



## Travel / Trips

**Activity Permitted for:** D B J C S A

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

**Vendor Approval:** Dependent upon chosen activities

**Required Training:** 281 GS 201 Trips & Overnights (gsLearn); GS 203 International Trip Training for international travel. *See below for training prerequisites*

**Proof of Commercial Liability Insurance:** Required for **Airbnb, VRBO and HomeAway-type or rentals** of private homes. A copy of the host's commercial liability insurance may need to be submitted to council if confirmation of coverage cannot be verified through host site. Council must receive confirmation or be able to verify premises for commercial use with one million dollars in General Liability insurance coverage.

### ***Note Council approval timelines:***

**Four (4) weeks processing** is required for local field trips within in-council boundaries and activities that do NOT require vendor approval. Refer to the above P1 policy as to when local field trips require council approval. This includes high risk activities, camping (even if on council property), or programs that include human sexuality or related health issues.)

**Six (6) weeks processing** is required for trips out-of-council boundaries but within the state of Virginia or any activities requiring vendor\* approval based on Safety Activity Checkpoints. (This includes high risk activities, camping, or programs that include human sexuality or related health issues.)

**Eight (8) weeks processing** is required for trips out-of-state but within the continental US and for stable vendor approvals.

**Twelve (12) weeks processing** is required for international trips outside of the continental US, including Alaska, Hawaii, and US territories and/or cruises.

**Twenty-four (24) months** in advance of intended international travel dates and prior to girl-led planning, [Intent to Travel for International Trips \(#2279\)](#) form must be submitted and approved by council. This form is a notification of international travel and allows time for the council to assign an international travel mentor and provide required GS 203 International Trip training. *GS 203 International Trip training must be completed 18-20 months before the tentative trip date and **BEFORE***

planning with girls begins. Approval of intent to travel is **NOT** final council approval for international travel. Intent to Travel form **DOES NOT** provide approval for international trips. For first-time Girl Scout international trips, allow **thirty-six (36) months** for planning. Some trips take longer to plan, adjust accordingly.

## 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 girls to develop leadership, confidence, and practical life skills. The following information can help you and girls prepare for local, regional, or international travel.

Girl Scouts is a great place for girls 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 girls 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 as part of the Journey they are working on. For Seniors or Ambassadors, it might mean whitewater rafting in Costa Rica or exploring the Our Chalet World Center in Switzerland. Please see the [Girl Scout Guide to U.S. Travel](#).

Although many troops decide to travel together, Girl Scouts might join a trip with other girls from around their council or form a new troop with other girls who like to travel. Girl Scouts of the USA offers individual Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors the chance to travel independently and meet other Girl Scouts from across the country through the Destinations program.

**Girl Scout Travel Progression**

Progression allows girls to learn the skills they need to become competent travelers, including how to plan and organize trips. Because when girls take the lead, the possibilities are endless.

**LOCAL FIELD TRIPS**  
Get your travel feet wet! Walk to a nearby garden, or take a short ride to a firehouse or other local spot.  
Keep it girl-led: girls choose the location.

**DAY TRIPS**  
Take an all-day trip!  
Keep it girl-led: girls choose the location and activity (perhaps working toward a badge) and make plans for lunch.

**OVERNIGHTS**  
Start with one night, maybe at a camp or museum. Progress to a weekend trip in a nearby city or state park.  
Keep it girl-led: girls plan the activity and meals, create travel games, and pack their own overnight bags.

**REGIONAL TRIPS**  
Spend three to four nights away somewhere a few hours from home.  
Keep it girl-led: girls plan key details of the trip, such as the activities, the budget, the route, and lodging.  
(Extended trip insurance required.)

**NATIONAL TRIPS**  
Travel the country! Trips often last a week or more. Girls should think beyond a typical vacation location and consider historical sites, museums, or national parks!  
Keep it girl-led: girls lead the entire planning process and might add a community service or Take Action project.  
(Extended trip insurance required.)

**INTERNATIONAL TRIPS**  
Travel the world! These life-changing trips usually take one to three years to prepare. Consider visiting a WAGGGS World Centre!  
Keep it girl-led: girls download the Global Travel Toolkit and plan their entire trip (including learning about the language, culture, passports and visas, exchange rates, etc.).  
(Extended trip insurance required.)

**INDEPENDENT TRAVEL**  
Older girls with national or international travel experience can travel nationally or internationally independently through council-offered travel opportunities or GSUSA's Destinations program. Check with your council, or visit the Girl Scout Destinations website!

Check with your council about age requirements. Girls should have experience at every level of the progression before moving on to the next level. For regional travel, girls must be Juniors or older. For national and international trips, girls must be Cadettes or older.

**When moving up to each level of the progression, consider girls' independence, flexibility, decision-making skills, group skills, and cross-cultural skills.**

## **The recommended progression of trips and travel for Girl Scouts are:**

**Local Field Trips** (Daisies and older). A walk to a nearby garden or a short ride by car or public transportation to a firehouse or courthouse is a great first step for Daisies. Keep it girl-led: girls 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 girls to select locations and do much of the trip planning, without being too far from home. Keep it girl-led: girls can choose the location and an activity (maybe a badge activity?) and help make plans for lunch.

