

Council Approval: Council Approval: Required – see [GSNI Troop Trip Travel Information](#).



Certificate of Insurance (COI): Required from vendors while on trips, including hotels and lodging, aquatic activities, equestrian activities, high adventure activities, amusement parks, and anything labeled as a high-risk activity. Visit [GSNI's webpage](#) for information on requesting a COI from the venue.

Activity Permitted for: D B J C S A

Note: Approval for international travel must often be obtained a year or more in advance of the trip.

About Travel/Trips

Some of the most memorable moments in a Girl Scout's life happen while taking trips. Travel offers a wealth of opportunities for Girl Scouts to develop leadership, confidence, and practical life skills. The following information can help you and Girl Scouts prepare for local, regional, or international travel.

Girl Scouts is a great place to learn how to plan and take exciting trips, because travel is built on a progression of activities—one activity leads to the next. Daisies can begin with a discovery walk. As Girl Scouts grow in their travel skills and can better manage the planning process, they progress to longer trips—even international ones!

For Daisies, this could mean a day trip to an arboretum to complete a badge requirement. For Seniors or Ambassadors, it might mean a college visit trip to the other side of the country, whitewater rafting in Costa Rica, or exploring the Our Chalet World Centre in Switzerland.

Although many troops decide to travel together, Girl Scouts might join a trip with other Girl Scouts from around their council or form a new troop just to travel. Girl Scouts of the USA offers individual Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador Girl Scouts the chance to travel independently and meet other Girl Scouts from across the country through the Destinations program.

The [recommended progression](#) of trips and travel for Girl Scouts are:

Local Field Trips (Daisies and older): Try a trip during your regular troop meeting time! A walk to a nearby garden or a short ride by car or public transportation to a firehouse or courthouse is a great first option for Daisies. Keep it girl-led: they can choose the location!

Day Trips (Daisies and older): An all-day visit to a point of historical or natural interest (bringing their own lunch) or a daylong trip to a nearby city (stopping at a restaurant for a meal) allows younger Girl Scouts to select locations and do much of the trip planning, without being too far from home. Keep it girl-led: Girl Scouts choose the location and an activity (maybe a badge activity?) and help make plans for lunch.

Note: Full-day trips may be challenging for Daisies, especially for kindergartners who have not experienced field trips. Make sure to take some field trips before progressing to a full day trip.

Overnights (Daisies and older, must have experienced a day trip through Girl Scouts): A trip of one night could start with a council event at a local museum or facility, or one night camping or staying at a Girl Scout council property. An overnight is an important opportunity in helping Girl Scouts, and their caregivers, prepare for the

independence needed to take a full weekend trip. Keep it girl-led: Girl Scouts make the packing list and pack their own bags.

Short Trips (Brownies and older, must have experienced an overnight through Girl Scouts): Spend two-three nights in your region, up to a six-hour drive away from home. Keep it girl-led: Girl Scouts pack their own bags, help to plan the activity and meals, and create travel games.

Note: These guidelines may differ from sleepaway camp guidelines. Check your council's camp guidelines for details.

Extended Trips (Juniors and older, must have experienced a short trip through Girl Scouts). Four or more nights camping or staying in a hotel, motel, hostel, or vacation rental . Travel anywhere in the country can last up to a week or more. Try to avoid ordinary recreational trips Girl Scouts might take with their families or schools and consider those that offer some educational component—such as incredible cities, historic sites, and museums around the country. Perhaps the Girl Scouts want to plan a trip to some national parks as part of the Girl Scout Ranger program. Keep it girl-led: Girl Scouts lead the entire planning process and might plan to add a community service or Take Action project.

International Trips (Cadettes and older, must have experienced an extended trips through Girl Scouts). Travel around the world can require one to three years of preparation. Ensure passports, documentation, visas, and customs requirements are in order well in advance of your trip. . Keep it girl-led: Girl Scouts download the [Guide to Global Travel](#) and plan their entire trip—including learning about language, culture, passports and visas, exchange rates, etc.

Independent Travel (Cadettes and older). Older Girl Scouts who already have national or international travel experience can travel independently through council-offered travel opportunities or GSUSA's Destinations program. For opportunities, check with your Girl Scout council and visit the [Destinations website](#).

When thinking about progression, consider things like Girl Scouts':

- Ability to be away from parents/caregivers and their homes
- Ability to adapt to unfamiliar surroundings and situations
- Ability to make decisions for themselves and the good of the group well and easily
- Ability to get along with one another and handle challenges
- Previous cross-cultural experiences, skills, interests, and language skills (where applicable)

Non-Girl Scouts. If you plan to include non-Girl Scouts on your trip, such as siblings, they should also be the same appropriate grade level in progression with travel experience. For example, an eight-year-old sibling of a Senior should not participate in an international trip. **Note:** *WAGGGS World Centres or your Girl Scout council may have additional or different guidelines regarding age requirements for international travel.*

Learn More

- [WAGGGS World Centres](#)
- [Girl Scout troop events and camps your troop can rent](#)
- [Girl Scout Guide to U.S. Travel](#)
- [Girl Scout Guide to Global Travel](#)
- [Girl Scouts Destinations](#) program: Ultimate Experiences in the United States and abroad
- U.S. Department of State: [U.S. passports](#) and [international travel](#)
- Travelers' health (vaccines, medicine, advice): [Centers for Disease Control](#)

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 [Open Doors Organization](#), a great reference for learning and traveling with disabilities.

