

Trip/Travel: Safety Activity Checkpoints



Some of the most memorable moments in a Girl Scout's life happen while taking trips, and travel offers a wealth of opportunities for girls to develop leadership skills. The following information can help you and girls prepare for local, regional, or international travel. Also be sure to check the specific Safety Activity Checkpoints listed for **activities** you will do while traveling.

Include girls with disabilities. Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Make sure that reasonable accommodations are made for girls with disabilities. Be inspired by stories of people with disabilities traveling by visiting [No Barriers](#) and [Wilderness Inquiry](#).

Trip/Travel Gear

- **Packing.** Girls and adults plan together what clothing and any equipment to take and how to pack it. Think about what equipment and resources might be shared and who will pack and carry it. (See “**Camping**” Checkpoint for packing or camping trips.)
- **Luggage.** Individual limits on luggage and equipment are set and adhered to. Each person is able to carry her own belongings except in cases of special consideration, such as a disability.
- **Forms and paperwork.** Check with your council about what forms you and the girls should be carrying on your trip (permissions, health histories, etc.)
- **Uniforms.** When the group wears their uniforms, all travelers wear it correctly. Girls and adults are encouraged to be in uniform only at WAGGGS World Centers and at Girl Guide/Girl Scout events.
- **Valuables:** Leave them all at home!

Preparing for Travel

Travel Progression and Recommended Ages for Travel Experiences

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. Girl Scout Daisies can begin with a discovery walk. As girls grow in their travel skills and experience and can better manage the planning process, they progress to longer trips – even global trips!

If your group is thinking about progression to the next step in travel, consider whether the girls are mature enough to handle planning (all travel should be girl-led) and participating in the trip. Think about the girls':

- Ability to be away from their 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
- Ability to work well as a team
- Previous cross-cultural experiences
- Skills, interests, and language skills (where applicable)

Recommended Progression of Trips in Girl Scouting

- **Short trips to local points of interest (Daisies and older):** A walk to the nearby garden or a short ride by car or public transportation to the firehouse or courthouse is a great first step for Daisies.
- **Day trip (Daisies and older):** An all-day visit to a point of historical or natural interest (bringing their own lunch) or a day-long trip to a nearby city (stopping at a restaurant for a meal)—younger girls can select locations and do much of the trip-planning, while never being too far from home. *Note: Full-day trips may be very challenging for Daisies, especially for kindergarteners who have not experienced short trips. Make sure girls take some short trips before they progress to a full day trip.*
- **Overnight trips (Daisies and older):** One (or possibly two) nights. This 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 whet their appetites, but not long enough to generate homesickness. *Note: A Daisy troop may participate in an overnight experience if the girls are ready. Brownie troops can participate up to two nights. For camp, girls who have completed kindergarten may independently participate at 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.*
- **Extended overnight trips (Juniors and older):** Three nights or four nights camping or staying in a hotel, motel, or hostel within the girls' home region (for example, New England, the Upper Midwest, the Southeast, the Pacific Northwest, and so on).
- **National trips (Cadettes and older):** Travel anywhere in the country, often lasting a week or more. Try to steer clear of 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!](#)
- **International trips (Seniors and older*):** Travel around the world, often requiring two or three years of preparation. International trips are available to Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, but **only to those who have successfully participated in a progression of overnight trips with Girl Scouting.** When girls show an interest in traveling abroad, contact your council to get permission to plan the trip and download the [Global Travel Toolkit](#). Visiting one of the [four World Centers](#) is a great place to start, but girls might also consider traveling with international service-learning organizations to perform community service, or meeting up with Girl Scouts and Girl Guides from around the world at an [international scouting event](#). All international groups should register with [S.T.E.P. - the U.S. Department of State travel registry](#). In addition to completing council forms, troops should complete this [online Intent to Travel](#). Be sure to also read the Travel Section of your council's *Volunteer Essentials* guide to learn about specific policies related to travel and ensure you meet all council requirements for international travel.

*NOTE: WAGGGS World Centers or your Girl Scout Council may have additional or different guidelines regarding age requirements.

Additional Preparation

- **Review Safety Activity Checkpoints.** Look up each activity you will do while traveling (e.g. hiking, camping, skiing) and ensure requirements are met for all activities.
- **Review the Travel Chapter of *Volunteer Essentials*.**
- **Communicate with council and parents.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints. Be sure to contact your council to get permission to travel at the beginning of your planning process.
- **Girls plan the activity.** Again, see the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints. In addition, keeping their program-level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activities, planning routes, menus, and rules for group living.
- **Prepare for emergencies.** 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. 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 training. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training. Ensure participants understand what to do in case of emergency. For international trips, register the group with [S.T.E.P. - the U.S. Department of State travel registry](#) and research local health issues and vaccination requirements.
- **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:
 - 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, leader must have international trip planning experience
- **Arrange for transportation and adult supervision.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints for the recommended adult-to-girl ratios.
- **Compile key contacts.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- **Ensure the safety of sleeping and bathroom areas.** Separate sleeping and bathroom facilities are provided for adult males; many councils make exceptions for girls' fathers. Ensure the following:
 - Each participant has her own bed. Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if girls are to share a bed.
 - Adults and girls never share a bed.
 - It is not mandatory that an adult sleep in the sleeping area (tent, cabin, or designated area) with the girls. If an adult female does share the sleeping area, there should always be two unrelated adult females present.
 - During family or "he and me" events (in which girls share sleeping accommodations with males), ensure the sleeping arrangement details are clearly explained in parent/guardian permission slip.
- **Arrange a pre-trip orientation.** Ensure that girl and adult participants, and girls' parents, receive information about first-aid procedures, emergency and rescue procedures, environmental awareness, plans for mode of travel and geographic area, operational procedures (e.g. chaperone reporting, or using the buddy system) detailed itineraries, and behavior expectations.

Trip/Travel Links

- Girl Scouts' [Global Travel Toolkit](#)

Including Girl Scout Program. The Journey Adult Guides have a lot of ideas about trips that bring the Journey to life, and many troops choose to earn badges as part of their trip planning and travel adventures.

Beyond Troop Opportunities. Although many troops decide to travel together, Girl Scouts may also get together specifically for the purpose of traveling. Girls 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 also offers individual Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors the chance to travel independently and meet other Girl Scouts from all across the country through the [Destinations](#) program.

Trip/Travel Gear

- Packing. Girls and adults plan together what clothing and any equipment to take and how to pack it.
- Share resources. Encourage girls to make a list of the gear and supplies, and then determine which can be shared. Support girls in creating a checklist of group and personal equipment and distribute to group members.
- Uniforms. When the group wears their uniforms, all travelers wear it correctly. Girls and adults are encouraged to be in uniform at WAGGGS World Centers and at Girl Guide/Girl Scout events.
- Luggage. Individual limits on luggage and equipment are set and adhered to. Each person is able to carry her own individually identified belongings except when a special consideration, such as a disability, warrants alternative plans. Leave valuables at home.