

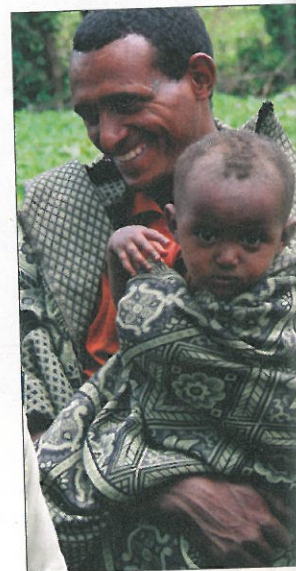
Just as animals travel with their young in different ways — a kangaroo with a joey in her pouch, a gorilla with little ones riding on her back, and ducklings lined up behind mom — people around the world have different ways of carrying children. Some moms tie up their kids in cloth pouches around their backs. Other parents push their babies in carriers, wagons, and even sleds. And many families simply use their arms to tote around their toddlers.

Moms and dads have always had the same problem: it's hard to get any work done while lugging around an infant. Just as today's parents need to run errands, cook, clean, and work, mothers living thousands of years ago had to gather food and firewood. Of course babies couldn't be left alone, so women began tying their babies to their backs, waists, and shoulders. This left their hands free to do their work, while the little ones went along for the ride.

This tradition lives on in countries all over the world. Southern African babies snuggle close to their mom's backs when tied up in a *kanga*. With just one piece of cloth, women from Botswana to Zimbabwe can transform a baby into a backpack bundle, with little feet sticking out either side of mom's waist at a height just perfect for tickling her elbows.

On the southeast Asian island of Borneo (BOR-nee-oh), children are carried on their mom's backs also, but in a carrier that looks more like a basket or bucket that's been cut in half. The open part of the basket has straps where the baby's legs go, and the back of the basket is decorated with beads. This baby-toting basket can be worn on someone's back, around his or her waist, or even carried like a purse.

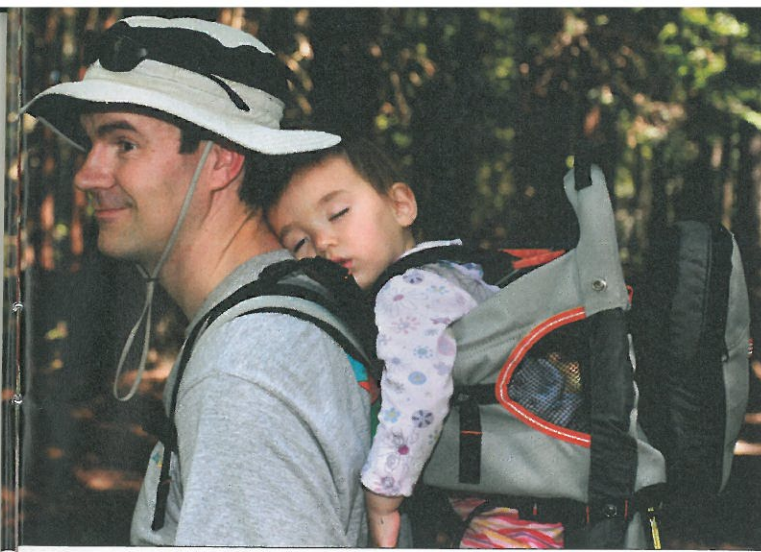
Babies in China used to ride around on their parents' backs just like African and Borneo babies, but this has changed lately because of the Chinese government's one-child-per-couple rule. This rule has created a society in which there are a lot more arms to carry than babies who need carrying. So instead of tied up