Equity. Some of your troop members may have traveled before, while others may have never left their home town. Travel could be new for them. Whatever your troop members' experience levels with travel, make sure your conversations normalize those experiences and include everyone. Steer conversations away from sharing about past travel experiences (which could make some Girl Scouts feel excluded). Instead, encourage Girl Scouts to connect about what is happening *now*, on *this trip*. Focus on shared and upcoming experiences.

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.

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.

Travel/Trips Checkpoints

Plan transportation in advance. When planning transportation, keep in mind that large 15-passenger vans manufactured prior to 2013 without driver assistance technology have been flagged as unsafe by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and should therefore be avoided. For more information on operating 15-passenger vans see [Transporting Girls under Standard Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) in the Introduction. If a commercial shuttle service is professionally using the van, this is acceptable.

For chartered buses or rented vehicles always verify safety credentials and commercial driving licenses, check the availability of seat belts, and request a certificate of insurance showing a minimum of one million dollars Auto Liability insurance.

Choose accommodations wisely. Girl Scout groups may stay in a variety of overnight accommodations. Evaluate all options with a view to safety, cost, amenities, distance to planned sights or transportation, privacy, parking, and insurance. Consider:

- Find a [Girl Scout camp](#) you can rent for travel.
- Learn about visiting national, state, or local campgrounds, many of which offer cabins to rent. Try [reserveamerica.com](#).
- Hostels that provide dorm-style space so your group can stay together.
- Hotels, and consider suites and adjoining rooms to enhance supervision. Avoid motels with doors opening to the outside.

Vacation rentals. These are permitted. However, because these are privately owned properties, it can be difficult to qualify safety and credibility. For these reasons, additional steps for rentals such as Airbnb, VRBO, and HomeAway are required. Confirm the following ahead of time:

- The rental is for exclusive use of the home. No other renters will have access to the home during the rental period.
- The space has smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers (these are noted as amenities on booking sites).
- The home and host have substantial, positive visitor reviews. Do not book places with negative, few, or no reviews. Look for super-host status on Airbnb.
- The liability insurance from the host covers premises for commercial use, with a minimum of one million dollars General Liability insurance.
- Check the host's profile or identity verification. You may be asked to do the same, as a renter.
- The local host or manager contact info is available for immediate needs. Share this information with an in-town contact (a person not on the trip).

- Check state laws to see if Airbnb, VRBO, and HomeAway are mandated to meet hotel laws and standards so that you know there is an extra layer of protection.

Check accommodations on arrival. No matter what housing you book, inspect premises with the group immediately on arrival. Let the front desk or host know if you find any deficiencies. Maintain a budget margin so that you can move to another location if you find a property unsafe. Here are several points to check upon arrival:

- All points of entry are secure and lockable.
- Stairs or fire escapes are identified and shown to Girl Scouts.
- Evacuation routes are clear and known to all. Identify an exterior meeting place in case of evacuation.
- Basic safety systems are in place, as appropriate to the type of building and according to building codes in the jurisdiction, such as a fire extinguisher and smoke alarm.
- Location of local emergency services and how to reach them.
- Confirm any communication services (mobile carrier, Wi-Fi) are running and reliable.

Sleeping and bathroom arrangements. Follow these points:

- **Adults are not required to sleep in the same space** (i.e., hotel room) as Girl Scouts; if they do, there should be at least two unrelated female adults in the room.
- **Each participant has her own bed.** Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if they are to share a bed.
- **Reduce the likelihood of spreading illness** by keeping beds 6 feet apart, and/or sleeping head-to-toe, when possible.
- **Girl Scouts and adults do not share a bed.** However, some councils make exceptions for mothers and daughters.
- **Males should not sleep in the same space as youth members.** An exception is made for family members during events such as parent-daughter or family overnights where one family may sleep together in an area specifically designated to accommodate families. If possible, men should have their own designated bathroom. If a unisex bathroom is used, the door must have a working lock, or a system for notifying others that the bathroom is in use. This system should be reviewed and understood by all participants. When traveling or camping, men should not have to walk through the youth sleeping area to get to the bathroom. Men must stay in a tent or a cabin that is separate from the girls or women.
- For additional information on sleeping accommodations, see [Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines](#).

