

Safety > Car Seats



Western norms meet Eastern realities, and you have to make an awkward choice.

This is a subject of obvious importance and sensitivity, but also one where perfectly sensible behavior for Westerners contrasts with a completely different set of cultural norms. As a parent, you'll have to think through your approach to this situation and decide your comfort level before getting on the airplane.

It sounds wrong to say this, but car seats aren't practical for use in China. Why?

- First, the infrastructure isn't there. Most people don't own cars, so obviously they don't own car seats. Because people don't own car seats, why bother designing vehicles with hardpoints to attach them to?
- Second, you'll probably be traveling with other families in small minivans. If every child had her own seat, there would be no room for the parents.
- Third, you may be using different vehicles each day. The time needed to rig up and remove seats - and do it safely - becomes significant.
- Fourth, you won't be buying a seat there. Safety regulations aren't the same, you don't read Chinese, and so you won't be able to determine if the seat is legal for use on an airplane or in a vehicle back home.
- Fifth, outside of the cost to check an unused car seat as luggage across the Pacific and then on another flight inside China, how likely is it that the seat will be damaged at some point?

For your flight home, if your child is age 2 or younger, you don't have to purchase a separate seat (although we highly recommend it if your budget agrees.) If your child is older, or you just want that extra space, then you have an option to use a car seat there.

Car seats aren't required by the FAA, but they do strongly recommend using them. US-based airlines by law must accept car seats which are labeled as 'approved for airline use,' but that's not necessarily the case for other carriers. There is just one [foldable/packable seat option](#) that has been tested and authorized for flight, but you are not allowed to use it in automobiles.

Whatever your choices in China and on the flight are, once you've landed at home and are getting into your own car (your in-laws' car, etc.), there is no question - that auto must use a car seat.

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