by Jennifer Moore

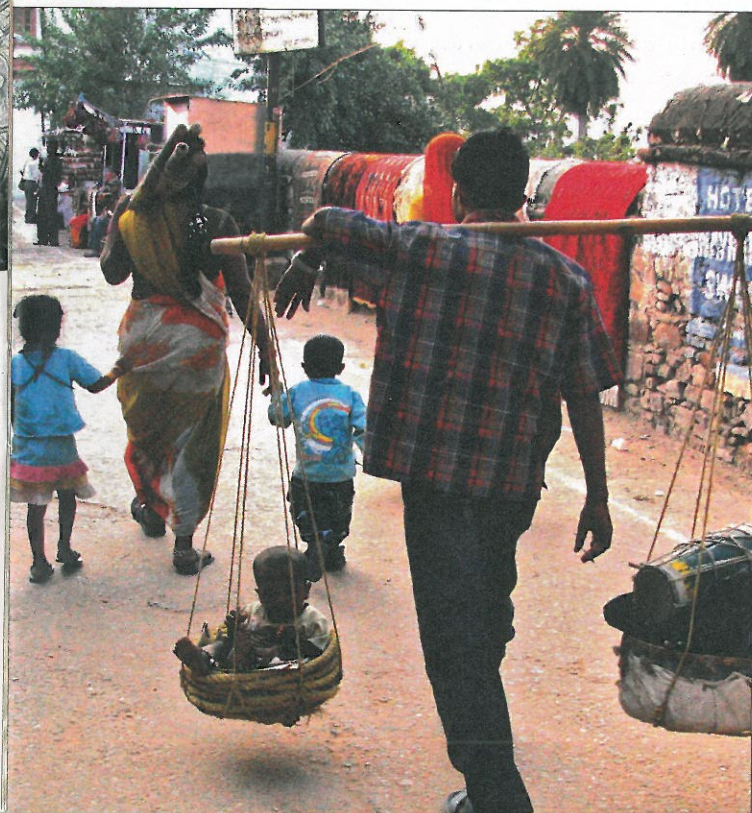
Hitching a Ride

How Babies Travel



and out of the way, Chinese babies are the center of attention, getting passed from mom, to dad, to grandma, to grandpa as each family member eagerly awaits his or her turn to hold onto the one and only baby.

All the way across the world in Canada's newest and most remote province, Nunavut, Inuit (in-YOU-it) Native Americans have lived for years. Nunavut's temperatures get below freezing in the summertime, so keeping a baby warm is a year-round challenge. An Inuit woman accomplishes this feat by stowing her baby in the oversized hood of her coat, called an *amauti* (eh-mow-tee). Just like in Africa, as soon as the passenger falls asleep, the moms can start their work.



Across the Atlantic Ocean, parents brave the snowy and icy streets of Norway. Their babies stay warm and stable in zip-up, sheepskin-lined strollers, complete with mini suspension-like cables between the wheels and the body of the stroller. These strollers are so high-tech that babies aren't the least bit disturbed as they travel up and down Norwegian hills, across bumpy terrain, and aboard buses.

Strollers have been used in Norway and throughout Europe since they were introduced during the Victorian England era, which was the first time that some parents had time to play and go on walks with their children. Strollers were then called perambulators, or prams for short. Prams got so popular that those without children started complaining about how they were crowding up the sidewalks!

As with many customs from around the world, Americans have adapted many of these child-carrying techniques. Especially while hiking, American moms and dads are often seen carrying babies in backpacks, just like the people of Borneo do. A quick glance at any mall, theme park, or sidewalk in the United States will show that strollers are just as popular now as they were in Victorian England.

But what about tying babies up in cloth and securing them to their moms — does that happen in America? It didn't happen much until the 1960s when a Peace Corps worker named Ann Moore came back to America after working in Africa. Remembering how seldom African babies cried, she created her own kanga-like carrier. Her invention is still being sold in stores all over the United States. Many moms use wraps because they feel when babies are physically attached to their families, they are emotionally attached as well.

Jennifer Moore has lived, taught, and spied on babies in Norway, China, and Egypt. She currently teaches world geography in Las Vegas.

Take me for a ride!

On wheels, by basket, in a cloth, or strapped into a backpack, there are many ways to carry a baby.