name all the places they've been?



Having time allows us to be flexible so we don't plan very far ahead. When my eardrum burst in the Philippines we extended our stay at a guesthouse until I was able to move and rearrange our plans. Unexpected change has often led to us stumbling across little pockets of magic, like discovering our spirit town, Vietnam's ancient Hoi An, where we came on a whim and stayed for five weeks with Emmie joining the international school for a month.

Our new normal

Of course there have been parenting fails along the way. When wild monkeys attacked us on Penang Hill I instinctively ran, leaving

Emmie behind to fend for herself, surrounded by the mischievous primates; an argument with a taxi driver in Beijing that escalated into a bit of pushing – and Emmie defending me by hitting him with her teddy bear – taught me to pick my battles. Sometimes you just have to accept you're being conned and get on with it.

I mostly face the same parenting challenges I had at home, for example, schoolwork is difficult and meal times remain a battle of wills, but there is nothing out of the ordinary that has

raised its head simply because we are not at home. The wins, however, are immeasurable. Like a baby onion, Emmie reveals layers of her developing personality with every new experience. She helps solve day-to-day challenges, is unflappable and sees the fun in spending 17 hours on a mistakenly booked third-class sleeper carriage on a Chinese train (hot, smelly and confined to coffin-like bunks) or spending the night at an airport. Her curiosity and openness has connected us with many local families throughout our travels.

Life on the road is our new, wonderful normal. Our only challenge now is coming home – returning will be much, much harder than leaving. ●

Follow their travels! Evie and Emmie share their adventures at www.mumpacktravel.com and on Instagram @mumpacktravel