***Note:** Full-day trips may be challenging for Daises, especially for kindergarteners who have not experienced short trips. Make sure girls take some short trips before they progress to a full day trip.*

Depending on where one lives in Virginia, day trips may involve travel to Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, or Washington D.C.

**Overnight & Weekend Trips** (Daisies and older): A trip of one—or possibly two—nights away could start with one night camping or staying at a Girl Scout property and progress to a visit to a state or national park, or nearby city for sightseeing, staying in a hotel, motel, or campground—or even an overnight at a large museum! These short trips are just long enough to get girls excited about travel, but not long enough to generate homesickness. Keep it girl-led: girls plan the activity and meals, create travel games, and pack their own bags.

***Note:** A Daisy troop may participate in an overnight experience if the girls are ready. Brownie troops can participate for up to two nights. For camp this differs in the following way: girls who have completed kindergarten may independently participate in day camp and in resident camp experiences lasting up to three nights. Girls who have completed first grade may independently participate in resident camp experiences lasting four or more nights.*

Depending on where one lives in Virginia, overnight and weekend trips may involve travel to Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, or Washington D.C.

**Regional Trips** (Juniors and older). Three- or four-nights camping or staying in a hotel, motel, hostel, or vacation rental within the girls' home region taking girls up to a few hours away from home. Keep it girl-led: girls plan key details of the trip such as activities, the budget, the route, and lodging.

Depending on where one lives in Virginia, regional trips may involve travel outside the state of Virginia, but remains along the East Coast, e.g., Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and Florida. **Make sure girls take short trips before they progress to locations that are farther away and require longer stays.**

**National Trips** (Cadettes and older). Travel anywhere in the country can last up to a week or more. Try to avoid ordinary recreational trips girls might take with their families and consider those that offer some educational component—such as incredible cities, historic sites, and museums around the country. Perhaps the girls want to plan a trip to some national parks as part of the Girl Scout Ranger program. Keep it girl-led: girls lead the entire planning process and might plan to add a community service or Take-Action project.

Depending on where one lives in Virginia, national trips may involve travel outside of the Virginia and East Coast Region but does not include travel outside the 48 contiguous U.S. states and sometimes referred to as “domestic” travel.

**International Trips** (Cadettes and older). Travel around the world can require **one to three years** of preparation. Ensure passports, documentation, visas, and customs requirements are in order well in Safety Activity Checkpoints

advance of your trip. International trips are available to Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, but only to those who have successfully participated in a progression of overnight and extended trips within Girl Scouting. Keep it girl-led: girls download the [Global Travel Toolkit](#), and plan their entire trip – including learning about language, culture, passports and visas, exchange rates, etc. The [Intent to Travel for International Trips \(#2279\)](#) form is to be submitted to council a minimum of 24 months in advance of the intended travel date.

International travel involves travel outside of the 48 contiguous U.S. states, which **includes travel to Alaska, Hawaii, any U.S. territories, and any travel by cruise ship.**

**Independent Travel** (Cadettes and older). Older girls 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 girls’:**

- Ability to be away from parents 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 each other 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.

*WAGGGS World Centers or your Girl Scout council may have additional or different guidelines regarding age requirements for international travel.*

### **Learn More**

- [WAGGGS World Centers](#)
- [Girl Scout Guide to U.S. Travel](#)
- [International events through Girl Scouts](#)
- Girl Scouts [Destinations](#) program
- U.S. passports and international travel: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- Travelers’ health (vaccines, medicine, advice): [Centers for Disease Control](#)
- [Girl Scout Global Travel Toolkit](#)

### **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](#), a great reference for learning and traveling with disabilities.

**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.

### **Trip and Travel Checkpoints**

**Vendor Approval Requirements dependent upon chosen activities.** Review Vendor Approval section under the *Standard Safety Guidelines for vendor approval timelines*. Connect with your Girl Scout council for approved vendors or site suggestions to ensure they are properly insured. If not approved, allow enough time to have the vendor or site to be approved. The owner operator should be able to confirm one million dollars General Liability insurance and instructor knowledge or experience upon request. 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. Volunteers are responsible for notifying the council immediately should the site seem unsafe, or the instructor's knowledge and experience does not meet safety standards.

**Verify Vendors for specific activities:**

[High Adventure Approved Vendors List \(#2147\)](#)

[Stables Approved Vendors List \(#2149\)](#)

[Charter Bus Approved Vendors List \(#2148\)](#)

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

**Required Training:**

**281 GS 201 Trips & Overnights (gsLearn):** This course is required for volunteers who would like to take girls on any local day or overnight trip as well as any regional or national extended travel across the US. It is recommended volunteers complete this course a minimum of six months prior to planning their first local day or overnight trip. It is recommended volunteers review this course prior to planning any extended Girl Scout travel within the 48 contiguous United States. The recommended planning period for extended travel is a minimum of one year in advance of the extended travel date. If you are a Troop leader, 281 GS 102 (gsLearn) is a prerequisite for this course. If you are a support volunteer acting as Trip Advisor, 281 GS 104 (gsLearn) is a prerequisite.

