



Recreational Tree Climbing

Activity Permitted for: J C S A

Council Approval: Required as per Council Policy P1;
[Activity/Trip Permission \(2129\)](#)

Vendor Approval: Required

Required Training: 281 GS 201 Trips & Overnights (gsLearn)

About Recreational Tree Climbing

In recreational tree climbing, girls explore the beauty of living trees with guided facilitator support. Recreational tree climbers use ropes, harnesses, saddles, and climbing techniques to ascend into the crowns of trees and the canopies of forests. Care should be taken to keep climbers and trees safe.

Climbing may be done on branches that have at least 6 inches of living tissue. A full inspection of the health of the tree and surrounding area must be made.

Leave No Trace

While climbing in natural areas, it is important to respect the environment. Read tips from the [Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics](#).

The [Global Organization of Tree Climbers](#) has an interactive map to help you find tree-climbing programs.

Learn More

- [The Tree Climbing Planet](#)
- [Leave No Trace](#)

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, check out [Move United](#) to learn about adaptive climbing.

Equity. In addition to physical and social-emotional disabilities, 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.

Infectious Disease Guidelines. Girl Scouts use a commonsense approach to health and safety. Before participating in Girl Scouting activities, members are to undergo health checks at home for any

symptoms such as fever of 100.4 (or need for fever-reducing medications) chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, stomach aches, nausea, or vomiting. Members with any of these symptoms or in need of fever-reducing medication **MUST** stay home until fully recovered.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) before taking girls out for any activity and review it with the girls so they too are prepared. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury to a girl, missing girl, sudden illness, or sudden weather or water emergencies.

Recreational Tree Climbing Checkpoints

Vendor Approval Required Recreational Tree Climbing. Review Vendor Approval section under the *Standard Safety Guidelines for vendor approval timelines*. Connect with your Girl Scout council for approved vendor suggestions to ensure they are properly insured. If it is not, allow enough time to have the vendor approved. The owner operator should be able to confirm one million dollars General Liability insurance upon request. For privately/locally owned businesses, the council will request a certificate of insurance to document evidence of the insurance coverage and name the council as additional insured. Most facilities will accommodate this request if they are able to administratively. [See High Adventure Approved Vendors List \(#2127\)](#).

Required Training: Troop/Group Program leaders must complete GSUSA's online leadership courses and GSVSC's 281 GS 201 Trips & Overnights course in gsLearn. Adult volunteer chaperones must complete GSVSC's 281 GS 104 Orientation for Support Volunteers online course in gsLearn.

Choose a certified instructor. The facilitator needs to have documented experience in leading and teaching tree climbing.

- Ensure the instructor climbs all routes before participants begin.
- Ensure only instructors clip participants in and out of the tie-in system.
- Ensure a process for managing safety and performing rescues is in place.

Ensure helmet-only areas are clearly designated to protect participants and passersby from falling debris.

File required permits.

Inspect equipment. The instructor will inspect all equipment before each use. Equipment will be well-maintained. A Use Log will track wear, stress, and deterioration of gear. Outside professionals should periodically inspect all trees and equipment. A written process for equipment monitoring and retirement needs to be followed.

Get a weather report. On the morning of the activity, visit Weather.com to determine if conditions are appropriate. Be prepared to alter the activity plan if weather conditions change. Participants must not climb when trees or gear are wet. In the event of a storm, take shelter away from all trees and other tall objects. 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.

Participants receive instruction. Instructors must describe the climb's objectives, safety procedures, and hazards to the participants. Climbers learn:

- Readiness and action commands.
- Muscle warmup and stretching techniques.

- Safety procedures and site-specific hazards.

Safety Gear

- Climbing equipment—such as ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets—designed for this purpose and appropriate for the size of the user.
- Climbing helmets worn by all participants who will be more than 6 feet off the ground or on belay; helmets must be approved by the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA).
- Sturdy shoes.