

Swim Meet Tips from an Experienced RDCSC Mom

Whether it's your first away swim meet or your 10th, there's always the stress of making sure you don't forget anything and are as prepared as you can be. Here are some Swim meet organization tips from an experienced swim mom

Hotel – There's no easy answer on what hotel to choose. Swim families tend to choose different hotels for different reasons. You can always ask an experienced swim parent for advice / where they like to stay. Being close to the pool is helpful for the early morning commutes (some meets need to be on deck at 715 am) or if there is only a short time between sessions. Don't forget to consider rush hour traffic flow in your commute. With a multiple day meet the commute time can really add up and contribute to swimmer fatigue.

	10 min away	15 minutes away	20 minutes away
2-day meet (prelim/final) - 2 trips/ day	Commute time: 40min a day 1hour 20 min for the meet	Commute time: 1 hour / day 2 hours for the meet	Commute time: 1 hour 20 min/day 2hours 40min for the meet
3-day meet (prelim final)- 2 trips/ day	Commute time: 40min a day 2hours for the meet	Total in the car: 1 hour / day 3hours for the meet	Total in the car: 1 hour 20 min/day 4hours for the meet
4-day meet (prelim final)- so 2 trips/day	Commute time: 40min a day 2hours 40 min for meet	Total in the car: 1 hour /day 4 hours for the meet	Total in the car: 1 hour 20 min/day 5hours 20min for the meet

Depending on when your swimmer must be at the pool, hotels that offer breakfasts may not open in time for your swimmer to eat before leaving for the pool especially on Sat/Sun. Make sure to check with hotels that offer breakfast about hours of operation. Some hotels that are popular/ filled with swimmers will open early or provide a bagged breakfast for swimmers during a meet weekend, so it never hurts to call the hotel and ask.

Make sure your hotel room has a microwave and a mini fridge (that isn't filled with little bottles of booze) at minimum. Hotels that offer partial or full kitchens are obviously amazing to have but often more expensive or further from the pool. Grab one if its close and a good deal!

Finally make sure you book a rate with free cancellation. Although its uncommon, swim meets can get cancelled or shortened or your swimmer may not be able to attend due to illness. Most hotels offer rates with cancellation up to 24 hr ahead or same day.

PACKING

Swim Bag: Pack a warmup suit & race suit (if appropriate for age & stage) plus an extra just in case, at least 2 RDCSC swim caps (this is a good time to use your named caps) and at least 2 pairs of goggles in case of malfunction. Also pack Catalina team gear shirts/hoodies, sweat pants, shorts, on deck runners or sandals with socks. Pack extra sweats/shorts/socks in suitcase to ensure your swimmer has dry clothes when there are multiple sessions.

Put a couple of swim towels in the swim bag and pack some extras in the suitcase. The number you need depends on whether there are multiple sessions in a day. They never dry in time and your swimmer will want dry towels for the evening session. Consider investing in some of the quick dry towels which will often (almost) dry between sessions.

Hydration: Don't forget your swimmer's water bottle(s). Swimmers need to stay hydrated on deck and in between sessions *especially* if they are in longer races or lots of races. Edmonton & Calgary pools have water bottle filler stations, but some smaller pools do not. You may want to bring some bottled water to those other travel meets. Gatorade (or BioSteel for the older kids) drinks are also a great thing to have on hand for your swimmer to ensure they are hydrated.

Snacks: Swimmers need to eat something on deck in between races but can't eat anything too heavy. Best options are small nutritious snacks your swimmer likes. Things to consider are oatmeal bars or oat bites, small healthy muffins/cookies, fresh fruit, dried fruit, protein bars, Trail mix. Your swimmer will often come home from swim meets begging you to buy or make "x" that another swimmer had on deck. You will soon find out what your swimmer likes or dislikes for these quick snacks between races. Make sure you pack more than you think you need (sometimes they share) and lots of options.!

Breakfast: Swimmers can be very particular about what they want to eat for breakfast on a meet weekend. Many swimmers develop a routine/ food they have every time but things to consider bringing are Bagels/bread and margarine/cream cheese/jam/peanut butter, instant oatmeal, egg bites, fresh fruit, cereal, milk or whatever else your swimmer might like to eat in the morning. Many swim families have a "travel toaster" they take to swim meets with them for a quick breakfast in the room.

Lunch/Dinner

A sometimes-forgotten expense of swim meets can be meals out. Some of the higher-level meets are over 4 days and 2 meals a day can add significantly to the weekend's expense. Depending on the meet there may only be a small amount of time between sessions for your swimmer and if your swimmer is in finals or a relay at the end of the evening session some evenings you may not get back to the hotel until after 9PM. Being prepared with home cooked meal options that are easy to make ahead/purchase and freeze for travel can reduce stress over feeding your swimmer. Some families bring all their meals and others none of their meals. Most are probably somewhere in between bringing a few favorites and also buying a few meals out. Skip the dishes/door dash get a lot of business during a swim meet weekend!

All swimmers are different in terms of likes/dislikes but some ideas for meals that travel well, are easy to reheat in the microwave and will give enough nutrition for your hard-working swimmer include:

1. Chilli & bun
2. Pre-cooked penne, fettuccine, or spaghetti (add a bit of olive oil when done & cool so it does not clump) meat sauce/ rose sauce / light cream sauce
3. Lasagne
4. Cooked chicken or roasted chicken pulled off the bird and rice
5. Baked potatoes and fixings.
6. Costco precooked meals separated into appropriately sized portions

Some families bring slow cookers/ Instapots filled with their favorite food or even have a small grill to use in the hotel rooms (which may or may not be okay with the hotel).

If you are bringing any meals with you don't forget to bring the necessary utensils and dishware. Nothing worse than getting into the hotel room and realizing you forgot spoons & bowls for the cereal. Some families have a "Swim Meet Tub" filled with paper or plastic plates, bowls, silverware, napkins, dish cloth & towel, dish soap. You can add in your toaster or any other small appliance you always bring to meets. The tub is always packed and ready to go!

Experienced RDCSC parents are always happy to share their favorite hotels, or packing tips so make sure to ask for help or advice if you have any questions!