Submit [Intent to Travel for International Trips \(#2279\)](#) form to council a minimum of 24 months in advance of the intended travel date. This allows time for the council to assign an international travel mentor and provide training. (International trips require submission of submit the **Activity/Trip Permission (2129)** a minimum of 12 weeks in advance of the trip date.)

**281 GS 203 International Trips:** This classroom or virtual course is required for volunteers who would like to take girls for any type of travel outside the 48 contiguous United States including Alaska, Hawaii, Safety Activity Checkpoints

and all U.S. territories. Training is to be completed for a minimum of 18-20 months before the tentative trip date and BEFORE girls and volunteers begin planning their first international trip. It is recommended this course be repeated prior to planning each international trip. The recommended planning period for international travel is a minimum of **24-36 months in advance of the intended travel date**. If this is the first time planning an international trip with Girl Scouts, allow 36 months. Some trips take longer to plan, adjust accordingly! The GS 201 Trips & Overnights course is a prerequisite to GS 203 International Trips. Additional learning opportunities may be required depending on the type of planned troop/group activities.

**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. Council may only approve certain makes and models of 12-15 passenger vans. Reach out to council at [info@gsvsc.org](mailto:info@gsvsc.org) for additional guidance. See *intro to Standard Safety Guidelines for details*.

For chartered buses or rented vehicles always verify safety credentials and commercial driving licenses, check the availability of seatbelts, and request a certificate of insurance showing a minimum of one million dollars Auto Liability insurance. **Charter buses companies must be an approved vendor though council: [Charter Bus Approved Vendors List \(#2148\)](#) 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:

- Girl Scout [camps](#) and facilities or [WAGGGS World Centers](#).
- National, state, or local campgrounds, many of which offer cabins to rent. Try [reserveamerica.com](http://reserveamerica.com).
- Hostels. [HI USA](#) offers Girl Scout ready hostels in the U.S.
- Hotels. Consider suites and adjoining rooms to enhance supervision.

**Airbnb, VRBO and HomeAway.** 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 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. **\*A copy of the host's commercial liability insurance may need to be submitted to council if confirmation of coverage cannot be verified through host site. Council must receive confirmation or be able to verify premises for commercial use with one million dollars in General Liability insurance coverage.**

**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 girls.
- Evacuation routes are clear and known to all.
- 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 girls; 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 girls are to share a bed.

**Girls and adults do not share a bed.** However, some councils make exceptions for mothers and daughters. When parents or caregivers are staffing an event, daughters should remain in sleeping quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.

**Males should not sleep in the same space as girl 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 girls and adults. When traveling or camping, men should not have to walk through the girls' sleeping area to get to the bathroom. Men must stay in a tent or a cabin that is in a separate designated area away from the girls or women.

For additional information on sleeping accommodations, See [Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines](#)

### **Additional Considerations**

**Esure 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 the U.S. Customs & Border Protection and is strongly suggested as a best practice. International permission slip: [Parent Permission to Travel Form for Minors \(#1018\)](#).

**Take the insurance.** 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. Email council at [info@gsvsc.org](mailto:info@gsvsc.org) for more information.

For information on Activity Accident Insurance, please refer to the **Activity Accident Insurance** section. See Intro to Standard Safety Guidelines.

Once council approval has been received, submit **Request For Girl Scout Activity Insurance (#2136)** to [info@gsvsc.org](mailto:info@gsvsc.org) and payment to council to obtain additional accident activity insurance with Mutual

of Omaha. Request and payment must be received a minimum of two weeks prior to the travel date for processing. Call Customer Care 540-777-5100 for payment.

**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 cancelled 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 girls and adults
- If the trip is international, trip leader must have international travel experience or work with an international trip mentor.

**Prepare a pre-trip orientation.** Make sure girls 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 girl and adult participants, and girls' parents, receive information about health, first aid and 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 to create a group behavior contract, and have members sign it. Another suggestion is to create a personal emergency action plan that each girl can write out herself and keep with her. Make sure to discuss topics like:

- Who her buddy is—and how the buddy system works,
- What to do if she is separated from the group, whether by accident or due to a crime,
- What to do if she loses something significant: 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 of her and the consequences to self or others, by 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 that the State Department knows where you are traveling.
- **Read on the [Centers for Disease and Control Prevention](#) website about health concerns for the country.** Make sure girls and parents/guardians review this information. Every participant travelling 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 U.S.,** 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 that 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– Not approved for Girl Scout Travel**
- **Confirm that both girls 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 to safeguard girls.
- **Travel Alert 4.** When the travel alert Level is 4 (“do not travel”), girls are not to travel to a location under any circumstances. **The council cannot approve travel to these areas.**
- **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 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 girls and parents/guardians and determine if there is still a compelling interest to travel 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 travelling, be sure to follow the safety checkpoints for specific activities you plan to do on your trip.