Additional Considerations

Try to make sure international permission slips are signed by both parents. Discuss with your Girl Scout council about having both parents sign the permission slip and notarizing it. This is recommended by U.S. Customs & Border Protection and is strongly suggested as a best practice.

Take the insurance. Protect troop and family funds. When booking flights, consider cancellation insurance which primarily covers the cost for airfare in the event a trip is cancelled due to illness. Read the fine print carefully, as some situations (such as pandemics) may not be covered. Broad cancellation insurance is called “Cancel for any reason” (CFAR) and must be obtained immediately after the first booking. Discuss this option with your Girl Scout council, if needed, as it could be costly. When planning to travel internationally, discuss liability insurance with your Girl Scout council. You will need to confirm that your council’s liability insurance does not have any specific exceptions or exclusion for international travel. For Activity Accident insurance, you must enroll and purchase a specific policy from Mutual of Omaha to cover international trips; international trips are not covered on the Basic Plan.

Plan for contingencies. Occasionally, things will not go as planned. Budget for extra money on hand as a contingency fund for when unexpected changes come up, for example: a canceled accommodation, a train is missed, or an illness requires quarantine or recuperation.

Verify leader/instructor knowledge, experience, judgment, and maturity. Ensure that at least one adult is trained or possesses knowledge, skills, and experience in the following areas:

- First aid
- Travel progression and readiness, including homesickness
- Trip planning in a girl-led environment
- Safety management
- Program activities specific to the trip
- Group dynamics and management
- Supervision of Girl Scouts and adults
- If the trip is international, leader must have international travel experience

Prepare a pre-trip orientation. Make sure Girl Scouts have a detailed itinerary, but do not post the itinerary on a publicly accessible website where others may be able to see it. Ensure that all participants and parents receive information about health, first aid, emergency procedures, plans for transportation, and any geographic detail such as the terrain or environment. Also share basic operational procedures (i.e., buddy system at all times) and behavior expectations. You may want to work with your troop or group to create a group behavior contract, and have members sign it. Another suggestion is to create a personal emergency action plan that each participant can write and carry with them. Make sure to discuss topics like:

- How the buddy system works
- What to do if separated from the group, whether by accident or due to a crime
- What to do if something significant is lost: money, passport, or luggage
- What to do if emergency help is needed
- How to perform basic first aid procedures
- How to deal with a large crowd, if applicable
- What positive behaviors are expected and the consequences of not living up to those behaviors

International Travel. International travel involves increased travel precautions and requirements compared to domestic travel. **The following Safety Checkpoints apply to International Travel:**

- **Register your trip** with the U.S. government's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) so that you will get updates about safety, and so that the State Department knows where you are traveling.
- **Read on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) website about health concerns for the country.** Make sure participants and parents/guardians review this information. Every participant traveling internationally should visit their doctor to discuss their travel health requirements and any vaccinations or medications necessary.
- **Become aware of any quarantine, vaccine, or screening requirements for return to the United States,** as well as what is required for entry into destination countries. This information will help greatly when deciding upon a destination.
- **Confirm the travel advisory level for the country** via the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. *Note: The State Department now classifies travel advisories with travel alert levels as follows:*
 - *Level 1: Exercise Normal Precautions*
 - *Level 2: Exercise Increased Precautions*
 - *Level 3: Reconsider Travel*
 - *Level 4: Do Not Travel*
- **Confirm that participants and their parents/guardians have the advisory information and are aware of the travel alert level in the region you plan to visit.** This can be reflected on a permission slip if your Girl Scout council chooses to handle it that way.
- **Read information about safety issues and concerns carefully.** Pay attention to the in-country travel alerts for the specific region you are interested in. For example, a certain country may be classified as a Level 2, but a particular state or region within that Level 2 country may be categorized as Level 3.

- **Check the travel alert status periodically in the months/weeks/days leading up to your trip for any changes.** For situations where there is a travel alert Level 1 or Level 2, take normal safety precautions.
- **Travel Alert 4.** When the travel alert Level is 4 (“do not travel”), Girl Scout members are not to travel to a location under any circumstances.
- **Travel Alert 3.** For situations where the travel alert is a 3 (“reconsider travel”), there are several steps that should be taken before moving forward:
 - Strongly consider selecting a different location.
 - If interest is high, have a conversation with your local council’s safety or risk representative to fully understand the specific risk factors in play.
 - Contact the host destination facility and ask if they are aware of the travel alert level and what extra security measures are in place, if any.
 - Inform participants and parents/guardians and determine if there is still a compelling interest in traveling to this location, considering the travel alert level.
 - Get parents’/guardians’ explicit approval to travel to the location, according to specific risks, in writing.
 - Have a conversation with your Girl Scout council and get approval from a legal perspective from in-house legal or outside legal counsel.
 - Confirm that you have senior management approval within your council prior to moving forward with your plans.

Finally, when traveling, be sure to follow the safety checkpoints for specific activities you plan to do on your trip.