



Snorkeling

Council Approval: Required. This is a vendor provided activity.
Certificate of Insurance (COI): Required from vendor providing this activity for Council Approval. Visit GSNI's webpage for information on requesting a COI from the venue.
If participating in this activity as part of a trip, troops must complete the [GSNI Troop Trip Travel Request Form](#).

Activity Permitted for: J C S A

About Snorkeling

Snorkeling is a great way to explore underwater life without the complicated equipment required for scuba diving. It is important to learn how to breathe properly using snorkels and to receive instruction from an experienced snorkeler or equipment rental facility.

Coral, an ecosystem of shell and marine life, is a popular attraction for snorkelers and must be respected. As ocean organisms that support plants and fish, coral reefs are an essential part of the underwater ecosystem. Unfortunately, coral reefs are under threat due to changes in climate patterns, ocean acidification, and people who mistreat it. Touching coral can harm the delicate outer layer, which may take as long as 100 years to recover.

It is important to know where it is safe to snorkel. Snorkeling is recommended in warm ocean water with minimal waves or current.

Learn More

- [National Association of Underwater Instructors](#)
- [Snorkeling 101: The Complete Guide to Snorkeling](#)

Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities. Talk to Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Always be sure to contact the location and/or the instructor in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities. For more information, visit the [National Instructors Association for Divers with Disabilities](#), and learn about water safety for children with special needs.

Equity. Consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the Girl Scout members in your troop that could affect their ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with members and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all Girl Scout members and their families feel comfortable and have access to whatever is needed to fully participate, such as proper equipment, prior experiences, and the skills needed to enjoy the activity. See the Equity section of the [Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for general advice about expense,

Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) before starting any activity and review it so all are prepared. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury, missing person, sudden illness, or sudden weather or water emergencies.

Snorkeling Checkpoints

Confirm swimming ability. Success on the water depends on comfort and ability in the water. Conducting a swimming test in advance is highly recommended. See [Swimming Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for a sample or ask your instructor for guidelines. If a swimming test is not possible, presume all participants are non-swimmers. Non-swimmers must wear a snorkeling vest and may only snorkel in very calm waters.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure the snorkeling instructor holds instructional certification from Scuba Schools International (SSI) or the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) or has equivalent certification or documented experience according to your council's guidelines.

Verify certified lifeguard is present. If the scuba instructor is not also a certified lifeguard, you will need a lifeguard present. Lifeguards need current ARC Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module or YMCA Waterfront Lifeguarding Certification, or the equivalent. You need one certified lifeguard for every 25 swimmers. The primary guard must be an adult (age 18). Secondary guards can be 16 years old.

Size up snorkeling gear. Ensure the appropriate sizes of masks, snorkels, and fins are available, and make sure that masks fit faces securely and comfortably. With goggles, the air space in front of the eyes is important to see properly underwater. Also keep in mind that objects viewed underwater while wearing a mask appear about 25 percent larger and closer than objects seen through a mask out of water.

Safeguard valuables. Do not leave personal belongings and valuables unattended in a public place. If working with a snorkeling school, inquire about the company's storage options.

Prepare for emergencies. An adult with rescue experience and/or certification must be present. If snorkeling from a boat, at least one adult should have the American Red Cross Water Safety for Parents and Caregivers, American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue, or equivalent experience. (One person can hold both of these qualifications.) Troops must provide one adult certified in Adult and Pediatric CPR/First Aid/AED who is not instructing the activity.

Ensure the presence of a waterproof first aid kit and a first aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared for cases of near-drowning, immersion hypothermia, and sunburn. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first aider with Wilderness First Aid certification.

Get a weather and wind report. Never snorkel on a stormy or extremely windy day; strong winds and large waves decrease visibility and make swimming difficult. On the day of the snorkeling trip or lesson, check the local dive report, [Weather.com](#), or other reliable weather sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. If weather conditions prevent the snorkeling activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

Use the buddy system. See [Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines](#).

Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning. Exit water immediately, and head to shore. Take shelter away from tall objects (including trees, buildings, and electrical poles). Find the lowest point in an open flat area. Squat low to the ground on the balls of the feet and place hands on knees with head between them.

Safety and Required Gear

- Wearable flotation device. Consult with your instructor to evaluate whether participants should wear a flotation device such as a simple waist belt or snorkeling vest. Water currents or surge, visibility, and participants' swimming ability should be considered. If life jackets are recommended by the instructor, then use U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets (Type III recommended) that fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure they are in good condition with no tears.
- Emergency flotation device. At least one graspable and throwable Coast Guard–approved personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) needs to be immediately available.

- Snorkel
- Mask
- Neoprene booties to protect bare feet
- Fins are required when snorkeling in open water.